

The Assessment of the Institutional Capacities of Gender Equality Mechanisms in 34 Municipalities

included in the European PROGRES programme

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Abbreviations

CLED	Commission for Local Economic Development
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
GE	Gender Equality
GEM	Gender Equality Mechanism(s)
GM	Gender Mainstreaming
LAP	Local Action Plan
NAP	National Action Plan for Gender Equality
STCM	Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities

SUMMARY

All 34 municipalities have some type of gender equality mechanism (GEM). Institutional framework and position of GEM could be improved in part by participation in decision making process at the local level, and by providing required comments/opinion, based on gender segregated data and consultations with women.

Even those municipalities that have adopted the EU Charter on Gender Equality at the Local Level did not develop local institutional instrument for its implementations. Local action plans are rarely developed in accordance with the Charter.

Support for the development of Local Action Plans has been recommended for 13 municipalities, and some of the priorities for the local self-government have already been identified during the evaluation process.

It turned out that the main drawback for sustainable gender mainstreaming continues to be the lack of political will – decision-makers giving the green light for interventions aimed at increase of gender equality. Only a few municipalities in Serbia (out of which 2 are included in the EU Progres Project) have conducted a gender analysis of policies or developed a gender-sensitive policy. These results and support for the process will be a new direction in the promotion of gender equality at the local level.

Local GEMs staff are rarely employees of LSG, who have important practical knowledge of procedures and formal and informal rules of local policy development.

Further support to GEMs/LSGs could be provided at two main levels:

- Changes of local procedures and regulations in order to implement the EU Charter;
- Conducting gender analysis/assessment and consultations with women and development of at least one gender sensitive local policy (sports, youth, and agriculture).

I. INTRODUCTION

The assessment of capacities, results, and needs of local gender equality mechanisms was conducted from March to June 2015 in the South and South West of Serbia, in 34 municipalities that are part of the European Partnership with Municipalities Programme – European PROGRES. The objective of the assessment was to map the current status and capacities of municipalities, specifically local gender equality mechanism and to determine the most effective forms of support to improve the capacity of municipalities to introduce a gender perspective in local policies and achieve results in the field of gender equality. The instrument used for the evaluation is the Benchmarking tool for comparative evaluation of the capacities of local mechanisms, developed in 2013 with the support of the OSCE Mission to Serbia and in cooperation with Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (STCM).

This report contains a general capacity assessment of 34 municipalities and includes the following: key obstacles, key achievements and examples of good practice (success factors), a description of the context and the current situation, and also a short outline for each municipality with specific recommendations for improving their capacities. Beside a general overview, the report provides scores for municipalities in each area. In this way, main challenges in GEMs practises are identified. Although the assessment focuses on local mechanisms for gender equality (on institutional arrangements for gender equality at the local level), in fact capacities of local governments as a whole have been analysed.

II. THE ASSESSMENT'S OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

The assessment has been conducted by using the Benchmarking tool for comparative assessment of local gender equality mechanisms (BM tool)¹ during the field visits to municipalities. Meetings were held with the representatives of GEMs, municipal executive bodies (Municipal Council, Deputy Mayors) and on some occasions with representatives of other institutions, women's organizations, associations of citizens, etc. Since tool is hosted online at the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities website, some municipalities have completed the Benchmarking Tool online by themselves and consultative meetings were held with these municipalities in order to provide update of the responses and to identify their priorities and needs.

BM tool was developed in 2013 in a consultative process with local mechanisms, international organizations, citizens' associations and women's groups and experts on gender equality, in order

¹ <http://www.soinfo.org/attachment/download/1139/Alat+za+samoprocenu.pdf>

to make possible comparative and continual assessment of local mechanisms', i.e. entire local self-governments' capacities and practices for the introduction gender mainstreaming into local policies.

This is a multi-purpose tool which is intended to enable following:

- Assessment of current capacities and practices from the point of view of sustainable introduction of gender mainstreaming
- Progress evaluation – comparison of results achieved by the local mechanism year after year
- Comparison of local mechanism's capacities and practices to those of other local mechanisms
- Guidelines/recommendations how to enhance capacities, performance, results and activity effects, that is, what steps need to be taken in order to advance capacities and activities
- Starting point for strategic planning through pinpointing of current weaknesses and strengths in relation to best practices

In general, this toolkit enables long-term and sustainable evaluation of process of gender mainstreaming in local policies. It can also assist in identification and definition of best practices in this field.

This instrument for comparative assessment of local self-governments in the process of gender mainstreaming (results and capacities) is intended for gender equality mechanisms (councils, committees, offices, individuals in charge of gender equality matters) in municipalities, cities and city municipalities² as local self-government agencies. It can also be used by the creators of various support programmes for local self-governments in the area of comparative external assessment of local mechanisms and identification of possible forms of cooperation and support. Organizations can use the tool to consider the initial state, and later on the results of their interventions³. It can also be utilized to measure the activity results in order to enhance the performance of local mechanisms, at the beginning and the end of the process.

Bearing in mind the context in Serbia, the tool has been designed to assess institutional preconditions, the capacities for gender analysis and efforts in the field of gender sensitive

²The acronym LSU is used in the instrument, but it also refers to city municipalities, which do not have the local self-government unit status.

³Until now the Tool has been used in this way by SCTM and NDI Program in Serbia.

budgeting⁴. Also, starting point is vision of sustainable gender mainstreaming which includes not only GEMs but all units, bodies and parts of local self-government (decision making bodies and administration). Therefore this assessment represent an assessment of the LSG as a whole, not only GEMs. During the tool development phase, actual achievements and realistic possibilities at the local level were considered. The context also shaped limited opportunities for policy impact assessment or effect of a few gender interventions or gender sensitive programs adopted at the local level⁵. Therefore the tool is focused on institutional preconditions for creation of such policies and interventions and systematic solutions adopted for gender equality at the local level.

Assessment methodology, as defined in the tool, contains three parts: the institutional framework, gender analysis and gender budgeting, as the three pillars of sustainable gender-mainstreaming. The institutional framework of local GEMs analysed the status and the position of local mechanisms in LSG system, implementation of national and international documents, capacities of GEM and its member. Also, as the signing of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life is extremely important for local self-governments, "commitments" of municipalities and cities as stipulated in the Charter have also been included in this chapter as important institutional instrument.

In the section related to gender assessment/analysis, the tool evaluates procedures, methodology, instruments and capacities for gender assessment of policies, gender sensitive needs assessment etc. This chapter includes questions about GEMs participation in decision making, procedures to ensure gender mainstreaming in local strategic documents or regulations, gender sensitive statistics and methodology of consultations with men and women in community in order to identify priorities etc.

Last section is related to gender sensitive budgeting and activities on gender analysis of budget allocations and which instruments and tools are put in place with this purpose; activities contributing to gender equality and measures related to empowerment of women funded from the budget. Gender analysis is defined as the precondition for gender sensitive budgeting.

Thus, the assessment includes total score for the municipality, which can be in one of five categories, as well as individual assessment for each chapter of legislative and institutional

⁴The tool was created in the period 2013 – 2014, when the development or activities on the introduction of the programme budget have not yet been initiated. In the coming period this section in the Tool will be adapted to this change and to the development of gender- sensitive indicators, particularly to the announced requirements that the budget should contain a gender-sensitive goal in a budget programme.

⁵ Affirmative measures for women in subsidiaries for agricultural production in Uzice or activities and solutions in the field of combating violence against women.

arrangements, tools, procedures, capacities of local self-governments, in order to see what are the greatest achievements and what is the biggest challenge, and why.

The classification of municipalities based on the number of points includes:

1. Under 30% - very low capacity indicating that the local mechanism, although established, is not active, nor is it visible within the local self-government system.
2. Between 30% and 49% BEGINNING – low capacity, which means that laws and regulations are being implemented only partially, i.e. that the local mechanism fulfils the minimum standards – the local mechanism has been established, holds regular meetings, keeps minutes of the meetings, develops annual activity plan, conducts individual and ceremonial activities, cooperation and communication with national institutions and organizations is established.
3. Between 50% and 69% PILOTING – mid-level capacity indicating that the local mechanism is active and that certain processes have been initiated which aim to introduce gender mainstreaming like gender sensitive data collection, organization of short term actions and programs for improvement position of women etc. The local mechanism functions within the local self-government system and conducts activities in a continual manner – participate in decision making process, prepare reports, have the budget for own activities etc.; local mechanism has completed training on the introduction of gender perspective and has initiated advancement of local gender equality policy (decisions, LAP, etc.)
4. Between 70% and 89 % VISIBLE GENDER MAINSTREAMING – high capacity, which means full implementation of laws and regulations as well as implementation of some of the more advanced mechanisms and tools which at the moment are not required by law, but only on the part of the local mechanism, without its working towards introducing of gender mainstreaming into all segments of local self-government and with no visible results or changes in practice. At least one gender assessment has been conducted; the local mechanism deliberates decisions of the local assembly and takes part in defining strategic objectives, but there is no stepping forward when it comes to introduction of additional mechanisms and tools.
5. 90% and more SUSTAINABLE GENDER MAINSTREAMING – fully developed capacity that in addition to full implementation of laws and regulations, also means implementation of a range of advanced, innovative mechanisms and tools; gender assessment of policies is an integral part of the local self-government functioning in all its segments and activities. Innovative practices are applied resulting in the promotion of gender equality and improvement of the status of women, for which there is readily available data.

It is also important to bear in mind that some obstacles are related to policy making ‘methodology’ as such or lack of good governance principles in LSGs and not exclusively to gender equality as a topic.

III. RESULTS OF THE CAPACITY ASSESSMENT

3.1 Capacity Assessment - Overview

Majority of municipalities are in the II, “pilot” category; two are in the category I and four in the category IV with visible efforts in gender mainstreaming. In second “beginners” category are also four municipalities. None of the municipalities scored in the category V since none of the municipalities in Serbia are on this level of development, and this category as the most advanced may serve as guidance for local self-governments in developing the tools and procedures which will enable utilization of best practices in the process of sustainable introduction of gender perspective.

Category	Municipalities	Number
I	Bela Palanka, Doljevac	2
II	Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Bujanovac, Crna Trava, Gazin Han, Knjazevac, Lebane, Leskovac, Medveđa, Nova Varoš, Novi Pazar, Presevo, Priboj, Sjenica, Surdulica, Trgovište, Tutin, Vlasotince, Vranje	19
III	Aleksinac, Babusnica, Blace, Brus, Kursumlija, Merosina, Prokuplje, Svrlijig, Zitorađa	9
IV	Ivanjica, Raska, Vladicin Han, Prijepolje	4
V	/	0
	Total	34

3.2 Institutional framework

3.2.1 Local Gender Equality Mechanism Legal Status

Serbian Law on Gender Equality stipulates several institutional modalities for the establishment of local gender equality mechanisms in Article 39. Gender equality mechanism can be established as appointed persons for gender equality or as a working body - council or commission in the Assembly or in the Municipal Council. In all municipalities some type of GEM (recognized in

Serbian Law on Gender Equality, 2009) has been established. In majority of municipalities this is a commission/council for GE at the local Assembly. In all municipalities GEMs are active and have some activities, except in Doljevac and Bela Palanka. In Doljevac local mechanism has been established (as the commission in the Assembly), but is not active and never meets⁶ while in Bela Palanka there is an appointed person within the municipal council, but had no activities so far.

The most present form of GEM in municipalities is a working body of the municipal/cities' assemblies (29) as the mostly recommended form of GEM (because of its suitability and formal authority of assemblies as the representation bodies). In five municipalities GEMs are working body/appointed person under the office of mayor or municipal council: in Bela Palanka and Bosilegrad there is an appointed persons, while in Raska and Aleksinac Councils for Gender Equality have been established by president of municipality/local Council.

GEM Status	Municipalities	Number
Permanent Working Body of Municipal Assemblies	Blace, Gadzin Han, Ivanjica, Knjazevac, Lebane, Leskovac, Merosina, Nova Varoš, Novi Pazar, Presevo, Prokuplje, Priboj, Prijepolje, Trgoviste, Tutin, Vladicin Han, Sjenica	17
Temporary Working Body of Municipal Assemblies	Babusnica, Bojnik, Brus, Bujanovac, Crna Trava, Doljevac, Merosina, Surdulica, Svrlijig, Vlasotince, Vranje, Zitoradja	12
Working Body in Mayor Office/ Municipal Council	Aleksinac, Raska, Kursumija	3
Appointed person in Mayor Office/ Municipal Council	Bela Palanka, Bosilegrad	2
More than one of formats	Ivanjica, Leskovac	2
	Total	34

⁶We were unable to contact or identify the person who would be interested in activities in the field of gender equality in Doljevac.

Taking into account the decision making procedures in Serbia, the most frequently recommended form of GEM, which at the same time ensures continuity of the mechanism, is a working body of the municipal/cities' (local) assemblies. In practice, however, it has been demonstrated that this body cannot act alone, that is: it needs administrative support, and also a more adequate participation of GEM in decision making process in the Assembly. In practice, mechanisms like assembly bodies, even when fully operational with implemented regulations, only get to participate in the final stage of decision making process – before the Assembly votes to adopt, and in that sense their leeway for intervention is minimal.

The examples of good practice are institutional arrangements in Ivanjica– Council and Coordinating Body for Gender Equality, and in Leskovac – Board and the Office for Gender Equality.

3.2.2 Regulation of GEMs work

Local mechanism's activities are often regulated by the Decision that defines the role, composition and mandate of GEM etc., but it rarely defines position of GEM in LSG system or its relations with other parts of LSG.

Document	Municipalities	LSG No.
Decision on establishment	All	34
Rulebook on operating procedures/Rules on GEM procedure	Babusnica, Novi Pazar	2
Annual activity plan	Ivanjica, Priboj	2
Local Assembly Rules on Procedure (if it is an assembly body)	Blace, Brus, Novi Pazar, Priboj, Prijepolje, Ivanjica, Tutin	7
Statute of the local self-government	Doljevac, Ivanjica, Knjazevac, Novi Pazar, Priboj, Prijepolje, Sjenica, Tutin, Zitoradja	9

All GEMs have the Decisions on establishment. Two GEMs have developed the Annual activity plan (Ivanjica and Priboj). Only two GEMs have the Rulebook on Operation Procedures of GEM, which should be developed and adopted by the GEM.

3.2.3 Composition of local GEMs

As most of the GEMs are established as a parliamentary body, their composition is determined by this (as for all working bodies based on the Rules on Procedure) – at least half of the members needs to be members of local Assembly. In seven mechanisms representatives of women's

organizations (e.g. Vlasotince, Tutin, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Priboj, Nova Varoš, Sjenica) were appointed as members. Generally there is a small number of women's organizations in the region of South and Southwest Serbia. Nevertheless, in some municipalities the cooperation between mechanisms and women's organizations is quite close, although informal: Svrlijig, Aleksinac, Leskovac). It has been proved that the key obstacle to the functioning of the mechanism is the inactivity and lack of interest of its members or the lack of coordination between the members.

Members	GEMs NO.
Local self-government employees	15
Local self-government officials	8
Local assembly members	28
NGO representatives (female)	8
Representatives of local institutions (m/f)	13
Representatives of multiple marginalized groups (female)	1

Local institutions representatives are mostly employees in school, centres for social work etc. not appointed by institutions but as assembly or political parties representatives. They are represented as institutions representatives but in practise they are not members appointed from the institutions.

In Svrlijig, although GEM is a parliamentary body, members do not participate in the local parliament but are appointed by political parties.

Only one GEM has a representative of marginalized women groups although in many municipalities the status of rural women has been recognized as a priority, for example in Nova Varos, Aleksinac, Surdulica, Crna Trava, Vlasotince, Bujanovac; or position of single mothers in Novi Pazar, Presevo. Only one Roma women is a representative in the GEM in Surdulica.

Men working in local mechanisms are recognized as a success factor related to GEMs composition (Vlasotince, Vladicin Han), along with experienced representatives of civil sector (Lebane, Leskovac, Vlasotince, Novi Pazar) and local government employees, for example the Budget Department (Vladicin Han, Ivanjica).

Significant difficulties in functioning of local mechanism are recognized in municipalities where presidents of Commission are not employed in local self-government (Kursumlija, Gadzin Han), however, it is difficult to have an influence on this.

3.2.4 The capacities of local mechanisms

Most members of the local mechanisms have undergone at least one training in the field of gender equality; however, in none of the municipality gender equality trainings have been organized for administration staff, councillors, and officials jointly. Training participants were GEMs members who are at the same time local assembly members, or employed in local self – government, but other assembly members, LSG officials, or employees who are not members of the GEM were not encompassed by trainings.

Decision makers, particularly those on executive position, were less represented on trainings related to gender equality.

Few municipalities participated in trainings for action planning or strategic planning, which is also an important contextual barrier – there is not enough knowledge on the process of strategic planning or policy development in which GEMs should make and propose changes in order to improve gender equality.

Training are categorized as *basic trainings*, which strengthen the understanding of the topic and basic concepts and enhances sensitizing on gender equality issues; and *advanced trainings*, which aim at advancing skills necessary for the application of gender mainstreaming in practice, i.e. provides tools and methods for it. Available training programs are not necessarily divided in this manner; usually these two levels were merged in training programs.

Capacity Development of Local GEMs	Municipalities	GEMs No.
Without training(s)	Doljevac, Svrlijig, Zitoradja ⁷	3
Basic Training(s) on Gender Equality	Aleksinac, Blace, Brus, Bujanovac, Crna Trava, Gadzin Han, Ivanjica, Knjazevac, Lebane, Leskovac, Merosina, Nova Varoš, Ivanjica, Nova Varos, Novi Pazar, Presevo, Priboj, Prijepolje, Raska, Sjenica, Trgoviste, Tutin, Vladicin Han, Sjenica, Surdulica, Vlasotince, Vranje	28
Advanced Training(s) on Gender Equality	Prokuplje, Ivanjica, Kursumlija, Nova Varos, Novi Pazar, Sjenica	6

⁷ Training were attended by representatives of municipality who are not members of the GEM

Strategic planning training(s)	Babusnica, Gadzin Han, Lebane, Bojnik, Merosina, Tutin, Raska	7
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Majority of GEMs, twenty-eight of them, had only the basic gender training, six had the advanced one and seven GEMs had the training on action planning and policy development.

In terms of other capacities and resources of the municipality, GEMs can use administrative and technical support, space and equipment etc.

None of the mechanisms (except Leskovac) have an email address. Also, the representatives of mechanisms complain about the lack of funds for participation in the regional or national events, which is also difficult to influence on. It is much harder to ensure funds a priori without clear purpose and aims of the allocation. Therefore it is important that GEMs define the objectives of these activities or the broader framework such as capacity building and similar. It could help the argumentation for LSG decision makers.

Resources	No. of GEMs
Office/workspace	18
Administrative and technical support and equipment	31
Official vehicle	13
E-mail address and access to Internet (in LSU)	16
Budget for the implementation of activities	8

Even when local mechanism has committed funds in the budget (Babusnica, Aleksinac, Raska, Surdulica, Ivanjica, Tutin, Novi Pazar, Kursumlija) resources often remain unspent or campaigns and one-off events are being organised, caused by the unclear idea on what the funds could be spent on, or funds being too small.

3.2.5 Cooperation of GEMs with other parts of local governance structures

Low understanding of GEMs role in the LSG system (by decision makers and administration) and (therefore) weak cooperation with GEM and other LSG structures represented the most important obstacle for GEMs to lead the sustainable introduction of gender perspective in local policies.

This has been improved in last few years (since surveys in 2011, 2012) and 32 out of 34 municipalities have established cooperation with other local self-government

bodies/departments, although it is arbitrary and ad hoc. There is no cooperation established in Svrlijig and Doljevac⁸.

The situation is similar in relation to cooperation with local institutions and organizations outside the LSG system.

Types of cooperation	Municipalities	GEMs NO.
Cooperation is arbitrary and sporadic, but does not always yield adequate responses to queries/requests submitted by the mechanism	Aleksinac, Babusnica, Bela Palanka, Crna Trava Knjazevac, Leskovac, Knjazevac, Presevo, Prokuplje, Svrlijig Trgoviste, Tutin, Vlasotince	13
Regularly collects data pertaining to the status of gender equality from their official records, but does not utilize this data	Blace, Brus, Bujanovac, Ivanjica, Gadzin Han, Kursumlija, Medvedja, Nova Varos, Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Zitoradja, Vranje	12
Performs gender assessment, and conducts gender assessment and formulates recommendations for the advancement of practices in communication with representatives of the institution. This is not institutionalized practice at the local self-government level, but individual cases.	Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Priboj, Raska, Surdulica Lebane,	6
Local institutions and organizations submit activity plans and activity reports that include gender perspective and gender sensitive information. Based on these reports, the local mechanism provides guidelines for the advancement of practices.	V.Han, Prijepolje, Merosina	3

⁸Gadzin Han reported that they have the bylaw that regulates responsibilities of administration employees related to monitoring and achievement of gender equality (forms, schedule and scope of cooperation with the local mechanism, but also communication procedures) but we did not find this type of document or examples of its implementation.

3.2.6 Local regulations and policy framework in the field of gender equality – regulation, commitments and promotion of gender equality

The institutional framework assessment includes the application of national legislation and policies, the development of local regulations and implementation of international guidelines. That includes: implementation of the Law on Gender Equality, implementation of the NAP, adoption of LAP for gender equality, signing of the European Charter on Equality, and promotion and visibility of the gender perspective in local documents, which above all is a sign of political commitment.

The regulations governing the obligations of local self-government and its policies should include regulations that operationalize the implementation of the provisions laid out in the Law, but also in the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia. One of the obstacles to the implementation of national and international documents is the lack of operationalization (instructions for the implementation) at the local level.

Internal regulations of GE in local self-government	Municipality	No.
Gender equality is defined as the competence and working principle of the local self-government in the Statute or some other regulation	Babusnica, Ivanjica Novi Pazar, Priboj, Prijepolje, Raska, Sjenica, Zitoradja	8
Statute or another regulation of the LSU recognizes affirmative actions for women	Ivanjica, Medvedja, Priboj, Merosina, Raska, Surdulica, Trgoviste, Vladcin Han, Vranje, Vlasotince	10
Adopted Decision on Gender Equality	Babusnica, Ivanjica Novi Pazar	3

3.2.7 Promotion of Gender Equality

Twenty three public campaigns were organized as the most common form of promotion of GE in activities and practices of LSG, gender sensitive language is used in 9 LSG, and only one has gender equality promoted in public calls (tenders and vacancy notices). Eight municipalities have included gender equality as a principle in local document.

There are many other possibilities for commitment to and promotion of gender equality in different areas at the local level.

Promotion of GE	Municipalities	No.
All regulations of the local self-government are written in gender-sensitive language (and this rule is defined in the Chapter on General Provisions of the Statute of LSU)	Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Crna Trava, Gadzin Han, Lebane, Leskovac, Merosina, Presevo, Raska	9
In all (or most) strategic documents gender equality is listed as a principle	Babusnica, Bojnik, Lebane, Leskovac, Merosina, Presevo, Raska, Vlasotince	8
In all advertisements for job vacancies/public calls/public procurement/allocation of funds to citizens' associations observance of the principle of equal opportunities is clearly stated	Priboj	1
Local self-government periodically, at least twice a year, organizes individual actions, forums, campaigns to promote gender equality	Aleksinac, Babusnica, Bojnik, Bujanovac, Gadzin Han, Ivanjica, Knjazevac, Nova Varos, Novi Pazar, Lebane, Leskovac, Merosina, Medvedja, Sjenica, Svrlijig, Surdulica, Tutin, Raska, Priboj, Prijepolje, Vladicin Han, Vlasotince	23

Municipalities (21) having LAP on gender equality have a better results of the assessment because it is usually aligned with nationally defined priorities and it represents local policy in the field of gender equality. Although 21 municipalities have adopted LAP, only 5 (Vlasotince, V.Han, Surdulica, Sjenica, Ivanjica) have the budget for its implementation and only in Raska 30 and more percent of activities have been implemented through local funds.

3.2.8 Implementation of national and regional acts

The European Charter for equality of women and men in local life is the only regional international document that relates exclusively to improving the functioning of local self- governments in the field of gender equality. What is more, at the core of the Charter are the internal procedures and functioning of local self- governments and not so much the state of gender equality in general in their territories. By becoming signatory to the Charter the Local Self-Government commits to take certain steps in the implementation of the Charter itself, but also to enable monitoring of the results and to develop practices.

Twenty- seven cities/municipalities signed the EU Charter in Serbia. Out of 34 municipalities encompassed by the EU Progres Project, 15 have signed/adopted the EU Charter and 7 adopted the Action Plan for its implementation.

On the other hand, the municipalities that have adopted the European Charter, done a little on its promotion or implementation. Even those who “adopted LAP for implementation of the Charter” have the LAP which is not directly related to the implementation of the Charter. Namely, LSG should adopt LAP for the implementation of EU Charter within two years after the signing. This means that specific principles and obligations from the EU Charter should be the part of the LAP. The EU Charter also refers to obligation and actions in internal procedures of LSGs. Some local regulations that contain provisions set out in the Charter (in the areas of employment, public procurement, gender assessment, etc.) are adopted only in Vladicin Han.

3.2.9 NAP implementation at the local level

Lack of NAP implementation is evident in local regulations or documents. NAP Strategic objectives constitute the framework for the functioning of the local gender equality mechanism in 18 municipalities and in 14 municipalities it is recognizes in LAPs. In Vladicin Han and Raska a system for monitoring of NAP indicators has been developed at the local level, and data is collected annually, only for specific areas.

3.2.10 Implementation of the Law on Gender Equality at the local level

One of the most important competences, if not the most important competence of the local mechanism is monitoring the implementation of the Law on Gender equality at the local level. This is often overlooked, especially when defining the areas in which it is necessary that the local gender equality mechanism provides its opinion as a working body of the municipal/city assembly. The most common practice is that of the mechanism providing its opinion on the decisions of local assemblies which are determined arbitrarily, so that the mechanism itself is denied information.

How does the local mechanism ensure/safeguard and monitor application of the Law on Gender Equality at LSU level?	Municipalities	No.
There is no specific method – does not monitor the application of the Law	Bosilegrad, Knjazevac, Kursumlija, Lebane, Prokuplje, Raska, Svrlijig, Vlasotince, Zitoradja, Bujanovac Aleksinac, Babusnica, Bela Palanka	16

Monitoring is performed sporadically, which means that it has not been operationalized by local regulations, and when providing its opinion on local decisions the local mechanism does not consult the Law on Gender Equality and does not use its provisions as guidelines	Bojnik, Brus, Ivanjica, Lebane, Medvedja, Nova Varos, Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Surdulica, Tutin	10
The areas where the local mechanism provides its opinion are defined in local regulations, but only those that concern gender equality (LAP, Decision on Gender Equality, etc.) while the Law on Gender Equality is not listed as framework/basis for monitoring	Gadzin Han, Leskovac, Priboj, Prijepolje, Vranje, Vladicn Han	6
Any decision adopted by the local assembly, which falls into one of the areas regulated by the Law, must be in compliance with the provisions of the Law, and the local mechanism, if it is a body within the assembly, shall give its opinion in the regular procedure	Merosina, Trgoviste	2

3.2.11a Recommendations for the improvement of legal status of local gender equality mechanisms

GEM defined in the Statute of LSG is seen as the most sustainable solution. However, from the formal point of view, it is important that this body is established as a permanent working body based on the Statute of LSG and to be recognized in the Rules and procedures of the Assembly. It turns out that, when local mechanisms are standing working bodies of the Assembly, they lack administrative support, especially when it comes to data and information gathering. It is therefore necessary to train and put in charge a person or persons who will be responsible of data coordination and information collection and cooperation with the administration, and will provide administrative and operational support to the local mechanism if that local mechanism is a body of the Assembly.

In order for LSU to be able to adequately fulfil responsibilities in the area of gender equality it is necessary that it creates adequate institutional solution and procedures in all segments of

administration: in the assembly as the highest body, in executive bodies, but also in local administration.

It is needed to continue advocacy for establishment of mechanisms at all levels and in all segments of public administration. Clearly defined the competences and roles of different mechanisms and adoption of documents which regulate those matters will help functionality and activity of GEMs.

Also, it is good to have the body/office/organization with the mandate related only to gender equality because in practise, persons who are working on this matter are usually too “busy” by other “regular” work or not working in LSG and GEMs members are employed in other institutions or on other positions in LSG.

For the assembly bodies, it is important to be recognized in Local Assembly Rules of Procedure, which is the case for 7 local assemblies. This is important because it defines their role in the procedures of the Assembly and makes GEMs more visible and important in the process of adoption of local decisions.

3.2.11b Recommendations for cooperation, capacities and resource use

In order to improve cooperation with other structures in LSG GEMs could develop forms for collection of gender-sensitive data, and initiate adoption of a bylaw regulating forms of cooperation of the local mechanism with local administration. Department employees should be included in the assessments or formulation of programs aimed at the promotion of gender equality. Trainings should be organized for local administration employees.

The cooperation is also related to capacity building as a whole. Different actors need to be involved in GE training and provide available data and info base of stakeholders and training providers at the national level and to encourage peer exchange.

Learning by doing i.e. training followed by mentoring support are the most efficient methods based on experience with GEMs in Serbia.

3.2.11c Recommendations on implementation of national and regional acts

In order to improve performance related to monitoring over the GE Law and participation in decision making, GEMs should define the areas in which the opinion of the local bodies is required, in accordance with the Law on Gender Equality, and inform all legal departments of the

local self-government. It is necessary that the provisions of the Law on Gender Equality serve as the basis, but also as the criteria for evaluation of the opinion when it is provided. In addition to the prohibition of discrimination and demand for equal opportunities policy, the Law regulates the obligations in the following areas: employment, social and health care, family relations, education, culture and sports, political and public life.

It is necessary to work on the Charter implementation with the municipalities that have adopted it, since it can be used as an argument and the assertion of political will at this stage, and afterwards as an indicator of results accomplished by the LSGs in the field of gender equality.

3.2.11d Recommendations for internal regulations commitments and promotion of gender equality

The most important success factors are related specifically to the institutional framework: adopted LAP on gender equality; signed European Charter on Equality of Men and Women at the Local Level; the Decision on gender equality and specifying gender equality commitments in the Statute of the local self-government.

In order to attain operationalization it is necessary that the LSU defines gender equality as one of its competences; it is desirable that it defines affirmative action as possible, because it is often a prerequisite for the implementation of activities to achieve equal opportunities.

In order to promote GE, to make stronger political commitment but also to implement EU Charter, LSG could list gender equality as a principle in all (or most) strategic documents, and clearly state the principle of equal opportunities in all advertisements for job vacancies/public calls/public procurement/allocation of funds to citizens' associations.

GEMs need to develop LAP and to ensure funds for its implementation. Sometimes it could be enough to change some procedures or resources division in different areas.

3.3. Gender Analysis, Assessment and Mainstreaming of Gender

Assessment of the capacities for gender analysis includes gender-sensitive data, consultations with women and men and development of recommendations or gender-sensitive programmes, which can focus on three different areas (in accordance with the three approaches to achieving gender equality):

- Promotion of gender equality, i.e. ensuring and encouraging equal opportunities
- Creation of affirmative measures

- Creation of specific programmes for women's empowerment and advancement of women.

Gender analysis has never been implemented or have been implemented partially, but not procedurally established in the municipalities. The key obstacle is the lack of standardized procedures for decision/policy making, monitoring and evaluation, with the exception of those adopted by the assemblies or linked to the budget.

Gender assessments/analyses of specific programs have been conducted in some municipalities but without an epilogue - “political” solutions or adopted recommendations. On the other hand, interventions for improvement of position of women are proposed and implemented without analysis or needs assessment. Also, there are no instruments developed for sustainable gender perspective i.e. gender sensitive monitoring and evaluation.

3.3.1. Gender Statistics and Prioritizing

Affirmative actions in all municipalities come from the national level (for participation of women in assemblies), and most often programmes are designed and implemented in the areas of prevention of violence, encouraging female entrepreneurship, and encouraging participation of women in decision-making.

Majority of GEMs – 19 out of 34 define priorities arbitrary (for next year or longer period), not based on the statistical data, consultation with men and women, or according to the nationally defined priorities. Almost one third of all GEMs (10) do not define priority areas and only 3 of them define priorities according to national policy and legal framework. Only 2 GEMs choose their priority areas for gender analysis and gender mainstreaming based on the priorities listed in the budget and strategic documents of LSG. At the same time only few municipalities –Raska, Ivanjica, Priboj have the annual work plan.

System of gender statistics is not developed in any of the local self-governments. Data are collected sporadically or partially, not analysed by gender even when there are pre-conditions (for example conducted survey or other official records). For example, Youth offices conducted survey on youth needs in Aleksinac or Blace and the results are not gender sensitive nor are the strategies developed on this ground. Also, LSGs do not use enough data from Serbian Statistical Office especially those segregated by sex, although they are able to request specific data from Statistical Office data bases.

GEMs collected gender sensitive data in specific areas: decision making, economic position of women, education etc. on the third part requests: from the national level, from donor organizations, national agencies and institutions.

Does the LSU collect and process statistical data classified according to gender	Municipalities	LSG No.
We do not collect data and do not have access to this kind of information	Aleksinac, Doljevac, Tutin, Zitoradja	4
Yes, when some other institution requests this information, or ad hoc, when necessary, from the data available, but there is no obligation to classify data according to gender, or to report by presenting gender-sensitive information.	Babusnica, Blace, Brus, Kursumlija, Merosina, Prokuplje, Bojnik, Bujanovac, Crna Trava, Gazin Han, Knjazevac, Lebane, Leskovac, Medveđa, Nova Varoš, Presevo, Sjenica, Svrlijig, Trgovište, Vlasotince, Vranje, Vladicin Han, Prijepolje	24
A system/framework has been developed for the collection of gender-sensitive data, but is not being applied, or was applied only once, with the aim to test it, or to define the starting point, but was not used afterwards	Novi Pazar, Ivanjica, Surdulica, Bosilegrad	4
Local Decision on the collection and processing of gender-sensitive data has been adopted as the obligation of all agencies and institutions of the LSU, but implementation was not precisely defined, nor has it been applied	Priboj	1
Yes, the system/ framework has been developed and document has been adopted that regulates the obligation of all LSU employees and all employees in the institutions to keep gender-sensitive official records; data are available to the gender equality mechanism in clearly defined time framework and made	Raska	1

public. Data is collected at least annually, and reports on the situation in the field of gender equality are submitted to the local assembly.		
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There were some attempts to develop a system of gender sensitive statistics were in few LSG, but they were not repeated (Novi Pazar, Ivanjica, Surdulica, Bosilegrad). It is also partially rooted in the administrative context – there is no “tradition” of data collection or evidence based policies. The system for gender sensitive statistics/data collection has been developed in Raska and data is collected. However, organized and systematic use of data for gender analysis and assessment is still lacking.

Annual planning according to mainstream activities and priorities in municipality could be improved.

3.3.2. Mainstreaming Gender in Local Regulations and Policies

As stipulated by the Gender Equality Law, the role of GEMs at the local level is gender assessment of local regulative or policies. In practise, only in 15 out of 34 municipalities GEMs discuss local regulative or programs adopted by the Assembly or the Council. This is mandatory and regulated by local laws in only 4 municipalities (Brus, Presevo, Raska, Sjenica). Still, there are no clearly defined procedures, criteria or checklists based on which the comments/opinion should be delivered. In 11 municipalities documents are delivered to the local mechanism for consideration in a package, which has not been regulated by any local regulation and is done only at the request of the mechanism and in 19 of municipalities mechanism does not participate in this part of decision making procedure. This is related to regulations of GEMs functioning (showed in the first chapter) but also to the lack of clear methodology and checklists for assessment of certain local document.

Also, participation of the local mechanism in the process of development of strategic documents is rarely regulated by a local self-government regulation (in 8 out of 34 municipalities). This is not the guarantee for GEMs participation in strategic planning or gender sensitive approach at all. Local mechanism is included in the process of development of strategic documents in 9 municipalities although there is no binding related regulation. This is not regulated in 17 municipalities and not the usual GEMs practice.

Regulation of participation of the local mechanism in the process of development of strategic documents	Municipalities	No.
No	Aleksinac, Babusnica, Blace, Bojnik, Bosilegrad, Doljevac, Kursumlija, Lebane, Leskovac, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Prokuplje, Raska, Svrljig, Surdulica, Trgovište, Žitorađa	17
Yes, it is regulated, but not always implemented	Bela Palanka, Bujanovac, Knjazevac, Medvedja, Nova Varos, Tutin, Sjenica, Vladicin Han	8
No, but the local mechanism is included in the process of development of strategic documents although there is no binding regulation in connection to this matter	Brus, Crna Trava, Gadzin Han, Ivanjica, Merosina, Presevo, Priboj, Vlasotince, Vranje	9
Yes it is regulated, both in the development and the adoption process: namely, the documents cannot be adopted without the opinion/comment and report of the gender equality mechanism on gender perspective of the strategy or other planning/development document	-	0

Gender perspective is usually ensured only through GEMs representatives participation in different working bodies. Gender sensitive data (for population or in specific sectors) is not always available and there are no consultations with women. This also could be improved through development of checklist and guidelines.

At the same time, the challenge is how to determine areas or issues relevant for gender equality which could be solved by defining priorities and by defining regular issues: for instance participation of women in decision making, budget, local economic development, social protection etc.

Participation of women	Municipalities	No.
It is not ensured	Bosilegrad, Bela Palanka, Kursumlija, Prokuplje, Trgoviste	5
In open public debate, but records are not kept on persons participated	Aleksinac, Babusnica, Blace, Bojnik, Brus, Bujanovac, Crna Trava, Doljevac, Gadzin Han, Knjazevac, Lebane, Leskovac, Medvedja, Nova Varos, Novi Pazar, Prijepolje, Sjenica, Surdulica, Svrljig, Tutin, Vlasotince, Vranje, Zitoradja	23
The local mechanism conducts public discussions and meetings with women and women's NGOs on its own initiative, in order to define priorities	Ivanjica, Merosina, Presevo, Priboj, Raska, Vladicin Han	6
The local mechanism creates and devises methods of involving the public specifically tailored to women and men, and especially women from marginalized groups (rural women, women with disabilities, single mothers ...) which are an integral part of the procedure adhered to by the entire local self-government in the decision making process.	-	0

Participation of women is not ensured within the process of strategic documents development. Most common and traditional form is open public debate (mandatory for most of the documents) but without additional efforts to include women or gender segregated data in public discussions. Therefore, we do not have data about women's participation in debates. Only 6 mechanisms (Vladicin Han, Raska, Priboj, Presevo, Merosina, Ivanjica) organized public discussions and

meetings with women and/or women's NGOs on its own initiative, in order to define priorities. Although one-time involvement of women (even when repeated a number of times) in the decision-making is a good practice, it is necessary that it becomes integral part of the procedure of the local self-government, which means keeping the records on the participation of women and men, and reports on the content of the consultation process.

In general, cooperation of GEMs and women's NGOs and other stakeholders active in the field of gender equality is informal and without procedures, defined outcomes, subject matter etc. In 8 municipalities GEMs have tight cooperation with women's organizations through the organization of periodic meetings, joint formulation of initiatives, advocacy campaigns, defining priorities for the next year and so on.

GEMs also recognize position of multiple discriminated or vulnerable groups of women mostly through organizing public events and implementing projects when practicable, but this is not defined specifically in strategic plans or separate action plans. At the policy level only 7 municipalities (Vlasotince, Vladicin Han, Raska, Ivanjica, Trgoviste, Bojnik, Merosina) are dealing with position of vulnerable groups (mostly victims of gender based/domestic violence, rural women and Roma women).

Gender assessment/analysis has not been carried out, so far, in 20 out of 34 municipalities. In 12 municipalities, gender sensitive data related to participation of men and women/boys and girls in certain fields is collected, and examination of available policies/strategies/programs and projects and assessment of measures for the promotion of equality or improvement of the status of women performed along with the analysis of objectives and target groups. The progress has been made in two municipalities (Priboj and Ivanjica), in terms of collection of information in relation to the number of program beneficiaries according to gender (in previous years of implementation) and information on allocation of resources.

3.3.3 Gender Analysis, Assessment and Mainstreaming of Gender Recommendations

1. Bearing in mind that gender mainstreaming is a long-term process, it is best to start by selecting priorities and taking small steps in this process. Priorities can be selected in accordance with national and international documents, but even then it is necessary to assess the situation in these areas in your community, as well as available resources and key stakeholders. GEMs need to develop Annual working plans (even though there are LAPs) and to prepare reports on their results and achievements.

2. General recommendations for LSG is to include other LSGs' agencies and bodies in the activities and establish gender analyses as a "routine", i.e. develop procedures and tools, such as checklists or gender-sensitive statistics.
3. What is lacking the most are concrete proposals of gender-sensitive policies based on gender analysis, or based on consultations with women and men on priorities. GEMs need support in using the gender segregated data in the analysis and in formulation of recommendations based on the analysis.
4. Analyses are envisaged in budgeting process, along with the introduction of gender-sensitive indicators, while gender analysis can be standardized by programmes, i.e. departments and agencies of local self-governments (e.g. Department of Agriculture, the Office for Youth, etc.).

3.4. Gender Responsive Budgeting

This section includes capacities for gender assessment of budget allocations but also the funds for gender equality and empowerment of women allocated by municipalities. It is not related only to financial means for GEMs but also to funds in different sectors and areas. Sometimes GEMs do not have clear distinction between funds provided by the LSG and those provided by donor organizations.

3.4.1 Gender analysis of budget allocations

Gender assessment of budget allocations is not carried out in 25 municipalities (73.53%). Assessments were carried out in only two municipalities: in Novi Pazar (2009) without clear institutional memory and practice and in Kursumlija⁹.

Is gender assessment of budget allocations carried out, and how?	Municipalities	LSG No.
It is not carried out, and we have not had the opportunity to become familiar with this subject so far	Aleksinac, Babusnica, Bujanovac, Bojnik, Blace, Brus, Bela Palanka, Bosilegrad, CrnaTrava, Doljevac, Gazin Han, Knjazevac, Lebane, Merosina, Medvedja, Novi Pazar, Presevo, Sjenica, Surdulica, Trgovište, Tutin, Vranje, Svrlijig, Zitorađa	25

⁹ According to the statement of GEMs representative.

Has not been carried out so far: representatives of the mechanism and/or persons employed in the administration completed training on gender budgeting, but it has not been implemented	Leskovac, Ivanjica, Nova Varos, Kursumlija, Vlasotince, Priboj, Prokuplje	7
It is carried out subsequently, in assessments conducted with external assistance, as individual/project activities (e.g. gender assessment of the budget/one budget line was conducted so far and recommendations were given, but were not accepted in budget adoption process)	Vladicin Han, Raska	2

Training for the implementation of gender assessment and/or gender assessment of the budget represents the first step, and it should be followed by piloting or application in practice, in one program or project.

3.4.2 Funds for Achieving GE and Empowerment of Women

Since budget is the most important political tool of the LSG, commitment to gender equality is visible in this document, despite present declarative support.

Are activities that contribute to gender equality funded from the budget?	Municipalities	LSGs No.
No	Babusnica, Blace, Brus, Aleksinac, Bela Palanka, Bojnik, Bosilegrad, CrnaTrava, Doljevac, Gazin Han, Knjazevac, Kursumlija, Lebane, Merosina, Novi Pazar, Sjenica, Trgovište, Tutin, Vlasotince, Vranje, Svrljig, Zitorađa	22
Yes, based on local mechanism's annual plan of activities (relating to individual activities of the local mechanism and its functioning within the local self-government system, but not to	Bujanovac, Leskovac, Nova Varos, Presevo, Priboj, Prokuplje	7

funds earmarked for the improvement of the status of women or promotion of equality.		
Yes, the implementation of the Action Plan for the promotion of gender equality, or other programs with the same goal	Medvedja, Ivanjica, Surdulica	3
Yes, implementation of the action plan or activity plan of the local mechanism, but also programs for the improvement of the status of women in different strategic areas and programs funded by the local self-government, which do not specifically target women	Raska, Vladicin Han	2

Majority of LSGs and/or GEMs implemented activities related to combating violence against women and educations for women. Projects were implemented by external support and not on the initiative and through funds of local institutions.

Projects	LSGs No.
Projects aimed at the advancement of women's health	5
Projects and programs to combat violence against women	20
Projects and programs for economic empowerment of women (e.g. training, consultancy support to the self-employed, subsidies for women entrepreneurs and farmers, etc.)	2
Educational programs, training and development of women (e.g. vocational re-training, program Second Chance, IT training, etc.)	13
Activities aimed at increasing the participation of women in decision-making (improving capacity and empowerment of women politicians)	4
Formal activities and campaigns (8 of March, 16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women, etc.	4
Social services to improve the status of women and respond to their needs	8

IV. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the assessment, the lack of procedures in general is identified as the key obstacle to the introduction of gender perspective. The most important is the lack of experience with such activities and the uncertainty that it is possible to intervene in the scope of the previously established procedures. Municipalities can be grouped in several "new" categories, as those that have a good institutional framework, but no results; as those that have implemented individual and small actions, but not systemic solutions; and as those which have created the preconditions for systemic solutions or gender-sensitive policies.

Further support to GEMs/LSGs could be aimed at two main levels:

1. Changes of local procedures and regulations in order to implement EU Charter;
2. Conducting gender analysis/assessment and consultations with women and development of at least one gender sensitive local policy (sports, youth, agriculture)

General recommendation is that municipalities should further work on gender analysis (within the selected priority areas) and involve other local self-government bodies in the activities related to gender equality, through the development of procedures and checklists.

Accordingly, several strategies can be chosen:

1. Working with employees and officials on introduction of a gender perspective, where the committees/commissions would remain political bodies within the assemblies;
2. Appointing a person/body in the executive branch or in the executive bodies;
3. Organizing a service in local administration or a body which would coordinate the activities on the introduction of gender perspective.

This will not guarantee sustainable gender perspective, but will facilitate the coordination of activities. The prerequisites are to gain decision makers support. Because of that, it is important the decision makers understand and support the processes. In other words, it is better to create institutional solutions through specific tasks and processes, rather than establishing them for themselves, without concrete goals.

It is necessary to:

1. Improve the capacities and understanding of local self-governments officials and administration employees;
2. Support municipalities in developing gender statistics;

3. Promote the European Charter through developing action plans for its implementation and the selection of one principle in which activities will be carried out and institutional solution created;
4. Support municipalities in consultation with women at the level of local communities, on local priorities;
5. Support municipalities in the implementation of gender analysis in one area/ department/service;
6. Support municipalities in gender mainstreaming of one strategic document and policy (in the course of 2015 and 2016).