

# European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina

# Results and recommendations

Project Publication  
November 2023

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**TITLE OF PUBLICATION:** European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Results and recommendations

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## PREFACE

The European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE), developed by the Council of Europe, is a program implemented by the Center of Expertise for Good Governance. The label, measured against the 12 principles of good local governance, developed by the Council of Europe, is awarded to municipalities or cities that have reached high levels of „good governance“. The main goal of this process is raising standards of local democracy in the Council of Europe member countries.

ELoGE process was introduced and implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina through the „Strengthening local participation and cooperation through partnership of public authorities and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina - LINK 4 Cooperation“ project, financed by the European Union. The training for the implementation of the ELoGE process was co-financed by the Council of Europe.

Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Mostar, as a certified entity, implemented the program in cooperation with Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Prijedor, Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Zavidovići and Center for Development of Herzegovina (CRH) Trebinje.

The main goal of this publication is to introduce and clarify the ELoGE process implemented in 12 municipalities/cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The publication also showcases results and gives recommendations on how to improve the implementation of and establish a more organized and useful approach to 12 principles of good local governance.

By sharing experiences, challenges and recommendations the publication aims to inspire continuity in improvement of operations in local governments in accordance with democratic principles, thus contributing to the sustainable progress and development of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Special emphasis is placed on the importance of cooperation between local governments and citizens with the goal of stimulating the implementation of principles of good local governance.

„Link 4 Cooperation“ project team

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## ABOUT LDA MOSTAR

LDA Mostar is a civil society organization focused on good governance, civic participation and strengthening cooperation between local authorities and civil society.

Since its establishment in November 2004, Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Mostar acts as a locally registered non-profit, nongovernmental organization, with the support of its partners and co-operation with other Agencies and the Association of Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA).

LDA Mostar is focused to:

- Promoting **democratic governance** through citizen participation in policy and decision-making processes
- Capacity building and promotion of **citizen participation** in order for more CSOs to become engaged and to participate in decision making processes
- Facilitating the **cooperation** between Local Authorities, Civil Society Organisations & Citizens
- Enhance effective citizen participation in the **EU integration** and accession negotiation processes in Bosnia and Herzegovina

It is precisely this co-operation, both on local and regional level that has enabled numerous activities and projects useful for the development of the local community and its inclusion into processes at the regional level. By using the principles of the multilateral decentralised cooperation, LDA Mostar Activities are aimed to create a more active citizenship on one side, and transparent and accountable local authorities on the other, and are focused towards development of a modern democratic society. These activities entangle every segment of life of the local community and offer a possibility of improving the living standard of all categories of the society by directly influencing concrete changes.

Through participative methods and decentralized cooperation LDA Mostar implements projects and actions in areas of the Human rights, Intercultural dialogue, Gender equality and inclusion, Youth participation, Disadvantaged groups, Art and culture, Public spaces and public discourses, Migrations, Environment, Nonformal education, Research and analysis.

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LDA Mostar, just as other Local Democracy agencies in network, have been established by initiative of the Congress of the Council of Europe since 1992, as a support program to strengthen local democracy, foster respect for human rights and further sustainable development. Today there are 16 active Local Democracy Agencies based in Western Balkans and Turkey, South Caucasus and North Africa coordinated by ALDA, on top of 3 LDAs – Operational partners, based in Croatia.

The agencies function as self-sustaining, locally registered NGOs, but they are different from other local NGOs because of the international framework they operate in. Indeed, the LDAs develop partnerships with local authorities and NGOs from all over Europe giving to the whole network direct access to an international framework through the support of ALDA, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

## **ABOUT “LINK 4 Cooperation” PROJECT**

In 2021, the consortium, led by the Local Democracy Agency Mostar in collaboration with the Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići, Local Democracy Agency Prijedor, Center for Development of Herzegovina (CRH) Trebinje, ALDA – European Association for Local Democracy, and ALDA Skopje as an associated partner, embarked on the implementation of the project titled "Strengthening local participation and cooperation through the partnership of Public Authorities and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina - LINK 4 Cooperation," abbreviated as Link4Cooperation. Project is funded by European Union.

This ambitious 3-year project is dedicated to promoting the principles of good governance, with the aim of enhancing the performance and responsiveness of local government units across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project's comprehensive design focuses on empowering both local authorities, including elected leaders and civil servants, and civil society stakeholders, fostering their capacities in implementing participative processes.

Working collaboratively, local authorities and civil society have joined forces to identify and address concrete issues within their communities through a

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participative approach. This inclusive and cooperative methodology ensures that the community's problems and challenges are tackled through collective efforts, drawing on the wealth of perspectives and expertise from both sectors.

At its core, the project aspires to achieve an overarching goal: strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations engaged in advocacy processes. By equipping these organizations with comprehensive training and expertise, they will emerge as reliable and capable partners for local authorities in creating and implementing policies and reforms within Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Implementing the ELoGE methodology was just one aspect of the comprehensive project, which encompassed several notable activities that significantly contributed to enhancing governance practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina. To illustrate:

- **Translation and Contextualization:** The ELoGE materials were translated for the first time into Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian languages, making the program more accessible and inclusive for local authorities and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The adaptation of the materials to the local context ensured that the program's principles and tools resonated effectively with the unique governance challenges and needs in the country.
- **"LINK for Cooperation" Project:** Operating within a broader framework, the "LINK for Cooperation" project integrated the ELoGE process, elevating its impact. The Leadership Academy's educational program (LAP) that is also part of this project, offered tailored training to both local authorities and CSOs. The LAP module content was informed by the findings of the Benchmark, ensuring its relevance and effectiveness in addressing identified needs.
- **Promoting Collaboration between Local Authorities and CSOs:** The ELoGE process and LAP actively engaged local authorities and CSOs in collaborative efforts. Special attention was devoted to fostering cooperation between these two critical stakeholders, creating tools for participation, and cultivating an environment conducive to joint action for the betterment of local communities.
- **Guidelines for Grants:** The self-assessment process completed by local authorities played a crucial role in shaping the guidelines for



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grants awarded to Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) in 12 cities across Bosnia and Herzegovina. The needs identified through the benchmark informed these grants, aligning them with the specific requirements of local communities.

- **European Label for Governance Excellence:** The ELoGE process served as a unique opportunity to introduce European standards and best practices to the participating municipalities. By familiarizing them with the ELoGE methodology and emphasizing its practical applicability, the project underscored the importance of aligning with EU standards.
- **Local Government Commitment to Capacity Building:** By voluntarily participating in the self-assessment program, the mayors of the 12 municipalities demonstrated a high level of awareness regarding the importance of enhancing their capacities and improving services to citizens. Their active engagement reflected a strong commitment to adopting EU standards and fostering good governance practices.

Overall, the project's multi-faceted approach, incorporating translation, tailored education, collaboration promotion, and grants alignment, created a robust and sustainable framework for enhancing governance practices in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The mayors' dedication to the ELoGE process underscored their proactive stance in advancing the country's journey towards European integration. The project's achievements exemplify the potential of local-level initiatives in fostering positive change and contributing to the broader EU accession process of the country.

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## ABOUT ELoGE

The Council of Europe has developed the standards, criteria, and mechanisms of this tool and is responsible for granting accreditation to various entities. To ensure the effective implementation of the program, the Council of Europe collaborates with qualified and experienced entities that possess expertise in the field of local governance and have obtained ELoGE accreditation. The ELoGE Accreditation Platform, established under the Strategy for Innovation and Governance at the Local Level, is directly responsible for handling and responding to requests related to accreditation<sup>1</sup>.

The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is an entity housed within the Council of Europe. It was established in 2006 with the aim of assisting European countries in achieving domestic standards of good governance<sup>2</sup>. The Centre fulfils this objective through various means, such as offering expertise, conducting research, developing programs, promoting best practices, and facilitating investments. These efforts are typically tailored to the specific contexts of the respective countries<sup>3</sup>. One notable achievement of the Centre is the defining of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, which serve as a foundation for the ELoGE program<sup>4</sup>. The Centre maintains a strong connection with the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), allowing it to tap into a continuous stream of knowledge, including insights from high-ranking government officials of member states. Additionally, the Centre has developed and regularly updates 25 capacity-building toolkits<sup>5</sup>, which are designed to meet the specific local standards of member states. The work of the Centre

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<sup>1</sup> The European Label of Governance Excellence. Council of Europe.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/eloge>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/centre-of-expertise-strategic-plan-2017-2022/1680766281>

<sup>3</sup> Centre of Expertise. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/centre-of-expertise>

<sup>4</sup> 12 Principles. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/12-principles>

<sup>5</sup> Centre of Expertise. Council of Europe. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/centre-of-expertise>

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of Expertise for Good Governance falls under the oversight of the Democratic Governance Division.

The European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) is a program initiated by the Council of Europe. It involves the assessment of municipalities and cities' local governance standards, using a benchmark provided by the Council of Europe<sup>6</sup>. The primary objective of the ELoGE is to enhance and support local governance by empowering municipalities to improve their capabilities and knowledge in delivering high-quality services to their constituents. Municipalities that demonstrate outstanding governance standards are granted the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) for a duration of two years. This prestigious accolade is symbolized by a crystal dodecahedron, which bears engravings of the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance. It is important to note that this program exclusively caters to cities and municipalities within member states of the Council of Europe<sup>7</sup>.

ELoGE came into existence through the adoption of the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on March 26, 2008. The current regulations governing the implementation of ELoGE have been revised and updated by the European Platform at regular intervals to respond to emerging needs. These regulations were most recently amended on 20 October 2023 and will be further updated to reflect CM/Rec (2023)5 on the principles of good democratic governance.

The effective operation of ELoGE relies on the involvement of an accredited and qualified entity with expertise in promoting good local governance. This entity acts as an intermediary between the Council of Europe and the municipalities participating in ELoGE process. To obtain accreditation, these entities undergo an evaluation process upon their request. Once accredited, they assume the responsibility of implementing ELoGE within the municipalities and cities that have voluntarily chosen to participate in this

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<sup>6</sup> The European Label of Governance Excellence. Council of Europe.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/eloge>

<sup>7</sup> The European Label of Governance Excellence. Council of Europe.

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/good-governance/eloge>

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process. Authority of the accredited body in this role spans a maximum of 3 years, with the possibility of renewal upon request<sup>8</sup>.

The ELoGE program can be divided into four distinct phases<sup>9</sup>. The initial phase is accreditation, where a city or municipality interested in participating in the program must submit an application to the accredited entity at the national or regional level. The second phase is regional implementation<sup>10</sup>, which involves a comprehensive process. Initially, cities and municipalities conduct self-assessments using the 12 principles matrix, which includes a series of questionnaires administered to local administrators, municipal employees, and citizens. The subsequent phase is evaluation, where the final data collected is forwarded to the National Evaluation Platform. This platform comprises a committee of experts who assess the data and determine which cities and municipalities deserve the ELoGE label. The final phase is the award ceremony, during which the accredited entity and the National Evaluation Platform jointly present the ELoGE label to the local governments that have demonstrated a commendable level of good governance.

During the implementation of the ELoGE program, there are various anticipated outcomes that are targeted. These encompass promoting favorable local practices, stimulating increased citizen participation, fostering collaboration between citizens and local authorities, enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of public services, establishing specialized training initiatives for authorities, citizens, and civil society organizations (CSOs), among other objectives<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> ELoGE Accreditation Platform. Council of Europe. <https://rm.coe.int/eloge-regulations-rev-21-2768-3402-8293-v-1/1680a460ed>

<sup>9</sup> European Label of Governance Excellence – ELoGE. E-Den Platform. <https://edenplatform.org/european-label-of-governance-excellence-eloge/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.alda-europe.eu/library/alda-bringing-eloge-to-croatia-and-north-macedonia/>

<sup>11</sup> European Label of Governance Excellence – ELoGE. E-Den Platform. <https://edenplatform.org/european-label-of-governance-excellence-eloge/>

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## **ABOUT ELoGE PLATFORM IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

LDA Mostar is the accredited entity for the implementation of ELoGE in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The accreditation was given by decision of The Council of Europe, European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) Accreditation Platform, at its meeting on 25 March 2022.

After examining the request from LDA Mostar for accreditation to award ELoGE in Bosnia Herzegovina, the ELoGE Accreditation Platform *“agreed to grant the accreditation for three years, noting that support was available from the Centre of Expertise and through strong involvement of civil society. In respond to the request, it was highlighted that the 12 Principles of good democratic governance are equally important, including respect for cultural diversity (principle 11), and should all be addressed in the ELoGE process.”*

By providing regular reports describing the activities, LDA Mostar as accredited entity keeps the CoE Accreditation Platform informed about the actions regarding ELoGE process in Bosnia Herzegovina. The CoE ELoGE Accreditation Platform presents information on the ELoGE process to the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG).

ELoGE in Bosnia and Herzegovina is implemented by LDA Mostar as the accredited national entity in partnership with Local democracy agency Prijedor, Local democracy agency Zavidovići and Centre for development of Herzegovina from Trebinje.

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## Timeline



## 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance

### 1. Fair conduct of elections, Representation and Participation

The first principle guarantees the integrity and inclusivity of local elections, ensuring that every individual, regardless of their identity or background, has the opportunity to participate and have their voice heard. It aims to ensure that decisions reflect the aspirations of the people, taking into account factors such as gender balance and the needs of marginalized individuals or groups. This principle emphasizes the importance of citizen engagement in local public activities, providing accessible channels for information dissemination and enabling their contribution to policy-making. Local officials play a crucial role in actively encouraging citizen participation, particularly among marginalized groups, and implementing mechanisms that facilitate this process. The ultimate objective is to foster an engaged constituency and enable decision-making that genuinely represents the will of the people within the local government.

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## **2. Responsiveness**

The second principle guarantees that legislation and institutional frameworks are aligned with the requirements and welfare of citizens. It ensures that public services, requests, and complaints are handled promptly and efficiently. To achieve the objectives of this principle, officials adhere to guidelines and procedures that guide the decision-making process. Mechanisms are established to effectively address citizen complaints, and policy and service changes are not only transparent but also based on evidence, research, and consultation. The aim is to provide services that effectively cater to the needs of citizens and continually evolve to meet their changing requirements.

## **3. Efficiency and effectiveness**

The third principle guarantees that the achievement of objectives is not only satisfactory but also optimized in terms of resource utilization. Regular evaluations are conducted to identify areas for improvement. To uphold this principle, local governments engage in ongoing strategic planning of activities and budgets. They regularly track and assess their performance to gain insights into their strengths and weaknesses, enabling them to develop mechanisms and frameworks for addressing various issues. Cities and municipalities can enhance their performance by sharing best practices with other local governments, fostering mutual learning and improvement. In essence, the emphasis on robust record-keeping and evaluation serves to inform more strategic decision-making processes.

## **4. Openness and Transparency**

This principle guarantees the enforcement of public access to information and promotes transparency in decision-making and provisions available to citizens, thereby fostering trust. It encompasses initiatives such as providing direct sources of information, opening meetings to the public, facilitating media access, and more. All decisions align with relevant legislation and regulations. To ensure effective decision-making and the allocation of responsibilities, the local government follows a dedicated delegation scheme. Furthermore, decision-making processes adhere to established rules and are fully transparent, providing clear and comprehensive information about the entire process.

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## **5. Rule of Law**

Principle five guarantees the equitable enforcement of rules and procedures, preventing local authorities from circumventing the law and judicial decisions. It establishes accountability for public officials, ensuring that any unlawful actions are reported and addressed. Regular collection of information is conducted to ensure the upholding of rules and regulations.

## **6. Ethical Conduct**

The sixth principle aims to prevent corruption and unethical conduct by prioritizing the common good over individual interests. Codes of conduct serve as crucial tools in establishing standards for public officials. The ultimate objective of public policy is to benefit the constituency, and their interests shape the overall direction of local policies. Measures are implemented to prevent and combat corruption, which involve internal and external audits, as well as other accountability mechanisms. The appointment, promotion, and recognition of staff are based on merit and follow approved procedures.

## **7. Competence and Capacity**

This principle aims to guarantee that individuals occupying local offices are qualified and consistently evaluate their capacity to meet the needs of the constituency and fulfill their responsibilities. Furthermore, procedures are in place to ensure that skills remain at the required levels to effectively carry out duties. To identify the necessary skills for delivering services efficiently, local governments take proactive measures to assess and develop a strategy for their staff. Training plans are formulated, implemented, and continuously monitored and evaluated to ensure that both the local government and its staff are equipped to address local challenges effectively.

## **8. Innovation and Openness to Change**

The following principle ensures that continuous efforts are made within the local area to enhance problem-solving methods and embraces a receptive attitude towards adopting new and potentially advantageous approaches and creating programs to facilitate the improved functioning of government. Structures and systems are established, and officials are



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dedicated to ensuring that local governments have the capacity for innovation and research in order to enhance governance.

## **9. Sustainability and Long-term orientation**

To uphold this principle, it is crucial to engage in long-term planning when formulating community policies. This involves considering the well-being of future generations by avoiding the transfer of problems to them and ensuring that local mechanisms are future-proof. Continuous general planning is necessary, taking into account historical, cultural, and social perspectives. Sustainability plays a vital role in municipality management, requiring a long-term perspective that encompasses dedicated planning, allocation of resources, clear responsibilities, regular evaluations, idea-sharing, and active participation. Historical, cultural, and social elements and perspectives must be carefully considered throughout the process.

## **10. Sound Financial Management**

The objective of this principle is to ensure transparency and effectiveness in managing the financial resources of the local area. This encompasses measures to prevent excessive spending, particularly in relation to public services, accurate financial estimation, and transparent budgeting processes that reflect the needs and opinions of the constituency. Steps are taken to mitigate risks, and active financial mechanisms are in place to define and enforce responsibilities, procedures, and resource allocation. The management process includes independent audits and reports to minimize corruption, and transparent mechanisms such as publishing reports. Citizens are informed about how their taxpayer money is utilized.

## **11. Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion**

The purpose of this principle is to make sure that within the local territory, human rights are preserved and protected, and that discrimination is fought against. Within local territories, cultural diversity is valued, and opinions and contributions of the different groups are respected, including making inclusive practices. There is effort to make sure that the marginalized are helped and shielded from discrimination, including through access to and promotion of services. Objectives and strategies are set to ensure that social cohesion and good outcomes are ensured for all the parties and individual groups within the city or municipality.

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## **12. Accountability**

Last but not less important, principle number twelve guarantees that decision-makers, whether individuals or groups, assume accountability for their decisions and ensure comprehensive reporting, along with appropriate sanctions for unethical behavior or negative actions by local authorities. Decision-makers are assigned individual and collective responsibilities within legal frameworks that are designed to be followed. To fulfill this objective, thorough reporting is conducted, making relevant documents accessible and available to promote transparency. Independent and unbiased evaluations are conducted to ensure fair outcomes in the decision-making process.

## **Bosnia and Herzegovina Final Report**

### **Overview of Local Government<sup>12</sup>**

Bosnia and Herzegovina became a member of the Council of Europe in 2002 upon ratifying the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The country's Constitution grants significant powers of self-government to its entities, ensuring a considerable degree of autonomy. Consequently, Bosnia and Herzegovina is a complex state with diverse institutions and a highly intricate local self-government system.

### **Organization of Local Government**

The signing of the Dayton Agreement marked the end of the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina and introduced a new political division within the former Yugoslav state. Bosnia and Herzegovina consist of two entities. The Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic Srpska and the Brčko District. The Republic Srpska is relatively centralized and comprises 64 local governments (54 municipalities and 10 cities). On the other hand, the

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<sup>12</sup> European Committee of the regions:

<https://portal.cor.europa.eu/divisionpowers/Pages/Bosnia-Herzegovina.aspx>

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Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a federal structure and is divided into 10 autonomous cantons (kantoni), further subdivided into 79 local self-government units (63 municipalities and 16 cities). The cantons were established by the Law on Federal Units, while the Federation itself was formed in 1994 through the Washington Agreement. Each canton has its own government, with an elected prime minister and cabinet. Additionally, the Brčko District of Bosnia and Herzegovina holds a special status as a self-governing administrative unit, simultaneously belonging to both the Federation BiH and the Republic Srpska, with equal sovereignty granted to both entities. At the apex of this complex institutional structure, the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, appointed by the Peace Implementation Council, oversees the peace agreement's implementation and possesses substantial veto power over Bosnian and Herzegovina's political actors. The High Representative is also the International Supervisor for Brčko District.

### **Responsibilities of Local Government**

Each city or municipality has a Council or Assembly and a Mayor, responsible for legislative and executive powers, respectively. The Council or Assembly represents the citizens and serves as the institutional body through which they can voice their opinions and participate in municipal self-government. Regular elections are held involving the entire voting population or all citizens of legal age. The Council or Assembly also monitors the actions of the mayor, who is elected directly. The entire election process is governed by law.

The specific functions of individual municipalities vary based on the entity to which they belong (the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina or the Republika Srpska). However, there are commonalities across municipalities. They typically handle responsibilities in social welfare, public health, infrastructure, education, culture, sports, urban planning, and more. While different legal references provide varying degrees of autonomy to local self-government units, they generally address similar issues.

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## **Financing of Local Government**

The Federal Law on Disbursement of Public Revenue outlines the self-financing mechanism for local governments, specifying the financial instruments they can utilize. These include revenues, taxes, and grants. In the Federation, the Cantons have the authority to collect taxes and share the funds obtained with the cities and municipalities within their respective self-administration units. In contrast, in the Republic Srpska, revenues are divided between the central government and the cities and municipalities according to specific proportions. The key distinction is that each canton in the Federation retains the revenues collected within its territory, while the process is more centralized in the Republic Srpska.

## **Citizen Participation**

Public authorities in both the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic Srpska encourage citizen participation and are obligated to keep the population informed about their activities. Similar laws, such as the Freedom of Access to Information Acts, apply to both entities. These laws require authorities to make non-confidential information accessible to citizens upon personal request.

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## **ELOGE PROCESS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

### **Introduction**

In the current challenging times, every local authority faces unique and specific challenges as they strive to achieve their aims and serve their communities. However, a common struggle for many of them is delivering effective solutions with limited resources, both human and financial.

In the face of such challenges, the collaboration between local authorities and civil society becomes increasingly important. Together, they can identify innovative and effective solutions that cater to their communities' needs. By implementing simple and efficient tools and instruments and engaging in participative processes, they can collectively find ways to address community problems and tackle the prevailing challenges.

The implementation of the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) aimed to assess the capacity of the involved cities and municipalities to provide efficient services for their communities. The primary objective of this Council of Europe's tool was to evaluate whether their work aligns with the 12 principles for good democratic governance. By conducting this assessment, efforts were made to identify what are the areas of strength and areas that needed improvement within each local government governance practices.

The results obtained from the self-assessment process served as valuable foundation that further ELOGE process was based on. These first findings helped shape the capacity-building process, enabling targeted and tailored support to address specific areas of improvement. Additionally, the assessment outcomes influenced the design of various activities and initiatives within ELOGE, ensuring that they align with the identified needs and priorities of the municipalities.

Through the ELOGE, local authorities and civil society partners have the opportunity to strengthen their governance practices, build their capacity, and improve the delivery of services to their communities. The focus is on participative processes thus empowering stakeholders to collectively address challenges and develop innovative solutions. By fostering a culture

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of good democratic governance, the ELoGE contributes to the overall progress and well-being of the participating cities and municipalities.

## **The Cities and Municipalities**

At the outset of the ELoGE process the consortium of “Link for Cooperation” project chose 12 cities and municipalities based on several key criteria that aimed to maximize the program’s impact and reach.

1. **Geographical Position:** One significant factor in the selection process was the geographical location of the local governments. The chosen ones were those that were situated close to the partner organizations implementing the LINK for Cooperation Project and the ELoGE process. Proximity of the partner organizations facilitated easier coordination, communication, and on-the-ground support, enabling a more seamless implementation of the ELoGE.
2. **Equal Distribution at National Level:** The project Link for Cooperation consortium sought to achieve an equitable distribution of the selected cities and municipalities across the both entities of Bosnia and Herzegovina, namely the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Srpska. By choosing six municipalities from each entity, the program aimed to ensure fair representation and inclusivity, catering to the unique governance challenges and contexts prevalent in different regions of the country.
3. **Good Relations and Knowledge of Local Context:** Another crucial consideration in the selection process was establishing good relations with the chosen cities and municipalities. Having in mind previous interactions and collaborations with the partner organizations of project Link for Cooperation, thus creating a foundation of trust and cooperation. This existing rapport facilitated a smoother onboarding process and a better understanding of the local context, thus providing the consortium an opportunity to tailor the program to the specific needs and challenges of each local government.

By adhering to these selection criteria, the consortium was able to create a diverse and balanced cohort of 12 cities and municipalities, each contributing unique perspectives and experiences during the

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implementation of the ELoGE. The chosen municipalities were Mostar, Jablanica, Nevesinje, Zavidovići, Zepče, Maglaj, Prijedor, Novi Grad, Kostajnica, Trebinje, Ravno, and Berkovići.

The deliberate and thoughtful approach to city and municipality selection demonstrated the consortium's commitment to ensuring an inclusive, effective, and contextually relevant implementation of the ELoGE. By strategically choosing the local governments, efforts were made to maximize transformative influence on local governance practices and contribute to fostering a culture of good governance and citizen participation across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **About ELoGE Cities and Municipalities**

### **MUNICIPALITY OF BERKOVIĆI**

**Location:** southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Republic of Srpska

**Population:** 2.114

**Area:** 241.27 km<sup>2</sup>

**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.opstinaberkovici.com](http://www.opstinaberkovici.com)

### **MUNICIPALITY OF JABLANICA**

**Location:** Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Herzegovina–Neretva Canton

**Population:** 10.111

**Area:** 301 km<sup>2</sup>

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**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.jablanica.ba](http://www.jablanica.ba)

## **MUNICIPALITY OF KOSTAJNICA**

**Location:** northwest part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Republic of Srpska

**Population:** 5.977

**Area:** 8.512 km<sup>2</sup>

**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.opstina-kostajnica.com](http://www.opstina-kostajnica.com)

## **MUNICIPALITY OF MAGLAJ**

**Location:** northern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zenica-Doboj Canton

**Population:** 24.980

**Area:** 290 km<sup>2</sup>

**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.maglaj.ba](http://www.maglaj.ba)



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## **CITY OF MOSTAR**

**Location:** southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton,

**Population:** 113.169

**Area:** 1.165,63 km<sup>2</sup>

**City Authorities:** Mayor and City Council

<http://www.mostar.ba>

## **MUNICIPALITY OF NEVESINJE**

**Location:** southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Republic of Srpska

**Population:** 12.961

**Area:** 923 km<sup>2</sup>

**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.opstinanevesinje.rs.ba](http://www.opstinanevesinje.rs.ba)

## **MUNICIPALITY OF NOVI GRAD**

**Location:** northwestern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Republic of Srpska

**Population:** 27.115

**Area:** 472.72 km<sup>2</sup>

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**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.opstina-novigrad.com](http://www.opstina-novigrad.com)

### **CITY OF PRIJEDOR**

**Location:** south-west part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Republic of Srpska

**Population:** 89.397

**Area:** 834.06 km<sup>2</sup>

**City Authorities:** Mayor and City Council

[www.prijedorgrad.org](http://www.prijedorgrad.org)

### **MUNICIPALITY OF RAVNO**

**Location:** south-west part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Herzegovina-Neretva Canton

**Population:** 3,328

**Area:** 286 km<sup>2</sup>

**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.ravno.gov.ba](http://www.ravno.gov.ba)

### **CITY OF TREBINJE**

**Location:** southern part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Republic of Srpska

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**Population:** 29.198

**Area:** 904 km<sup>2</sup>

**City Authorities:** Mayor and City Council

[www.trebinje.rs.ba](http://www.trebinje.rs.ba)

## **CITY OF ZAVIDOVIĆI**

**Location:** central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zenica-Doboj Canton

**Population:** 52.379

**Area:** 590.3 km<sup>2</sup>

**City Authorities:** Mayor and City Council

[www.zavidovici.ba](http://www.zavidovici.ba)

## **MUNICIPALITY OF ŽEPČE**

**Location:** central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina

**Entity:** Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zenica-Doboj Canton

**Population:** 32.856

**Area:** 283,53 km<sup>2</sup>

**Municipal Authorities:** Mayor and Municipal Council

[www.opcina-zepce.com](http://www.opcina-zepce.com)

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## **Local Experts, The ELoGE Training**

In order for the Consortium to be trained to implement the ELoGE methodology at the local level in 2021, a series of trainings for trainers (ToT) was organized in an online format. This training was conducted by trainers of the Council of Europe according to the standard methodology adopted by the Council of Europe. The ToT aimed to train the project consortium to lead the ELoGE process and, in this way, ensure sustainability and local ownership.

## **Methodology and Implementation**

### **Preparation phase**

During the preparation phase of the ELoGE activity, the project consortium carried out all necessary administrative and preoperational tasks to lay a strong foundation for the process' implementation.

One of the crucial aspects of this phase was the development of a comprehensive communication strategy. This strategy served as a roadmap for effectively disseminating information about the ELoGE to all relevant stakeholders. It outlined the objectives, activities, and the anticipated results, providing clarity on the project's overall mission and vision of the ELoGE's complex structure.

The project consortium recognized the importance of relations with the public, and on the website of the LiNK for Cooperation project ([link4cooperation.ba](http://link4cooperation.ba)), a section exclusively related to information on the progress of the ELoGE process was regularly maintained. Thus, the public could be informed about all relevant details related to the application of ELoGE and today it represents a centralized hub for interested parties to access basic documents, updates and progress reports.

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## **Adaptation phase**

The adaptation of the ELoGE methodology to suit the unique local contexts proved to be an important task for the consortium. Understanding the diversity and individuality of each city and municipality, required careful consideration and thoughtful adjustments to ensure the process' effectiveness.

The first significant undertaking was adapting the Benchmark document. This document serves as a fundamental reference point for evaluating the municipalities' performance against the principles of good democratic governance. The consortium tailored this Benchmark to the specific characteristics of each municipality, while still maintaining a consistent and standardized assessment framework.

Next on the agenda was adapting the surveys. Surveys play a crucial role in gathering citizen feedback (opinions of citizens, councilors in local Councils and Assemblies, as well as local administration employees), providing valuable insights into the local community's perceptions and needs. The consortium had to adapt surveys so they would resonate with the unique cultural, social, and economic aspects of each city and municipality. This required thoughtful modifications to ensure the questions were relevant, clear, and meaningful to the citizens they served.

The consortium chose suitable tools to deploy the adapted documentation effectively. This involved careful consultation with experts from the Council of Europe (CoE) and the local communities themselves.

Throughout the adaptation process, collaboration and open communication with the local governments were of great importance. Engaging with local stakeholders provided valuable insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by each community. The cities and municipalities' input and consideration of their unique perspectives were instrumental in shaping the tailored ELoGE methodology.

Additionally, seeking guidance from CoE experts ensured that the methodology retained its robustness and adherence to European standards, while still being flexible enough to accommodate the diverse local contexts.

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In conclusion, the consortium's efforts in adapting the ELoGE methodology demonstrated a commitment to inclusivity and a recognition of the importance of tailoring governance practices to meet the specific needs of local communities. By addressing the challenges associated with diverse contexts and linguistic differences, the consortium aimed to foster a more meaningful and impactful ELoGE process that could effectively promote good democratic governance in all local communities included in the Link for Cooperation project.

### **Preparatory meetings**

During the period from November 2021 to February 2022, the LINK 4 Cooperation project consortium engaged in a series of meetings with representatives from 12 local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose of these meetings was twofold: a) to showcase the accomplishments of the one-year LINK for Cooperation project implementation in the participating cities and municipalities, and b) to outline the upcoming project activities. Emphasis was placed on introducing the "grant" scheme for the civil sector within the project area, as well as exploring potential collaborative promotional models on the project's online platforms, including Facebook and Instagram.

At the heart of these meetings, the primary objective was to highlight the European Label of Excellence in Governance (ELoGE) and the Leadership Academy Programme (LAP) as invaluable tools provided by the Council of Europe. These tools are poised to improve the relationship between local governments and the civil society organizations involved in this project. Moving forward, the next step in project implementation involved launching the ELoGE process in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Following the Council of Europe's methodology based on 12 principles of good local governance, ELoGE teams, designated within local governments that participate in LINK for Cooperation project, assumed the responsibility for implementing the self-assessment process. Throughout this process, continuous support was extended to local governments by the project consortium representatives, led by the Local Democracy Agency Mostar, the accredited platform holder for the implementation of the ELoGE process in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

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## **Launching ceremony**

The ELoGE launching was a momentous event that coincided with the first Forum for sharing best practices of CSOs (Civil Society Organizations) and LAs (Local Authorities) cooperation, held in Zavidovići in March 2022. This significant forum brought together the representatives of all 12 municipalities and CSOs from each community, fostering a collaborative environment for knowledge-sharing and partnership-building.

During the forum, the representatives of cities and municipalities demonstrated their commitment to actively engage in the ELoGE self-assessment process. This commitment was a pivotal step towards strengthening cooperation through participatory processes.

The Launching event of ELoGE in Bosnia and Herzegovina served as a powerful platform to inspire and unite the local governments and CSOs in their shared pursuit of good governance and participatory decision-making. It marked the beginning of a journey towards enhanced cooperation, transparency of local governments, and citizen engagement in local communities.

Through the active participation in the Launching ceremony of ELoGE in Bosnia and Herzegovina of the municipalities, CSOs, and esteemed speakers, the ELoGE program gained momentum and demonstrated its potential to bring positive changes to the participating communities. The commitment and enthusiasm shown during the Launching event set a strong precedent for continued efforts in improving governance practices and fostering collaborative partnerships between local governments and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **Benchmarking process**

### **Workshops for participating cities and municipalities**

Between March and June 2022, the LINK 4 Cooperation project consortium embarked on a series of workshops aimed at empowering 12 local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement the European Label of Excellence in Governance (ELoGE). These workshops served as a platform for educating and training the local governments on the 12 principles of good democratic governance, emphasizing the significance of

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benchmarking methodologies and the importance of gathering feedback through well-structured questionnaires.

To inspire and guide the participating local governments, exemplary practices from EU member states were shared with the ELoGE teams in all 12 cities and municipalities. These examples showcased the practical implementation of ELoGE and ways in which this process identifies the strengths and weaknesses within local governance structures, at the same time improving the value and importance of LINK for Cooperation project.

After the ELoGE self-assessment process, in the continuation of the "LiNK for cooperation" project, LAP training sessions were held, another tool developed by the Center for Expertise of the Council of Europe. This aspect of the project demonstrates the commitment to providing continuous support and opportunities for capacity building of local governments during the implementation of the LINK project for cooperation. By training local governments in leadership skills and offering them knowledge about process management, the project ensures a sustainable and lasting impact on their capacities, transparency and responsibility.

The financial support for the project comes from the European Union, underscoring the EU's dedication to fostering good governance practices and democratic values in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In this endeavor, the Local Democracy Agency Mostar takes the lead as the accredited platform holder for Bosnia and Herzegovina, guiding and facilitating the successful adoption of the ELoGE in cooperation with their partners.

Bosnia and Herzegovina became the first non-EU country where ELOGE process of self-assessment is implemented. This pioneering step demonstrates the country's commitment to enhancing its governance practices and aligning them with European standards of excellence.

The LINK 4 Cooperation project engages 12 local governments, each striving to bolster its capacity, transparency, and accountability. This collective effort signifies a strong commitment from these local governments to drive positive change and foster a governance culture that prioritizes the well-being and interests of its citizens.

Through the collaboration between the project consortium and the participating local governments, the ELoGE has the potential to usher in a



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new practice of effective and citizen-centric governance in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project's comprehensive approach to education, training, and support ensures a transformative journey toward improved governance practices, ultimately benefiting the communities and citizens that these local governments serve.

### **Self-assessment**

The self-assessment process for the cities and municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina commenced in April 2022, marking an essential phase in the implementation of the ELoGE. To initiate this process, the mayors of these 12 local governments made an Official Decision to appoint the City/Municipal ELoGE teams. This decision reflected their commitment and laid the groundwork for a successful self-assessment.

To guide and support the local ELoGE teams through the self-assessment process, the project consortium prepared a comprehensive documents package tailored to provide the local teams with the necessary tools and information to carry out the self-assessment effectively and efficiently. The documents package consisted of:

- Benchmark with the introduction
- Power point presentation of ELoGE Process
- Power point presentation of 12 Principles of good local governance
- Two Promo Videos of ELoGE
- Questionnaire for local administration
- Questionnaire for citizens

The Project management team played organized workshops for the local ELoGE teams conducted from March to June 2022 that served as a basic step to introduce the ELoGE process and familiarize the teams with its core principles and methodologies. The workshops provided comprehensive insights into the Benchmark, an essential tool for assessing and evaluating the governance practices in local governments.

To ensure a set time frame, a deadline of 15th March 2023 was established for the delivery of the benchmark by the City and Municipal ELoGE teams.

Despite the dedicated efforts of the local ELoGE teams and the support provided, various challenges and constraints arose that impacted the

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timeline. As a result, the initial, previously set deadline had to be extended multiple times to accommodate the specific needs and of the cities and municipalities participating in the process. The project team demonstrated flexibility and understanding during this process, recognizing that each local government had its unique context and complexities of management.

By the conclusion of year II of LINK for Cooperation project (2022), a significant milestone was achieved as six cities and municipalities successfully completed the ELoGE process. For the remaining five cities and municipalities, the majority of the ELoGE process was accomplished by the final deadline of 15th March 2023. One of the local governments did not succeed to complete the ELoGE process, and ELoGE project team undertook all the steps to include the local government in the following round of this process. The progress made by these local governments showcases their earnest efforts to embrace the principles of good governance and participate actively in the self-assessment. With the dedicated assistance of the project team and certified ELoGE experts, they successfully navigated all the challenges of this process.

### **Questionnaires for local authorities and citizens**

In parallel with the benchmarking process, another critical aspect of the ELoGE was initiated in April 2022 – the distribution of questionnaires to citizens in the 12 local communities. These questionnaires played an important role in obtaining valuable feedback from the citizens, enabling their active participation in the assessment of local governance.

The questionnaire distribution process was designed to be inclusive and comprehensive. ELoGE teams from all project cities and municipalities ensured the distribution of questionnaires to citizens through different channels.

Furthermore, to capture the perspectives of the local authorities, both the city administration and city councilors were also presented with questionnaires.

In total, 2,929 questionnaires were successfully completed by citizens, local administration members, and city councilors across the 12 cities and municipalities participating in LINK for Cooperation project and this process.

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The responses gathered from the questionnaires, in conjunction with the results of the self-assessment survey conducted by the local governments, were combined to form a robust dataset. This dataset was then forwarded to an independent committee of local government experts.

The role of the independent evaluating committee was crucial, as it brought an objective and impartial perspective to the evaluation process.

The collaborative effort of the citizens, local authorities, and the independent evaluating committee underscored the participative and transparent nature of the ELoGE process.

## **Evaluation and Results**

Throughout the evaluation process, the committee closely monitored the cities and municipalities' efforts and progress, taking note of their strengths as well as areas for improvement. The committee provided detailed overviews and recommendations for each city and municipality based on their findings. These recommendations were valuable in guiding cities and municipalities on specific actions they could take to enhance their performance and adherence to the ELoGE principles.

Once the entire process was completed, the Evaluation committee compiled a final overview, consolidating their findings and recommendations for each city and municipality. This comprehensive assessment served as a basis for the ELoGE platform's final decision, representing the recognition of municipalities that demonstrated adherence to the ELoGE principles and a commitment to good governance practices.

Overall, the collaborative approach involving the ELoGE platform, the evaluation committee, and partner organizations ensured a credible evaluation process. By incorporating expert insights and recommendations, the evaluation process empowered cities and municipalities to identify areas for improvement and adopt measures to further strengthen their governance practices. The thorough evaluation process was instrumental in recognizing and promoting good governance practices within Bosnia and Herzegovina and contributed to the advancement of local democracy and

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citizen-centric governance. After the whole process was completed the Evaluation committee gave the final overview and the recommendations for the ELoGE platform final decision. The committee received 11 full dossiers to be evaluated, from them 3 were given positive marks and founded eligible to receive the label.

## **Award ceremony**

An extremely important part of the entire ELoGE process is the awarding ceremony of the prestigious European Label of Excellence in Management (ELoGE). The event serves as a unique opportunity to recognize all local breweries that have demonstrated a high level of commitment to excellence in management. With the mediation of the accredited ELoGE entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the ELoGE platform of the Council of Europe also awards a symbolic award, a crystal dodecahedron, which signifies their dedication to adhering to the principles of good governance. The ceremony is also an opportunity for all actors of this process to contribute to the promotion of ELoGE as a practical tool, and by their example contribute to its wider application with the aim of improving the quality of work of local self-purification companies and creating prosperous local communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The entire ELoGE award ceremony promotes good governance, transparency, citizen participation and efficient service provision, and provides inspiration for continued dedication to management excellence and the importance of supporting democratic values.

## **Status overview of cities and municipalities participating in ELoGE process**

The overview of the status of good governance in cities and municipalities participating in ELoGE process Bosnia and Herzegovina takes in consideration the initial self-assessment, the final scoring, the provided evidences and comments from the evaluation committee. The analysis of all above mentioned points provides a general overview for each principle.

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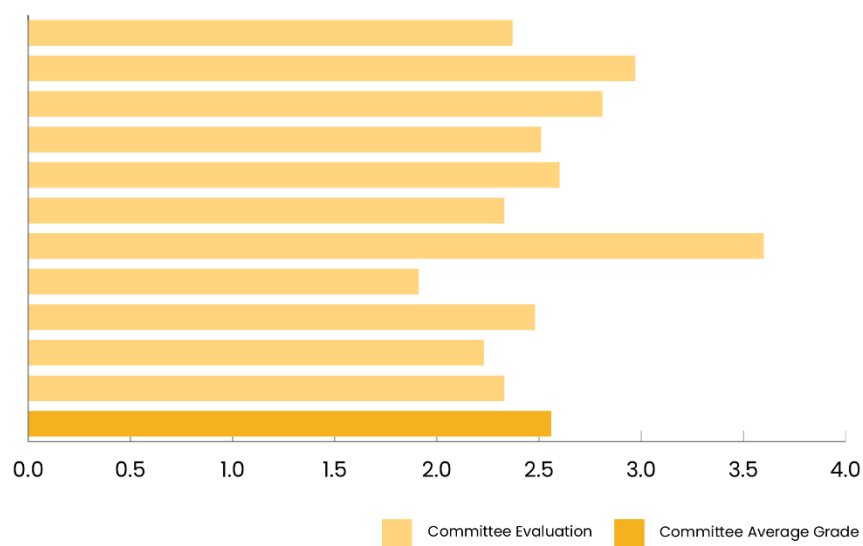
## Principle 1 – Fair conduct of elections, Representation and Participation.

The Principle of Fair Conduct of Elections, Representation, and Participation is essential for promoting democratic values and ensuring inclusive governance in cities and municipalities. The evidence provided indicates that all municipalities have made some level of effort to enhance participatory processes within their communities.

The positive aspect is that different mechanisms have been proposed and undertaken by each local community to encourage citizen participation. These mechanisms can include public forums, town hall meetings, citizen assemblies and other consultative processes.

However, there are certain areas that need improvement to strengthen participatory processes effectively. One common concern is that some of the mechanisms used may be outdated or insufficient. Visibility is another critical aspect that requires attention. The lack of sufficient visibility of participatory processes can limit citizen awareness and discourage active involvement.

Furthermore, the information provided to the public should be comprehensive and accessible. Transparently sharing relevant information about upcoming projects, policies, and decision-making processes empowers citizens to make informed contributions and be more engaged in local affairs.



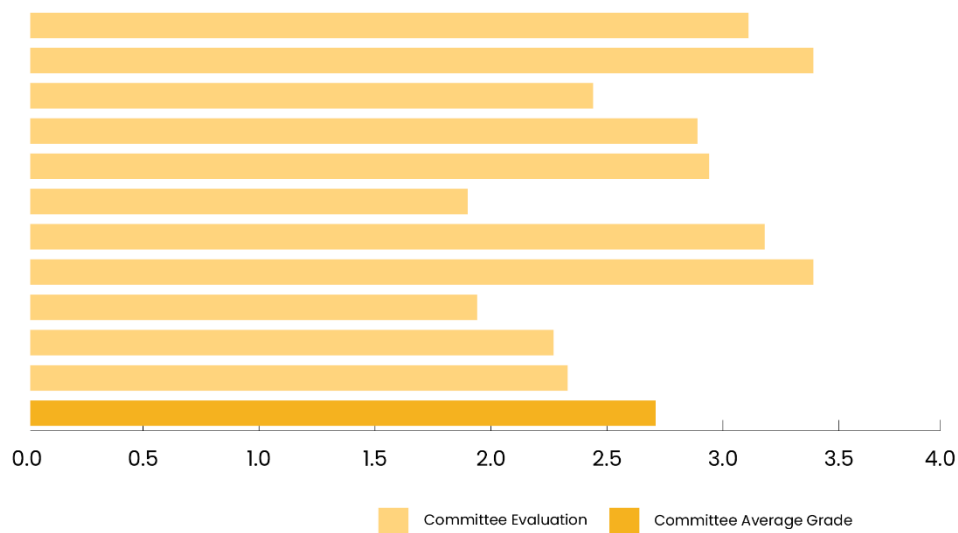
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## Principle 2 – Responsiveness.

The principle of Responsiveness reveals a variety of results across cities and municipalities, with some positive aspects above average but also areas that require attention and improvement. While the majority of cities and municipalities have mechanisms in place to handle public services, requests, and complaints promptly and efficiently, there are still certain shortcomings that need to be addressed.

One crucial area for improvement is the absence of deadlines for decisions. Without specific timeframes, there is a risk of delays and potential frustration among citizens, which can negatively impact public trust and satisfaction with local administration services. Moreover, decisions made by cities and municipalities should be made publicly available. Transparency in decision-making allows citizens to understand the basis for the municipality's actions and fosters accountability. Another concern is the outdated procedures in some municipalities.

On a positive note, some of the evaluated local governments have made progress in establishing ethics codes and implementing digital tools to enhance responsiveness.



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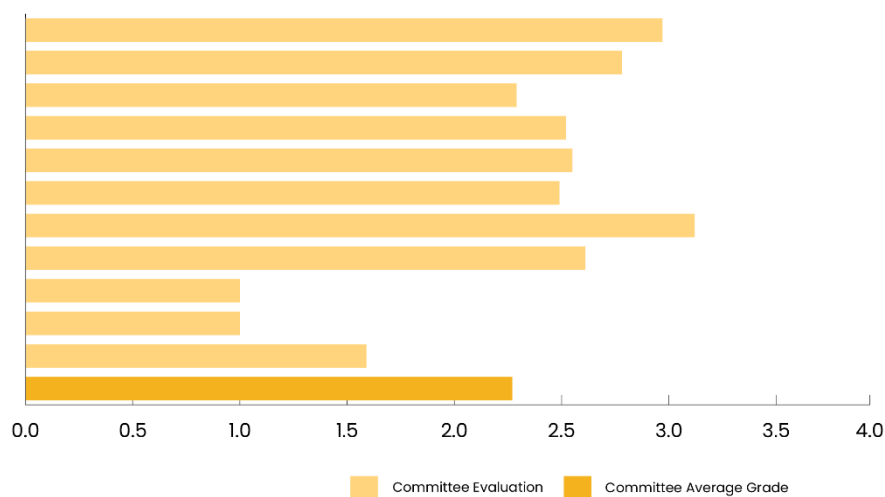
### Principle 3 – Efficiency and effectiveness.

The principle of Efficiency and Effectiveness in public services is noticeably low scored in municipalities. While some of them have made commendable efforts to develop strategic plans for improving public services, conducting public opinion surveys, and conducting regular audits, there are still many areas that need attention to ensure comprehensive improvement.

The positive aspect is that half of the cities and municipalities have taken proactive steps in developing strategic plans to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of public services. Strategic planning allows for a systematic approach to improving public services and ensures that resources are allocated efficiently to achieve desired outcomes.

On the other hand, the remaining half of cities and municipalities face significant challenges in this principle. The lack of key development strategies indicates a need for a more systematic approach to improving public services.

Moreover, the absence of internal audits suggests a lack of internal scrutiny and evaluation of practices. Internal audits are instrumental in identifying operational inefficiencies and potential areas for improvement within the cities and municipalities.



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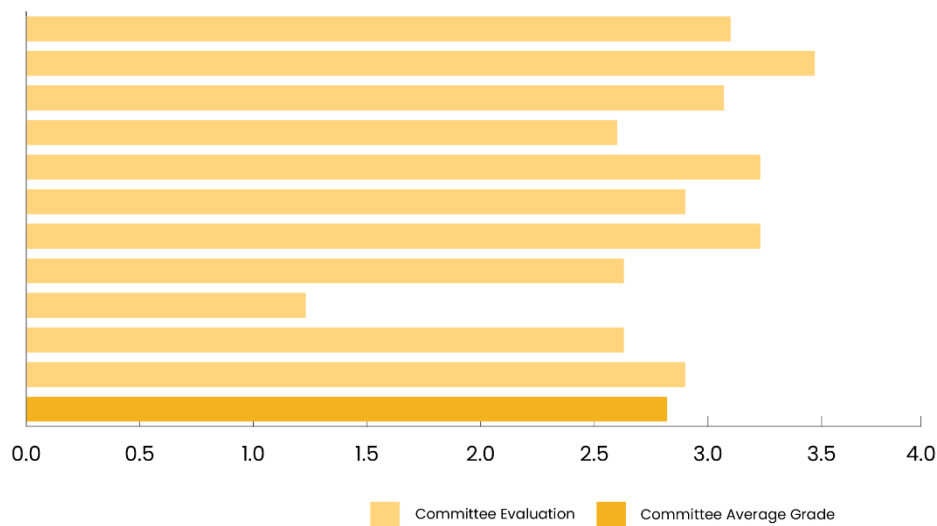
## Principle 4 – Openness and Transparency.

The principle of Openness and transparency is largely evident in all local governments. All cities and municipalities show a high level of effort by embracing modern mechanisms and programs for information exchange.

However, there are still some administrations that have room for improvement when it comes to transparency efforts. While they do demonstrate a medium level of openness, they may not fully embrace modern tools and platforms to share information comprehensively. This could result in limited access to certain information, hindering citizens' ability to fully participate in local affairs.

Significant progress could be achieved by creating an annual program. This program, when properly developed and maintained, serves as a valuable resource for citizens, providing insight into the municipality's planned initiatives, projects and activities for the entire year.

However, this principle was rated with the highest average score, taking into account all cities and municipalities that participated in the self-assessment.





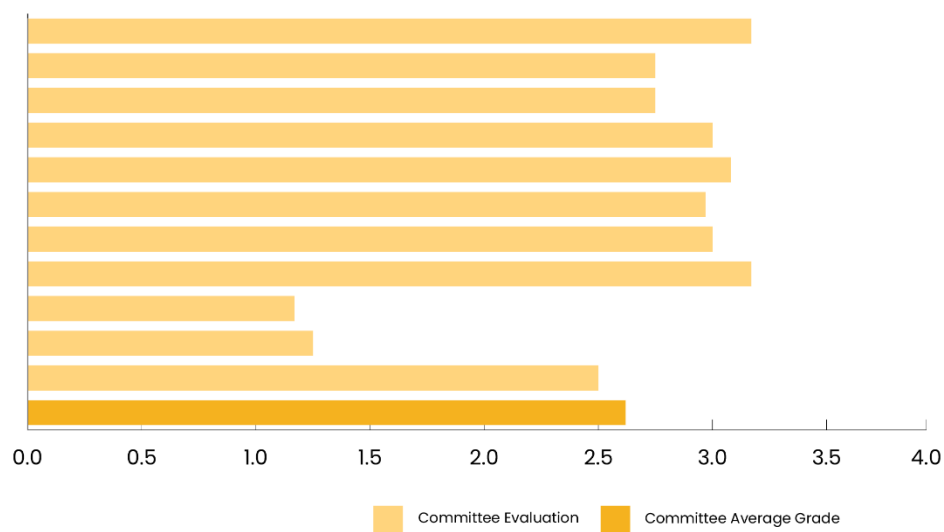
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## Principle 5 – Rule of Law.

The principle of the Rule of Law holds significant importance for all cities and municipalities, and the evidence indicates an average commitment to adhering to the laws and ensuring transparency in their actions. A better commitment to the Rule of Law is fundamental for maintaining a just and accountable governance system.

One of the strengths observed is the effort made by all cities and municipalities to comply with the laws governing their operations. By abiding by legal requirements, they demonstrate their respect for the principles of legality, fairness, and equality before the law.

Transparency is another key aspect in the application of the Rule of Law. It is encouraging to see that many local governments are open and transparent about their compliance with laws and regulations. However, there are instances where some local governments lack transparency regarding proceedings against them.

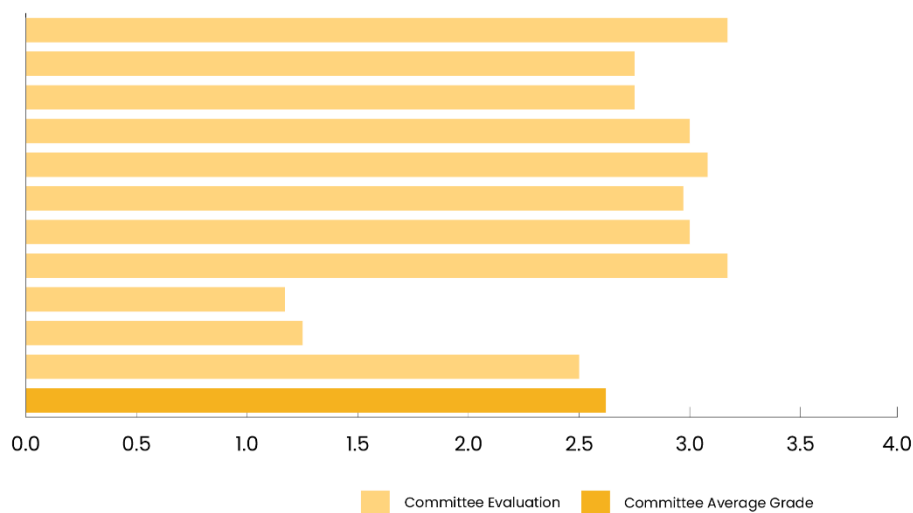


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## Principle 6 – Ethical Conduct.

Although there is a high disparity between local governments, the evidence provided for the Principle of Ethical Conduct indicates that the local administrations mainly rely on existing laws and national procedures to uphold ethical standards and prevent corruption. It is encouraging to see that these cities and municipalities have implemented ethics codes and various mechanisms to ensure compliance with these codes.

Another critical consideration is transparency. Making ethics codes readily available on local governments' websites and providing information about the mechanisms used to enforce ethical behavior fosters an environment of openness and accountability.



## Principle 7 – Competence and Capacity.

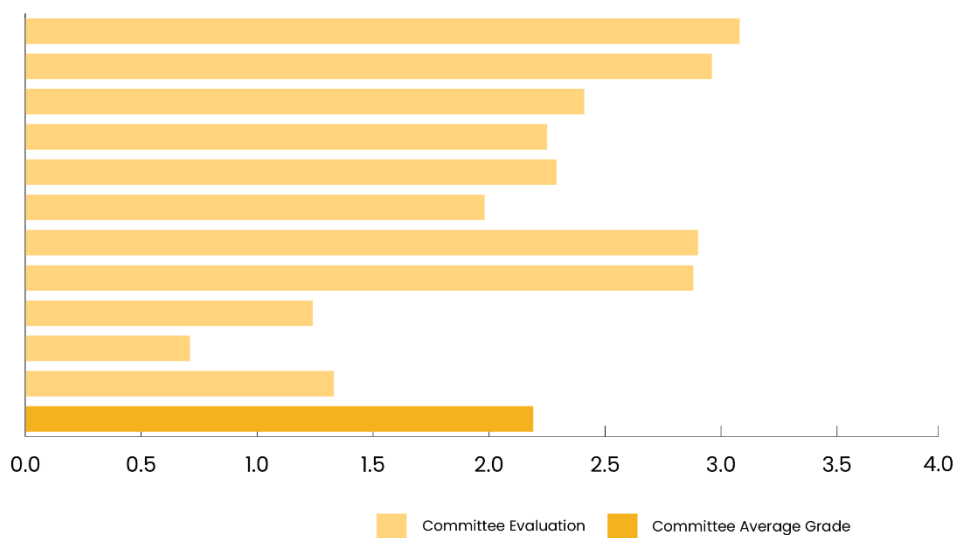
The principle of Competence and Capacity reveals a concerning trend in most evaluated cities and municipalities, as they appear to be relatively passive in terms of actively demonstrating their competence and building capacity. While there may be mentions of different mechanisms and initiatives at municipal as well as at higher levels of government, the lack of concrete evidence to substantiate their utilization raises questions about their effectiveness.

One of the essential aspects of this principle is the training and capacity building of municipal employees. Well-trained and skilled staff are crucial

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for efficient and effective governance and service delivery. However, the evidence provided indicates that training plans for employees are either rarely presented or, if they exist, lack the necessary evidence to support their implementation.

This principle was evaluated with the lowest average score, taking into account all cities and municipalities that participated in the self-assessment.



### **Principle 8 - Innovation and Openness to Change.**

The principle of innovation and openness is average in the analysis given by cities and municipalities. It is evident that these local governments are to some extent open to innovation and that they should be increasingly involved in various projects aimed at progress and improvement.

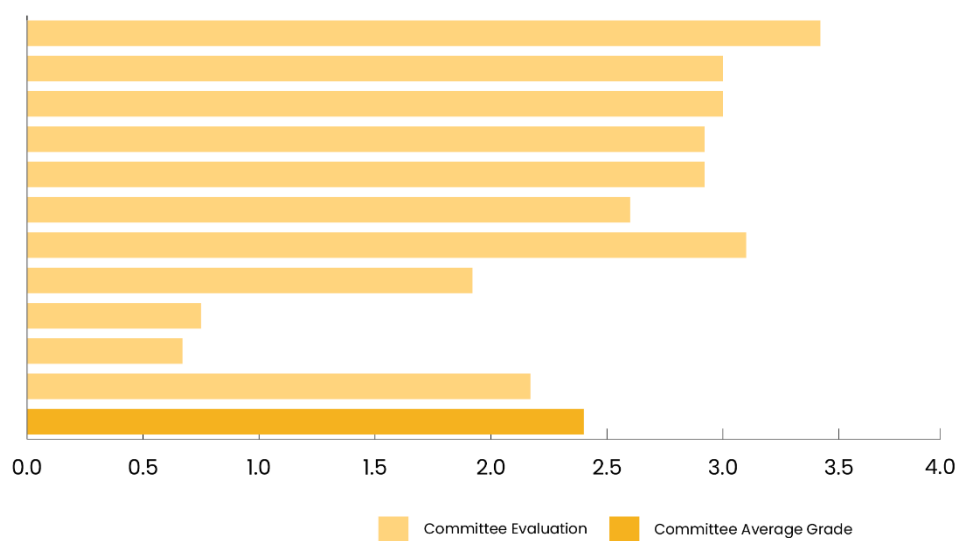
By embracing new ideas, technologies and approaches, an environment would be created that fosters creativity and fosters a culture of continuous improvement. By collaborating with other stakeholders, such as government agencies, non-governmental organizations, or private enterprises, they can leverage collective knowledge and resources to effectively address complex challenges.

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Moreover, the efforts that all local administrations in this process should step up to need to move in the direction of good practices that would be proof of their commitment to knowledge sharing and capacity building.

The analysis also reveals an area that requires attention – the lack of structure and a strategic approach to innovation efforts. Although these cities and municipalities show a degree of openness to change, some may lack a formalized process for managing and evaluating innovative projects.

With this principle, the highest disparity is also evident among the local governments that completed the self-assessment.



### **Principle 9 – Sustainability and Long-term orientation.**

The principle of sustainability and long-term orientation is evident in the strong scores achieved by most local governments. They demonstrate a concern for the well-being of their communities and the environment, as reflected in their actions and evidence.

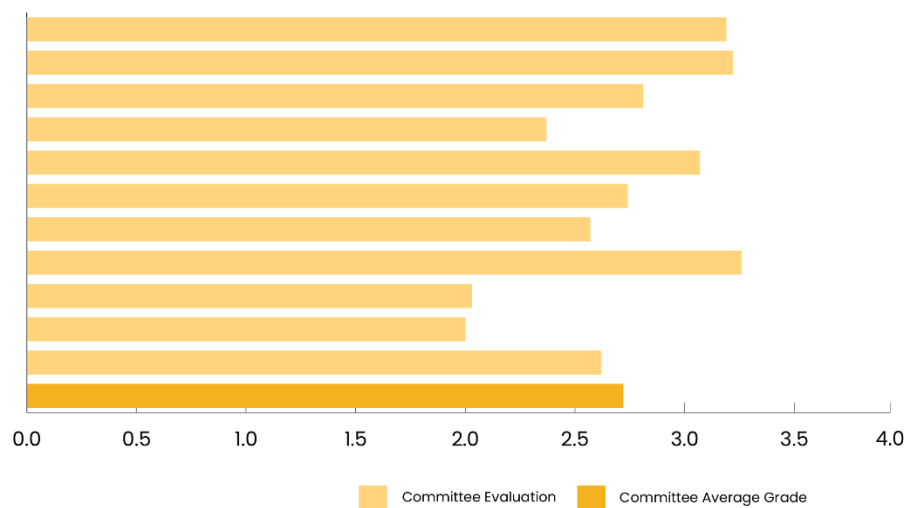
One of the most positive aspects is their commitment to developing strategic plans for sustainable development. These plans take into

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consideration not only economic factors but also cultural, historical, and other relevant aspects.

However, one critical critique that can be levied against these long-term strategic plans is their potential overemphasis on extended time. While long-term planning is vital for sustainable development, it is equally important to complement it with structured and short-term plans. These short-term plans are essential to ensure the accomplishment of the long-term goals and to maintain a proactive approach in addressing immediate challenges and opportunities.

This principle also shows the least disparity between evaluated local governments.



### **Principle 10 – Sound Financial Management.**

The principle of sound financial management presents a challenging aspect for most cities and municipalities, encompassing multiple dimensions that need to be addressed. While some progress has been made, there are still significant gaps in achieving transparency in all aspects of budget management.

Most local governments have taken commendable steps towards transparency by being open about their budget processes. These processes involve citizens in public debates on the drafted budget, but not in the planning process. Public input through consultative processes would enrich

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the citizen’s participation when formulating the budget and make the whole process more transparent.

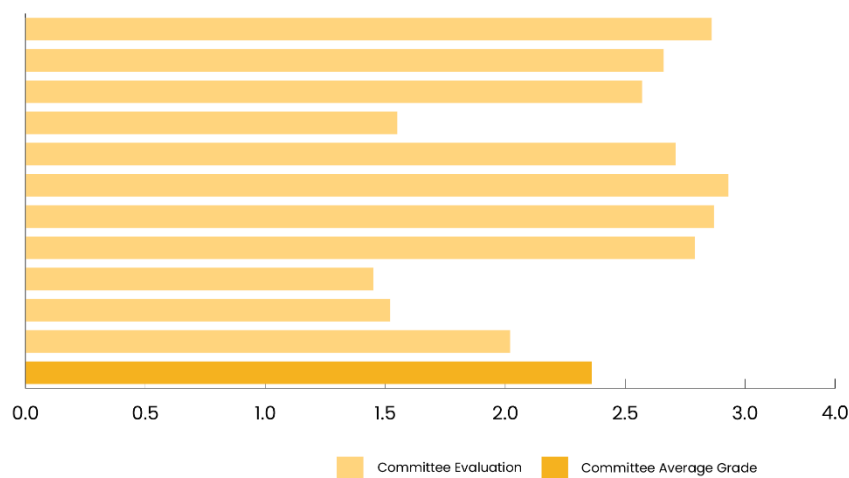
Furthermore, these cities and municipalities publish their budgets on their websites, making financial information accessible to the public. These efforts are crucial in promoting accountability and building trust between the local government and its constituents.

However, many of them fall short in certain areas of budget transparency. One critical aspect that remains lacking is the auditing of their financial work. Conducting regular financial audits is essential to ensure that public funds are managed efficiently and in accordance with established standards.

Additionally, a significant concern is the limited sharing of audit findings with the public. It is crucial for municipalities to make audit results readily available to citizens, as this fosters transparency and allows the public to understand how their tax money is being utilized.

Another important aspect of budget transparency is the publication of yearly reports. Unfortunately, many municipalities do not publish comprehensive reports detailing their financial activities, outcomes, and progress.

Moreover, the lack of citizens-friendly budgets is a widespread issue. Cities and municipalities often fail to present budget information in a clear and accessible manner for the general public.



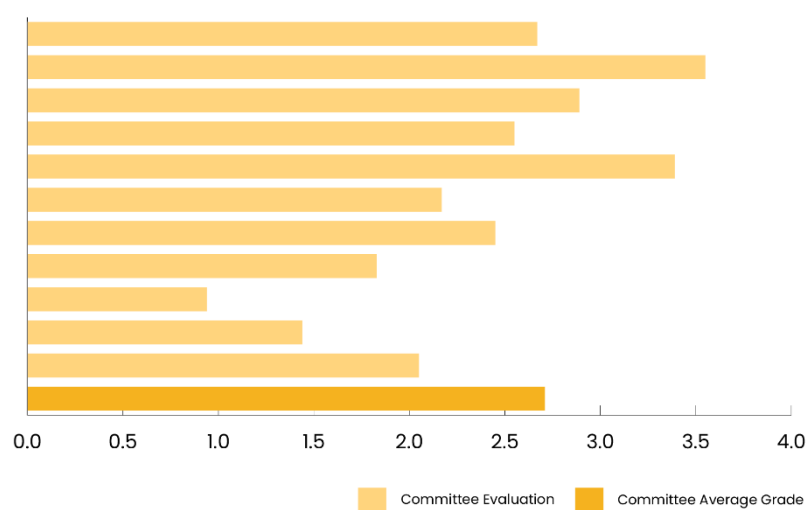
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## Principle 11 – Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion.

The principle of respecting human rights is one of the lowest rated and also unveils a stark contrast among cities and municipalities, with some demonstrating a high level of commitment while others show a complete lack of effort. It is evident that this principle is either embraced passionately or neglected entirely, leaving a significant divide in the approaches taken by different local governments.

On one hand, the multi-ethnic communities mostly are showing a strong dedication to upholding human rights cultural diversity and social cohesion. These proactive municipalities actively engage in numerous projects and initiatives aimed at improving the lives of all citizens, regardless of their background or circumstances. By prioritizing human rights, they create inclusive environments that promote equality, social justice, and dignity for everyone within their jurisdiction. These local governments understand the transformative power of human rights in fostering a thriving and harmonious community.

On the other hand, the monoethnic communities are cause for concern, as they display a major lack of strategies and plans to uphold human rights cultural diversity and social cohesion. This results in minimal effort being put forth to address issues related to human rights violations and social inequality. The absence of a well-defined approach to human rights can lead to systemic problems, discrimination, and the marginalization of vulnerable groups within these communities.



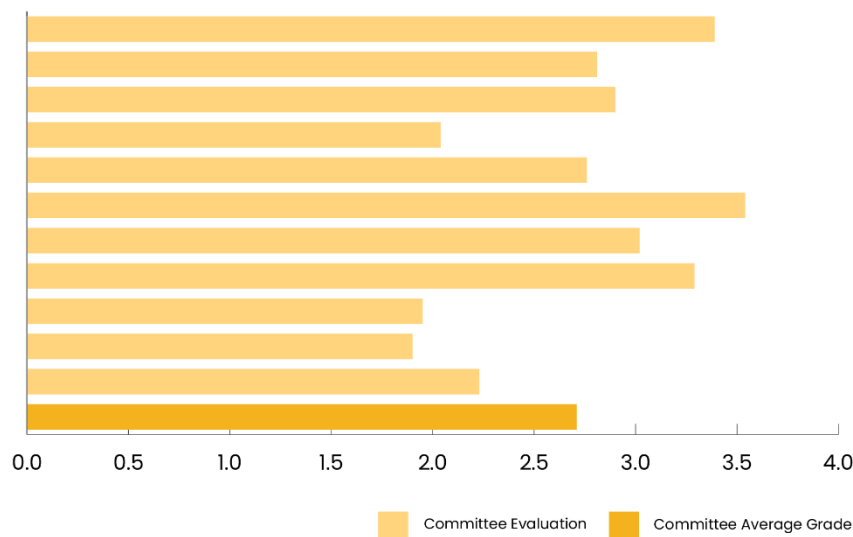
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## Principle 12 – Accountability.

Regarding accountability, it is encouraging to observe that cities and municipalities demonstrate awareness of the significance of this principle. Many of them put forth commendable efforts to ensure they remain accountable to their citizens. They achieve this by providing regular reports, conducting thorough analyses, and offering updates on their activities. This level of transparency fosters trust between the governing bodies and the public, promoting a healthy democratic environment.

However, one key area where some municipalities fall short is the timeliness of their reporting and documentation. To address this issue, local governments can take several proactive steps. They should implement streamlined reporting processes that allow for more efficient data collection and analysis.

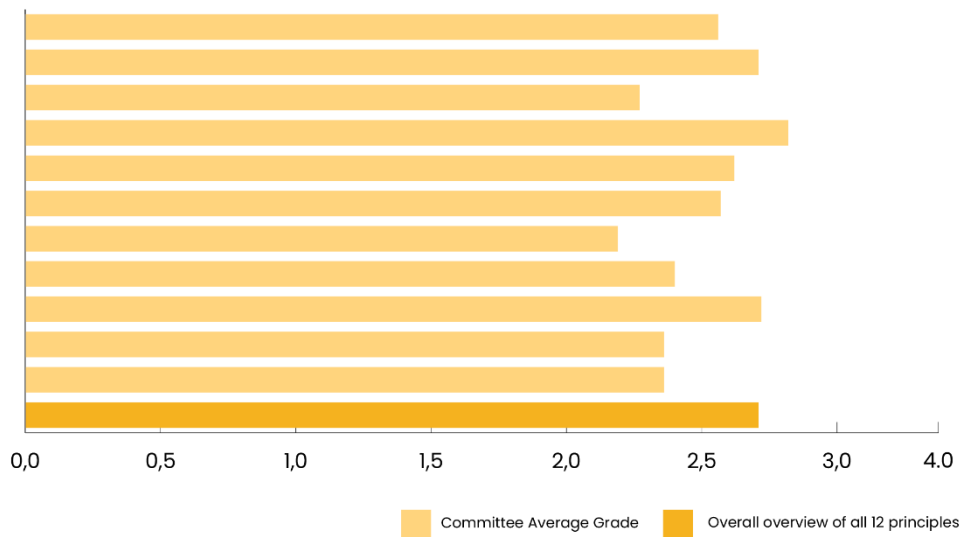
Additionally, regular audits of their reporting practices can be conducted to identify potential bottlenecks and areas for improvement. These audits can highlight the specific challenges these local governments are faced with in meeting reporting deadlines and offer valuable insights into enhancing the overall accountability process.





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## Global overview of self-assessment results



Observing the average scores for all principles of self-assessment of all cities and municipalities,

the highest rated principle is Openness and transparency. The principles of Sustainability and long-term orientation, Responsiveness - timely and adequate reaction as well as Responsibility are also highly rated.

The lowest rated were the Competence and capacities of the civil servants, which showed a high level of awareness, self-criticism, but also readiness to learn and adopt new knowledge and competencies. Efficiency and effectiveness, Human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion, as well as Good financial management, were also not rated highly.

The self-assessment showed that all cities and municipalities paid almost equal attention to sustainability and were equally committed to a long-term orientation. This is clearly the most similar rate given for the principle Sustainability and long-term orientation. On the other hand, the highest disparity is also evident when it comes to Innovation and Openness to Change.

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Another significant observation of this self-assessment refers to the great commitment to Human Rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion, mostly in multi-ethnic municipalities. This gives a lot of space for reflection, perhaps breaking prejudices or sharing experiences with other municipalities where this commitment was evidently absent.

One of the most significant indicators, although not surprising, are the very low ratings by citizens. The cities and municipalities' self-assessment, as well as the assessment of independent experts, shows that such assessments of citizens are not realistic. All this clearly indicates lack of information among citizens about the local government functions, lack of knowledge about the basic tools of communication and participation in decision and policy-making.

## **General observations**

The self-assessment process provides valuable insights into the efforts made by cities and municipalities and their overall performance. The clear disparity in scores between certain municipalities, highlights the varying levels of commitment and dedication put forth in their tasks.

Also, this process showed the need for a clearer presentation and clarification of concrete evidence that local governments should provide in the self-assessment process. Another important segment is the importance of dedication in emphasizing the importance of ELoGE self-assessment as a tool that serves local governments to improve the quality of their work, which would achieve greater dedication of local ELoGE teams.

To address these challenges and improve the effectiveness of future self-assessment process, several steps can be taken. First and foremost, providing comprehensive guidelines to all cities and municipalities and their ELoGE teams on the evidences they need to present would be beneficial. This could be accompanied by workshops or training sessions to ensure that the teams understand the requirements and can gather the necessary information efficiently.

Additionally, it is crucial to foster better communication and coordination among the ELoGE teams and all levels of local administration. Regular

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meetings and updates between these stakeholders can help align efforts and ensure that the assessment process is carried out smoothly and accurately. This collaboration can also lead to a more profound understanding of the local governments' work and create a stronger partnership between the teams and the assessed entities.

Overall, the self-assessment process offers valuable feedback that can be utilized to enhance the performance of local administrations and the efficiency of the ELoGE teams. By recognizing the areas where efforts need to be improved and addressing the challenges faced, the process can contribute to the betterment of public services and governance on all levels of government in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## **Recommendations**

Drawing from the information provided and the observations on the local administrations, here are some suggestions to enhance the execution of each Principle and establish a more organized and purposeful approach to them:

### **Principle 1 – Fair conduct of elections, Representation and Participation.**

1. **Update Mechanisms:** All cities and municipalities should review and update their participatory mechanisms to ensure they are relevant and effective in engaging citizens. This may involve utilizing modern technologies, such as online platforms, mobile apps, or social media, to reach a broader and more diverse audience.
2. **Collaboration with Civil Society Organizations:** Collaborate with local civil society organizations and community groups to strengthen participatory processes and ensure a wider range of population are considered.
3. **Inclusive Decision-Making:** Ensure that the opinions and ideas collected through participatory mechanisms are integrated into the decision-making process. Demonstrate how citizen input influences local policies and projects.

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## **Principle 2 – Responsiveness.**

1. **Establish Clear Deadlines:** Each city and municipality should set clear and reasonable deadlines for handling public service requests and complaints. This ensures that citizens know when to expect a response and helps to expedite the resolution of issues.
2. **Publicly Available Decisions:** Make sure that all decisions related to public service requests and complaints are made publicly available. Transparency in decision-making builds trust among citizens and allows them to understand the outcomes of their requests, letters and similar documents.
3. **Regular Evaluation and Improvement:** Implement a systematic and periodic evaluation of the responsiveness mechanisms in place. Identify areas of improvement based on the feedback received from citizens and take necessary actions to address the identified shortcomings.

## **Principle 3 – Efficiency and effectiveness.**

1. **Develop Strategic Plans:** Prioritize the development of strategic plans that outline the local objectives, goals, and action plans for improving public service effectiveness. Involve key stakeholders and seek public input during the planning process.
2. **Seek External Assistance:** If the city or municipality lacks internal resources for conducting audits or developing strategies, consider seeking assistance from higher-level authorities or intergovernmental organizations.

## **Principle 4 – Openness and Transparency.**

1. **Publish Yearly Programs:** Each municipality should develop a comprehensive 12-month program that outlines the key activities, projects, and initiatives planned for the upcoming year. This program should be made publicly available on the city's or municipality's website and be regularly updated to reflect any changes or progress.
2. **Digital Platforms and Online Portals:** Embrace modern mechanisms and digital platforms to share information with the public. Develop

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user-friendly online portals that provide easy access to important documents, announcements, and updates about activities.

3. **Transparency in Decision-Making:** Ensure that decision-making processes are transparent and accessible to the public. Publish agendas, minutes, and outcomes of important meetings to keep citizens informed about how decisions are reached.

### **Principle 5 – Rule of Law.**

1. **Promote Legal Awareness:** Conduct awareness campaigns to educate citizens and municipal staff about the importance of the rule of law and the rights and responsibilities it entails. This can foster a culture of legal compliance and accountability.
2. **Transparency in Legal Proceedings:** Ensure that all legal proceedings involving the municipality are conducted with transparency. Make information about ongoing legal cases and their outcomes available to the public on the official website.

### **Principle 6 – Ethical Conduct.**

1. **Update Ethics Codes:** Review and update the ethics codes to ensure they are comprehensive, relevant, and up-to-date with the changing landscape of governance and public service. Involve key stakeholders, including citizens, in the process to increase ownership and effectiveness.
2. **Transparency in Ethics Codes:** Make the ethics codes easily accessible and transparently available to the public. Publish the codes on the city's or municipality's website and distribute physical copies at public offices and community centers.

### **Principle 7 – Competence and Capacity.**

1. **Develop Comprehensive Training Plans:** Create comprehensive training plans that outline the specific training programs, workshops, and courses needed for different departments and job roles. Ensure

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these plans are aligned with the strategic goals of the city or municipality.

2. **Implement Regular Training Sessions:** Actively organize regular training sessions for employees in local administration. These sessions should cover a range of topics, including technical skills, soft skills (analytical thinking, verbal and written communication, ability to motivate, negotiate, lead...), ethics, governance, and customer service.
3. **Utilize National Mechanisms:** Leverage national mechanisms for capacity-building and training programs. Collaborate with relevant national agencies or institutions to access training resources and expertise.

### **Principle 8 - Innovation and Openness to Change.**

1. **Innovation Strategy:** Develop a formal innovation strategy that outlines the city's or municipality's vision, goals, and approach to fostering innovation. This strategy should align with the overall development plans and be integrated into the city's or municipality's strategic planning process.
2. **Regular Innovation Reviews:** Conduct periodic reviews of innovation projects to assess their impact and progress. Identify successful initiatives that can be scaled up and learn from any challenges or failures.

### **Principle 9 - Sustainability and Long-term orientation.**

1. **Integrated Short-term Plans:** Develop short-term action plans that align with the long-term sustainability goals. These short-term plans should outline specific steps, projects, and initiatives that contribute to the larger vision.
2. **Stakeholder Engagement:** Engage all stakeholders, including citizens, community groups, businesses, and NGOs, in the sustainability planning process. Collaborate with them to identify short-term actions that address pressing sustainability challenges.
3. **Public-Private Partnerships:** Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships to implement short-term projects that contribute to sustainability. Private sector expertise and resources can be valuable in achieving goals efficiently.

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4. **Flexibility in Long-term Plans:** Ensure that long-term plans are adaptable and can accommodate changes based on evolving circumstances, feedback, and insights from short-term actions.

### **Principle 10 – Sound Financial Management.**

1. **Citizen-Friendly Budgets:** Create citizen-friendly budgets that are easy to understand and accessible to the general public. Use plain language, infographics, and other visual aids to communicate financial information effectively.
2. **Consultative Budgeting Process:** Involve citizens in the budgeting process through consultations, public hearings, or surveys. Seek feedback and input from the community to ensure that the budget reflects their needs and priorities.

### **Principle 11 – Human Rights, Cultural Diversity and Social Cohesion.**

1. **Human Rights Framework:** Develop a human rights framework that serves as a guiding document for the city or municipality. This framework should outline the city's and municipality's commitment to upholding human rights and promoting inclusivity.
2. **Social Cohesion Initiatives:** Implement social cohesion initiatives that bring diverse communities together and foster a sense of belonging and unity. These initiatives could include community dialogues, intercultural exchanges, and collaborative projects.
3. **Access to Services:** Ensure equal access to public services and amenities for all citizens, regardless of their socio-economic status or background. Identify and address any barriers that may prevent marginalized groups from accessing essential services.
4. **Partnerships with NGOs:** Collaborate with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based organizations that focus on human rights and social cohesion. These partnerships can leverage resources and expertise for more effective initiatives.

### **Principle 12 – Accountability.**

1. **Regular Reporting Schedule:** Establish a clear and regular schedule for reporting and documentation. Commit to providing updates, reports, and analysis at specified intervals to ensure consistency and avoid delays.

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2. **Publicly Available Reports:** Make all reports and documentation publicly available on the city's or municipality's website or other accessible platforms. This includes financial reports, performance assessments, and updates on projects and initiatives.

By implementing the recommendations derived from the 12 principles of Good Governance, cities and municipalities can fortify their dedication to promoting effective, transparent, and inclusive governance. These actions will help create a more accountable, efficient, and responsive local government, fostering a stronger connection with citizens and fostering sustainable development within the community.





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