

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has become evident that there more and more municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina are establishing the quality management system based on ISO 9001:2000 standard, and that has a significant effect on the efficiency of their operation. Given that in Bosnia and Herzegovina generally there is a low degree of citizen participation in decision-making processes, it is interesting to investigate whether, and to what extent, the introduction of ISO standards leads to the increase of citizen participation in decision-making at municipal level. Municipality as the service to citizens should respect the fundamental principle of ISO standards, i.e. «orientation towards beneficiaries of services». In that respect it should keep into account the needs of its citizens consulting and involving them in the decision-making processes.

This survey tries to apply comparative method in order to establish the scope of citizen participation in the process of decision-making in those municipalities that have already introduced ISO standards (Sarajevo Centre, Tešanj and Laktaši) vs. the municipalities that have not done it (Livno, Ilidža and Modriča). The following elements were analysed:

- Number of decisions passed by municipal council/assemblies in 2003/2004. Number of decisions that are the result of previous consultations with the citizens in 203/2004
- Amounts of municipal budgetary funds earmarked for the grants for NGOs in 2003/2004

The focus of our survey was out on quantitative indicators. The quality of decisions was not subject of our consideration.

The surveys that were conducted in the last several years in Bosnia and Herzegovina have shown that citizen participation in political life is very low. The forms of direct participation of citizens in decision-making defined by cantonal laws and municipal statutes are used very rarely.

Numerous are the factors that make it difficult for local self-governance to function smoothly and to have it harmonised with the European Charter on Local Self-governance: the territory of the country divided by Dayton Constitution has led to great differences among the municipalities in terms of their size and population as well as to great dependency of municipalities on the higher levels of government (cantons, entities); displaced population does not feel the new environment as its own and loses interest in participating in the processes of decision-making at the local level; municipal own revenues are very low (municipalities can use only 10% of their won revenues, while the rest goes to the higher level of authority); inadequate legislation, etc.

With its accession into the Council of Europe Bosnia and Herzegovina has become bound to implement the European Charter on Local Self-governance whose integral parts are the measures for direct participation of citizens in the process of decision-making at the local level.

Municipalities that have modernised their work in line with international ISO 9001:2000 standards, reconciled their statutes with the requirements of European Charter on Local Self-governance have increased efficiency of their work. The fundamental principles of ISO standards require from municipalities to be at the service of their beneficiaries and to respond to their needs. In order to meet the needs of its beneficiaries they must consult them and incite them to get involved in the processes of decision-making. Their primary task should be to focus on the beneficiaries of their services and not only to increase their internal efficiency as it is often the case. Having in mind all the above-mentioned facts, it was worth researching whether these municipalities have truly increased the citizen participation in the processes of decision-making.

The results of our survey have shown that the municipalities with ISO standards have on average made more decisions upon consultations with their citizens than it is the case with others. In their statutes different forms of citizen participation have been foreseen, the most common of them being citizens gathering, referendum and civic initiative. The methods of establishment of local communities have also been precisely defined. However, we could say that Sarajevo Centre Municipality is the only municipality that has been implementing in practice the modes of citizen participation as defined by its statute. In this municipality there was not a single decision that has been made without

previous consultation with citizens; therefore, this municipality may be mentioned as the example of good practice. Among the municipalities that was subject of our survey and do not have the said standard, not a single one possessed the data on the number of decisions made with previous consultation. This is the consequence of disorganisation and non-existence of a structured data-base.

The analysis of the overall number of gatherings with citizens and the number of civic initiatives launched in the municipalities that have introduced ISO standard (Municipality of Laktaši excluded since we do not have any data for it) and the municipalities that have not introduced the standards yet we have see that the former are much more efficient that the latter.

The analysis of the budget of these municipalities was done in order to determine the amount of funds these municipalities allocate to their civic associations thus assisting them in their activities.

The results of our survey have shown that the municipalities that have ISO standards allocate fewer funds from the budget to civic associations then those without those standards. However, the municipalities that have ISO standards do allocate more funds for the realisation of civic or NGO initiatives or NGOs that are active participants in the life of local community. On the other hand, those municipalities that do not have these standards are more oriented towards providing support to humanitarian organisations, associations of their citizens with the war-related disabilities and associations of paraplegics, while they provide very little support to the organizations of different profile. This survey failed to establish to what extent citizens truly participate in the passage of municipal budgets in the municipalities without ISO standards, the element that could have shed some light on the situation. The reason for this lies to the fact that there is no data-base on citizen participation.

If a municipality get modernised and adopts ISO 9001:2000 standards, then its primary goal must be the orientation towards its beneficiaries. The results of this survey have shown that the municipalities with these standards do take care of this principle and, therefore, we could say that modernisation of local self-governance is the road towards a more efficient and effective administration that certainly implies involvement of all

the stakeholders of the local community that ensure its unimpeded functioning. It is also visible that Sarajevo Centre Municipality has shown exceptionally good results in the application of this concept of modernisation in line with the norms of ISO 9001:2000. It is yet another evidence that on the existing legal framework and with the implementation of basic principles of ISO standards exceptional results can be achieved. That is the reason why we are offering the following recommendations.

- Efforts should be invested into modernisation of municipalities in line with ISO standards
- Besides the introduction of standards, efforts should also be made by municipal officers to meet the requirements of ISO standards in an appropriate and adequate way
- It is necessary to make efforts in terms of application of the Recommendations of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to the member states relating citizen participation in public life at the local level
- It is necessary for municipal administration to understand in the right manner the first requirement of ISO standards, i.e. that primary strategic orientation of the municipality should be its orientation towards the requirements and needs of its citizens who, according to ISO standards represent the consumers of the service provided by the municipality.
- Municipalities should understand adequately the role of the NGO sector in increasing the level of democracy and transparency of the society and in that respect they should provide greater financial and other kind of assistance to NGOs of this or similar strategic orientation.