

# EUROPEAN LABEL OF GOVERNANCE EXCELLENCE (ELOGE) IN CROATIA, NORTH MACEDONIA AND KOSOVO\*

## Publication

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Centre of Expertise  
For Good Governance



Citizens, Equality, Rights  
and Values programme



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**European label of governance excellence (ELoGE) in Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo\***

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\*All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations' Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

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# Preface

The ELoGE programme has been facilitating improvement of local democracy standards in member states within the Council of Europe for the past several years. When municipalities that sign up for the programme achieve high enough standards of good governance, they are awarded the European Label of Governance Excellence for one year, and a crystal dodecahedron engraved with the 12 Principles of Good Governance.

Recently, ALDA has been accredited to implement ELoGE in various municipalities in Croatia, North Macedonia, and Kosovo\*. The purpose of this publication is to inform readers about ALDA's methodology and results under the ELoGE programme in the countries it is accredited for, give a good understanding of the inner functioning and steps of the programme, and to understand the contexts and results in the countries that it is being implemented in.

This publication is divided into multiple sections which cover important faces of the implementation of the ELoGE programme in the listed countries. The first part of the publication, the introduction, gives a detailed breakdown on the ELoGE programme and its steps, creation process, purpose, and implementation, descriptions of the Council of Europe and other involved entities such as the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance, and lastly, a description of ALDA itself, the accreditation process, and the reasons as to why ALDA is a qualified candidate for ELoGE accreditation.

The second part of the publication focuses on giving a presentation of the 12 Principles of Good Governance, an important creation of the Centre of Expertise, which is used as central ELoGE evaluation criteria. It goes into detail for every individual principle and how it is relevant to improving and understanding good local governance.

The third part of the publication is focused on individualized case study breakdowns for the countries in which ALDA has implemented the project. This includes breakdowns of the local contexts in the respective countries, their municipalities, factors of local governance, the results of the activities, and more. We expect that by the end of the publication, those reading it will be able to understand the programme and what it has to offer to the countries in which ALDA has implemented it.

# Introduction

For over 20 years now, all of us at the European Association for Local Democracy, ALDA, have been working to promote local democracy and active citizenship in Europe, the Western Balkans, and the European neighborhood in general in order to improve local contexts. From our point of view, strengthening local democracy allows for an environment where local government is more responsive to and reflective of the people's needs. Furthermore, we also support fostering local and regional cooperation, including regular work and projects to help make local life better. It is greatly within ALDA's interest to improve the European area in general through the supporting of local democracy, active citizenship, and sustainable cooperation between citizens, civil society, and local governments.

ALDA has a breadth of experience in facilitating regular cooperation between local authorities and civil society, and our staff is well-equipped for our work. Promotion of good governance and continuous multi-partner approaches lie at the heart of our mission for increased regional cooperation, including a European project-based approach and facilitating networking and exchanges between the various local actors. Our experienced staff has helped to implement countless projects throughout the years all over the European neighborhood and beyond, and this is a testament to our ambitions in fields including development, human rights, and European integration.

We recognize that to maintain good functioning, local governance requires a good democratic structure and work in the citizens' interests, prioritizing local needs and giving them a say in matters of concern. When citizens are encouraged to engage in local processes, this inclusive approach enables their interests to be better represented, particularly those of marginalized groups, and it creates better decision-making, accountability, and responsiveness of local governance. In our facilitation and advocacy of better local standards, we recognize that an active local sector can drive positive changes in other levels of governance.

Building bridges between citizens, civil society, and local authorities remains as a fundamental goal of ALDA. When exchange between parties is facilitated, we observe that it is not only mutually beneficial, but forms a foundation of trust, better governance, and stability. We work to ensure that all participating partners are heard, have something to gain in the process, and have reasons to continue cooperation. Local cooperation itself proves to be a complex and integrated web in which the many stakeholders making it up matter, whether they are representatives of civil society, educators, entrepreneurs, and other local actors. At the end of the day, from the point of view of ALDA, cooperation is not a project, but a process.

# About ELoGE

ELoGE, or the European Label of Governance Excellence, is a programme created by the Council of Europe in which municipalities are evaluated on their standards for local governance based on a benchmark from the Council of Europe. One of the main purposes of the ELoGE programme is to support local governance by further strengthening municipalities in their capacities and knowledge for providing good services for their constituency. If they are deemed to have high standards of good governance, they are awarded the European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) for one year, with the award consisting of a crystal dodecahedron that is engraved with the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance. This programme is specifically for municipalities within member states of the Council of Europe.

ELoGE was signed into existence with the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local level, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the CoE on the 26th of March 2008, and the current regulations for implementing ELoGE were adopted by the European Platform on the 18th of May 2016. They were amended twice on later dates, those being March 24, 2020, and October 15, 2021. The functioning of ELoGE depends on an accredited and qualified entity that has experience in good local governance to act as a medium with the Council of Europe. These entities are evaluated upon request for accreditation and if achieved, they attain the responsibility of implementing ELoGE within the municipalities that have agreed to be a part of it, holding their authority for a maximum of 3 years that can be renewed upon request.

The ELoGE programme can be split up into four distinct phases. Accreditation is the first step in the procedure. When a municipality desires to take on the programme, it needs to submit an application to the national or regional accredited entity. Following it is regional implementation, which is an extensive process. For starters, municipalities go through self-assessments utilizing the 12 principles matrix, including a series of questionnaires directed to local administrators, municipal employees, and citizens. Continuing with the next step, evaluation, consists of the final data gathered being sent over to the National Evaluation Platform, which is a committee of experts, to decide which municipalities will earn the label. In the next and final step, there is an award ceremony where the accredited entity and the National Evaluation Platform present the ELoGE label to the municipalities that have earned a satisfactory level of good governance.

The ELoGE programme has several expected results that are aimed for in the process of implementation. These can include encouraging good local practices, fostering greater participation from citizens and cooperation between citizens and local authorities, improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public services, setting up specialized trainings to authorities, citizens, and CSOs, and more .

# About Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an organization based in Strasbourg, France consisting entirely of European countries with the goal of protecting and promoting human rights and fostering cooperation through different treaties and mechanisms and unity between European states. It is notably a body which helps with and advocates for domestic reforms within countries, such as media freedom, judicial reforms, and provides expertise in many different legal areas, although there is a large amount of focus on good local governance.

The Council of Europe created the ELoGE programme as one of several methods to measure good governance, having developed the standards, criteria, and mechanisms of it, and it additionally assigns accreditation privileges to different entities. For the purposes of the programme, the Council of Europe will partner with an entity that is qualified, experienced, and knowledgeable in the fields of local governance that it has been assigned accreditation. The Strategy for Innovation and Governance at the Local Level has an ELoGE Accreditation Platform that is directly responsible for responding to these requests.

The Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is a body within the Council of Europe, created in 2006 with the intention of helping European countries achieve good governance standards domestically through methods including providing expertise, doing research, creating programmes, engaging in investment, encouraging best practices, among others, usually tailored to the domestic contexts of the respective countries.

A notable creation of the Centre is the 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance, which the ELoGE programme utilizes. With its connection to the European Committee on Democracy and Governance, or the CDDG, it has a consistent knowledge stream to draw upon, including from that of higher-level government officials from the various member states. Along with this, it has the 25 capacity-building toolkits, which have been thoroughly developed and continually updated to meet local standards for the member states. The work of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance is overseen by the Democratic Governance Division.

# About ALDA

ALDA, or the European Association for Local Democracy, is a non-governmental organization that has the purpose of promoting good local democratic practices and citizen participation, as well as fostering cooperation. It was created by the Council of Europe in 1999 to act as a coordinator for the various Local Democracy Agencies, or LDAs, to further the goal of promoting good local democracy practices. Within it, it has a structural relationship with the Congress of Regional Authorities and an observatory status.

ALDA is involved in the six Western Balkan Countries: Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Kosovo\*, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia, with the operational office there that coordinates the LDAs being based in Skopje, North Macedonia. It also helped found and coordinate the Balkan Network for Local Democracy, or BNLD, similarly headquartered in Skopje. According to the Statute of ALDA, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe has a statutory seat in the Governing Board of ALDA.

ALDA is a membership-based organization with over 350 members, ranging from local authorities, associations of local authorities, and civil society organizations from over 45 countries, and has implemented over 450 projects within 20 years. Throughout the years, ALDA has undertaken countless projects regarding topics such as active citizenship, youth empowerment, and local capacity building and democracy, and has built up an extensive network of experienced employees that can further the goals of the Centre of Expertise.

The current Strategic Plan 2020-2024 heavily emphasizes the importance of cooperation with the Council of Europe and its institutions for the promotion of good democratic practices in Europe.



# ELoGE Accreditation

ALDA has been accredited to implement the ELoGE programme in multiple countries and their municipalities, with the intent to help further build up the capacities and expertise of the municipalities that request the programme. With its past work, ALDA has shown its capabilities in its history with relevant lines of work, in particular, their experience within the field of local democracy. With this, ALDA takes on the responsibilities of providing training and information and maintaining a relationship with the municipalities involved over a set period.

The staff of ALDA and the LDAs have good experiences with delivering the method of ELoGE as well as experience with the specific evaluation instruments utilized in previous projects, such as of those in Ukraine, Moldova, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tunisia, and others. ALDA has consistently shown a commitment to cooperate with the Centre of Expertise and implement the ELoGE programme, something which is expressed in the European Support to Local Democracy, which is ALDA's flagship initiative. This initiative started with the adoption of the Strategic Plan 2020-2024 and consists of a broad collection of local democracy instruments based on the context of civil society.

When a local self-government unit requests accreditation, they make a pledge to implement the ELoGE criteria within a set number of municipalities in a certain allotted period. This process involves the translation of the benchmark, making internal preparations, finding which municipalities seek to implement the criteria, and then assisting them throughout the process. This process is kicked off with various self-assessment processes, and a series of surveys for citizens and officials with the purpose of determining the extent to which the 12 principles are being utilized. The accredited entity and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance both assist with the implementation of the 12 principles.

Once the programme is completed and it has been acknowledged that the municipality has achieved good governance standards, the accredited entity presents the label to the successful municipality, with the label lasting one year. This however does not mark the end, as ELoGE continues to provide support in further adaptation and self-understanding of municipalities. ALDA and the Centre of Expertise have an opportunity to forge a strong partnership due to common values and the ability to exchange good practices with the ELoGE programme.

# 12 Principles of Good Governance

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

This principle ensures that local elections are free and fair, and that voices are all represented, no matter the identity or background of the individual. It makes sure that decisions are representative of the desires of the people, especially through maintaining a gender balance and accounting for those who may be in more disadvantageous circumstances. Overall, it ensures that citizens are an important facet of public activities at the local level and have their ways of finding information and contributing to policy. There is also direct effort from local officials to encourage citizens to be more active and consider their input, especially the more marginalized, with mediating mechanisms designed to support this process. The end goal is an active constituency and decision-making that is representative of the the people in the municipality.

## 2. Responsiveness

This principle ensures that legislation and structures that are adopted are reflective of the needs and well-being of citizens and that public services, requests, and responses to complaints are delivered in a timely manner. To accomplish the goals of this principle, officials are subject to guides and procedures that inform their decisions. There are mechanisms developed to be receptive to citizen complaints, and that policy and service changes are not only transparent, but also made in a way that is informed by evidence, research, and consultation. All of this together contributes to services that meet the needs of citizens and evolve in their approaches.

## 3. Efficiency and effectiveness

This principle ensures that the results of objectives are not only satisfactory but do so with the best utilization of resources possible. This can be ensured through regular evaluations to see what can be improved. To achieve this principle, municipalities undergo consistent strategic planning of activities and budgets as well as logging their performance on a regular basis to be able to understand their strengths and weaknesses and develop mechanisms and frameworks to address different sectors. Municipalities can also improve their performance by exchanging best practices with, for example, other municipalities. Overall, stronger record-taking and evaluation is used to inform more strategic decision-making.

## 4. Openness and Transparency

This principle ensures that access to information for the public is enforced and that there is ready access to information regarding decisions and provisions available to citizens, ensuring trust.

This includes providing direct sources for information, opening meetings to the public, an openness to the media, and more. Any decisions that are made line up with legislation and rules. For making decisions and the different responsibilities, the municipality has a dedicated delegation scheme for responsibilities. As well as this, when decisions are made, they follow established rules and are fully transparent about the process.

## 5. Rule of Law

This principle ensures that there is fair enforcement of rules and procedures and that local authorities do not try to bypass the law and judicial decisions. Accountability is enforced on public officials and any action taken that breaks the law is to be reported, with information being regularly collected to make sure that rules and regulations are upheld.

## 6. Ethical Conduct

This principle is meant to safeguard against corruption and unethical behaviour by prioritizing the collective good over the interests of individuals. Codes of conduct play a very important role in setting standards for public officials. The goal of public policy is to be for the better of the constituency, and their interests guide the general direction of local policy. This includes taking measures to prevent and combat corruption with internal and external audits and other accountability mechanisms. Appointments, promotions, and rewards for staff are based on merit and approved procedures.

## 7. Competence and Capacity

This principle is meant to ensure that those who hold local offices are qualified and continuously reflect on their ability to meet the needs of the constituency and deliver their responsibilities. Additionally, there are procedures to make sure that skills are kept up to the required levels to fulfill duties. To understand what skills are necessary to deliver services effectively, municipalities take steps to identify them and build on a strategy for their staff. Training plans are developed, implemented, and there is constant monitoring and evaluation to make sure that the municipality and its staff are equipped to handle local problems.

## 8. Innovation and Openness to Change

This principle makes sure that within the local area's sphere of influence, there is consistent effort to continuously improve methods of problem-solving, and there is an open-mindedness to the usage of new and potentially beneficial methods and the creation of programmes in the name of facilitating better functioning of government. Structures are in place and officials are committed to make sure that municipalities are capable of innovation and research to improve governance.

## 9. Sustainability and Long-term orientation

For the achievement of this principle, it is necessary that there is long-term planning in the community's policies. This includes keeping future generations in mind, such as not leaving problems for them, making sure that local mechanisms are future-proof, general planning is continuously done, and historical and cultural perspectives are considered. Sustainability is an important principle in the management of the municipality, which requires a long-term approach, dedicated planning, resources, responsibilities, evaluations, idea-sharing, and participation. Historical, cultural, and social elements and perspectives are to be considered.

## 10. Sound Financial Management

The purpose of this principle is to make sure that there is transparency and effectiveness in the management of financial assets of the local area. This includes making sure to prevent overly expensive services, especially public services, proper financial estimation, transparent budgeting processes reflective of the constituency's needs and opinions, and steps taken to reduce risks. There are active financial mechanisms that define and enforce responsibilities, procedures, and resources. The process of management includes audits and reports done by independent parties to minimize the presence of corruption, and transparent mechanisms such as publishing reports. Citizens are also informed of what their taxpayer money goes towards.

## 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 and encouraging inclusive practices. There is an 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 in stone to ensure that social cohesion and good outcomes are ensured for all the parties and individual groups within the municipality.

## 12. Accountability

This principle ensures that decision-makers, whether it is individuals or groups, take responsibility for their decisions and ensure that everything is reported on and that there will be sanctions for unethical behavior or negative actions taken by local authorities. There are individual and collective responsibilities assigned to decision-makers and legal frameworks surrounding that meant to be followed. In following this goal, extensive reporting is undertaken with documents being made accessible and available for the sake of transparency. Evaluations are independent and unbiased to make sure that the process arrives at the fairest outcome.

# Croatia

## Country Report

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Centre of Expertise  
For Good Governance

# Croatia

## Local governance in Croatia: a brief overview

In Croatia, local governance is guaranteed by the Constitution, which specifies the administrative and hierarchical structure of territorial government in the very first article. Following that, the country became part of the Council of Europe on the 6th of November 1996 and ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1998. However, the real process of decentralization only began in 2001, when a law stipulated that certain functions should become the full responsibility of local governments, both in terms of management and funding. Since then, the decentralization process has taken many steps forward, gradually increasing the functions of local self-government units and making them more autonomous from the central government.

## How is local government organized?

The 1st article of the Constitution states that Croatia is a unitary state, with several levels of governance. At the top of it, there is the central government, which deals with national issues. Then, a regional level of governance is provided, which includes local-level self-administration counties called županija. Finally, at the bottom level, there are municipalities and towns (općina and grad). Overall, Croatia is divided into 20 counties plus the capital city, Zagreb, which possesses a special status guaranteed by the Constitution. The city of Zagreb is considered both a county and a city, with all the rights and duties that come with it. The counties are in turn divided into 556 local self-government units, 128 of which are cities and 428 are municipalities. In addition, since 2005, cities above 35,000 inhabitants have been defined as "large towns," with additional local self-government powers.

Each county is headed by a county prefect (župan), who is elected for a 4-year term by the local government units. They represent the executive power of the county and can only be recalled by a popular referendum. Regular local elections, on the other hand, determine the composition of the county assembly (županijska skupština), which is also renewed every 4 years with a proportional voting system. It is the deliberative body of the county and directly represents the citizens. Municipalities and cities are essentially equal in functions and administrative organization. The only difference is formal: usually municipalities are a collection of villages in rural areas, while towns are more markedly urbanized.

To be considered a city, a municipality must have more than 10,000 inhabitants, or alternatively be the center of a county. Both the municipal and city councils (općinsko or gradsko vijeće) represent the citizens of the self-government unit and are elected every four years by local, direct elections. The head of the council is called either municipality president (općinski načelnik) or mayor (gradonačelnik) depending on the case, but their functions are exactly the same: the representation of the executive power, directly elected by the citizens by majority vote every four years. Croatian municipalities are divided into local committees too, which also have elected councils.

## What are the responsibilities of local government?

The type and scope of functions reserved for each type of government depends first and foremost on the self-government unit itself. According to the subsidiarity principle – part of the Constitution since 2000 – the exercise of public functions should be as close as possible to citizens, delegating their fulfillment to the territorially superior level of governance only when necessary. So, in general terms, anything that is not expressly the responsibility of the central government can be delegated to local governance.

At the regional level, counties are responsible for a wide range of functions, varying from education to healthcare, from economic development to urban planning, and so on. As well as the other forms of local governance, counties are independent in their decision-making and can eventually take over some of the responsibilities of cities or municipalities if they request it. On their side, municipalities and towns take care of the basic needs of their citizens, and in general of all those tasks closely related to the territory, such as housing, utility services, social welfare, environment, civil protection, etc. It is also within their prerogative to request the county to transfer certain functions under its jurisdiction. Moreover, large towns are granted more autonomy in some specific issues, such as building permits and local roads.

## How are local governments financed?

Each level of governance corresponds to a different administration of finances, but the central government is the only one that can decide the taxes of the country. However, the actual amount of city and municipal taxes can vary from city to city and from municipality to municipality, because local authorities are allowed to change the rate within a range that is set by the central government. The only means by which local authorities have to collect taxes, bypassing the central government, is the public land use tax. Therefore, it is not surprising that the most important source of income for cities and municipalities is represented by non-tax revenues, of which the government sets only the minimum threshold. On the other hand, counties raise part of the capital needed to carry out their activities from the Croatian government, and part from specific taxation, such as the 5 percent tax on inheritance and vehicle ownership. Other means of self-financing may be the revenues from county-owned enterprises.

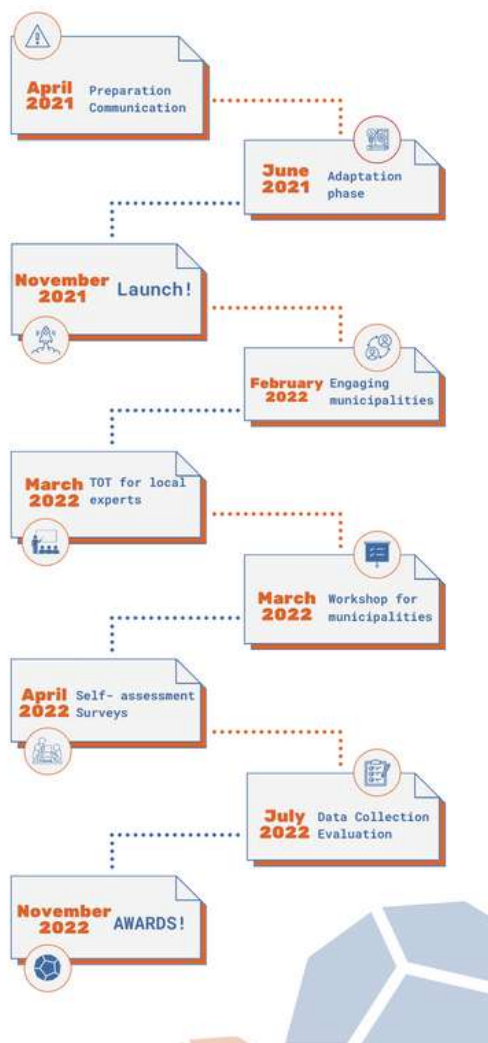
## Citizen participation

In 2010, the Constitution was amended to make access to public information a fundamental right in the country. Then in 2013, the Law on the Right to Access Information was adopted, which requires public authorities to grant access to information to any citizen or legal entity that requests it. The law also requires public institutions to appoint an Information Commissioner, a public official responsible for overseeing the implementation of this principle. Finally, public bodies must use digital tools to increase active citizen participation, both by informing the public of their initiatives and by making documents of public interest available.

# ELoGE in Croatia

## ELOGE IN CROATIA

### TIMELINE



## Local Experts

The implementation of the activities was done by ALDA in cooperation with the ALDA Skopje staff and the external expertise of the Consultancy Company from Croatia RAVECON, represented by Robert Ravenščak. A training session for trainers was organized in March and May of 2022, where throughout 3 sessions, the local experts were trained in implementation of the program of ELoGE.

## Introduction

The Project “European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in Croatia” is a 2-year project that started in April 2021, when ALDA was awarded the accreditation to implement the programme in Croatia. The project was implemented in 2 phases, from the 1st of April 2021 until the 30th of November 2021 and from the 15th of February to the 30th of November 2022.

The project aims to contribute to the activation of different Local Authorities from Croatia for the ELoGE accreditation from the Council of Europe, increasing the number of Municipalities awarded with the Label as a guarantee of good governance for all citizens in Croatia.

## Objectives

- To provide selected Municipalities from Croatia with trainings on good local governance standards and methods
- To raise awareness among selected Municipalities in Croatia on the role of the COE
- To raise awareness among Municipalities from Croatia about the 12 Principles of Good Governance
- To inform citizens in Croatia on the existence of tools to measure the performance of their local authorities
- To make citizens of Croatia aware of what good governance means
- To facilitate citizen participation in all the decision-making processes in general in Croatia
- To involve civil society organisations in the implementation of good governance principles in Croatia
- To assist the selected Municipalities in Croatia in the application process for ELoGE



# Methodology and Implementation

## Implementation on Institutional Level

As a first step in implementing the project, letters of information about the project were sent to relevant national and international stakeholders in Croatia such as the Association of cities of Croatia, Croatian Counties Association and Regional development agencies in Croatia in order to establish a connection on an institutional level and present the activities.

In the preparation phase, the project was presented during ALDA's events organised in Croatia. The events were a good opportunity to present the project and to meet Local Authorities and to map possible participants in the ELoGE assessment.

## Preparation phase

First step in order to better follow the project activities was to map all the activities and to create an action plan. Regular meetings were held for better coordination, and a communication channel for regular updates was established. Mapping on experts, municipalities, and different stakeholders was also put into place.

In this phase, a communication strategy was created covering the program, aims, activities, and achieved results, as well as promotion and dissemination of the project activities and results during the whole project duration. These activities include the visibility image of the project, designing of promotional materials, visibility activities for targeted groups, a networking plan as mentioned above, and communication/information. A website dedicated to ELoGE was created ([www.alda-elope.org](http://www.alda-elope.org)) where all information was translated in Croatian and made accessible for the general public

[www.alda-elope.org](http://www.alda-elope.org)

## Adaptation phase

One of the biggest challenges was adapting the materials for the ELoGE programme to consider the local contexts, more specifically, translating them into Croatian. The first document that was tackled was the Benchmark, which was translated with the support of the local expert. The content and indicators were discussed with experts in order to ensure they correspond to local context.

In this phase, the format of the benchmark was decided. Excel was chosen as the format for the benchmarking tool in this project. Following the final version of the benchmark, a guidelines document was prepared for the purposes of supporting the process.



## Launching ceremony

The project “European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE)” for Croatia was launched on the 22nd of November 2021 in Zagreb. The project was promoted in a hybrid-type of event, giving representatives of municipalities and participants the possibility to join both online and in person.



The launching started with a short welcoming speech from Mr. Robert Ravenščak, General Director of Ravecon LLC, our local partner organization, and continued with the intervention from the President of ALDA, Mr. Oriano Otočan and Mr. Niall Sheerin, representative of the Center of Expertise for Good governance, from the Council of Europe (CoE). It was reflected on how on one hand, Croatia has reached a certain level of expertise and maturity; while on the other there are still difficulties that persist; emphasizing how this project would be perfect to tackle them.



The opening speeches were followed by a presentation of the ELoGE programme in the Country, done by Ms. Katica Janeva, describing the details of the phases and processes that the LAs need to follow to be awarded with the label, the specific timing and timeline, tools, and more. The event was closed off with a Q&A session and a fruitful discussion.

## Engaging Croatian municipalities

After the Launching of the programme, interested local authorities were asked to officially adhere in the programme by signing and sending an official consent form from the Mayor and the Municipal council.

18 local authorities decided to join the ELoGE programme in Croatia.



# Benchmarking process

## Workshops for participating municipalities

The benchmarking process started with a workshop for the Croatian ELoGE coordinators on 30.03.2022. A short presentation of the ELoGE label and the programme details were the focus at the beginning of the event, before tackling the process of benchmarking and practical exercises.



The ELoGE coordinators had the opportunity to work on the benchmark alongside their colleagues with the support of Robert Ravenščak from RAVECON, ALDA's local partner, and to share their opinions about the key concepts and indicators. The event was a good occasion for the municipalities to network and to share experience and best practices.

## Self-assessment

The self-assessment process for the Croatian municipalities started on the 12th of April 2022. A package containing the following documents was sent.



- The Benchmark in Excel format
- The Benchmark in pdf format for consultation
- The Guidelines for filling the benchmark
- Link to additional documents (promotional items, the questionnaires in pdf format etc.)
- A link to a Google Drive folder created for each municipality to be used as an evidence depot.

The deadline established for the delivery of the benchmark was set in June 2022. During this period, the local experts were in constant contact with the Elogé coordinators to offer support. Due to various reasons, the deadline was pushed to September 2022 to accommodate the Municipalities.

In this timeframe, 4 municipalities delivered a complete dossier.

## Surveys for local authorities and citizens

3 separate surveys were prepared, 1 for citizens, 1 for employees of the municipalities, and 1 for councilors. The Surveys were created in Google forms in Croatian, and QR codes were made to ease the distribution. The Guidelines document contained instructions on how to distribute and promote the surveys.

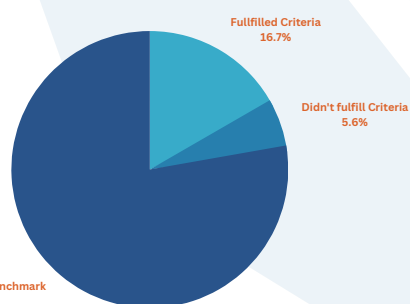
Targets were set for the different surveys that corresponded to the following criteria:

- For Citizens: 0.5 % of the population per the last census, from which 70% was acceptable.
- For Employees: All of the employees, per information obtained from the municipality, from which 70% was acceptable.
- For Counsellors: All of the counsellors, per the information obtained from the last local elections, from which 70% was acceptable.



The surveys stayed open until September 2022. The local experts worked with the ELoGE coordinators to reach the targets.

## Evaluation and Results



The collection of the data and the creation of the final dossiers of each municipality started in July 2022. To ensure that the data was complete, a check was made that the benchmarks were filed correctly and that the survey's targets were met before creating the final dossier for the Evaluation.

The evaluation committee was created in June 2022, with 2 members, representatives from the NGO and Consultancy sectors of Croatia. In the period of 2 months, the evaluators had the opportunity to check the dossiers in detail and ask for additional explanations or documentation.

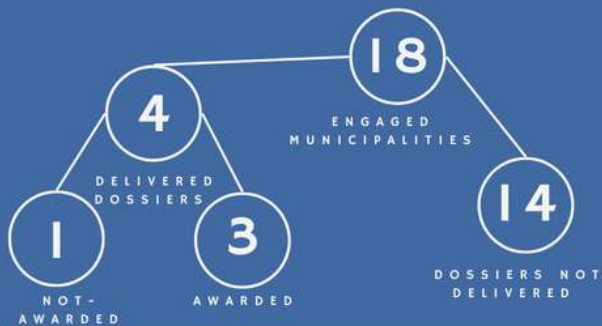
After an extensive deliberation of the committee and ALDA, the final scoring deemed that 3 of the 4 municipalities fulfilled the criteria to be awarded with the label and receive the dodecahedron.

For the municipalities from Croatia, the recipients of the label were Čakovec, Labin and Šibenik.

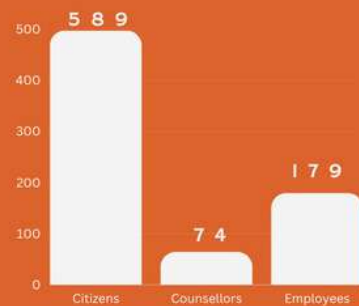
## ELOGE IN CROATIA STATISTICS

### BENCHMARKS

**3 . 2 8** AVERAGE SCORE OF  
AWARDED  
MUNICIPALITIES



### SURVEYS



AVERAGE  
SCORE **2 . 4 9**

# North Macedonia

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## Country Report

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Centre of Expertise  
For Good Governance

# North Macedonia

## Local governance in North Macedonia: a brief overview

Generally speaking, local governance is a well-embedded principle within the Macedonian political system. The Republic of North Macedonia ratified the Council of Europe's European Charter of Local Self-government, and the Constitution pays special attention to the local self-government issue – devoting an entire section to it.

Article 114 guarantees citizens' right to self-government and the role of municipalities in its realization, prescribing the establishment of neighborhood self-government entities that serve as a link between citizens and policymakers at the local level.

Article 115 also specifies the units of local self-government's prerogatives, stating that they represent a tool for citizens to participate in the decision-making process on issues of local relevance. Urban and rural communities can be established within each municipality, but their competencies vary from one to another. Villages and neighborhoods are not political entities, and they can only make recommendations to the local governments.

## How is local government organized?

The Republic of North Macedonia provides for two distinct levels of territorial administration: a central and a local one. As a result of several changes in the number and responsibilities of the administrative districts, the local government system now consists of 80 municipalities (општини) plus the City of Skopje.

10 municipalities constitute the so-called Greater Skopje, or City of Skopje, a distinct unit of local self-governance. All of them have a council and a mayor, as well as the other municipalities of the Republic, but they only deal with local matters and specific issues, while the City of Skopje takes care of matters that concern at least two municipalities at the same time. The particular status of Greater Skopje is regulated by the 2004 Law for the City of Skopje and guaranteed by article 117 of the Constitution.

The municipalities can be City-municipalities or Village-municipalities. They are composed of the mayor (градоначалник, the executive body) and the municipal Council (совет на општината), which represents the citizens. The mayor is elected by direct universal suffrage for a four-year term through the majority electoral model. In contrast, city councilors are elected by proportional vote, and the number of seats depends on the population of the municipality. The Council members elect their President, who manages and leads the sessions, and takes care of and performs the work delegated by the Law. The decisions of the mayor can be challenged by the unsatisfied parties.

## What are the responsibilities of local government?

The 2002 Local Self-Government Act put into operation the constitutional provisions and created the basis for the commencement of the decentralization process, making a qualitative change and increasing the number of competencies, previously shared, now being inherently municipal ones. Within the context of this law, the Ministry of Local Self-Government was established.

Then, in 2014, the EU enshrined the importance of regional development by including it as a separate IPA 2014-2020 objective. This has given a boost to local institutions, citizen participation in public life, and CSOs. Overall, Macedonia has a highly decentralized public sector, with municipalities assuming responsibilities in important areas such as education, basic service provision, and social welfare, environment, health, local economic development, culture, and sport. According to the Constitution and the Local Self-Government Law, a public administration body may also delegate to the municipality the performance of specific tasks within its competence.

## How are local governments financed?

To carry out necessary tasks, Macedonian local self-government units need financial resources collected in accordance with the Law on financing the local government units. The types of funding available in the country mainly include income sources and grants from the Republic's budget.

Roughly 50 percent of local revenues come from the central government, most of which are used to finance the education system. Other important sources of funding are the VAT revenues and the Personal Income Tax. In recent years, there have been increased efforts to improve municipal finances in an attempt to achieve greater economic independence from the central government.

## Citizen participation

The Law requires municipalities to be transparent to their citizens, informing them about their activities, decisions, and services. Popular participation in decision-making processes is granted in two ways: through the representatives of citizens and their associations and through direct participation. The latter can take the form either of a referendum, appeal or proposal, or of a public meeting or civic initiative, or of opinion polls – as established by the Law on referendum and other forms of direct participation.

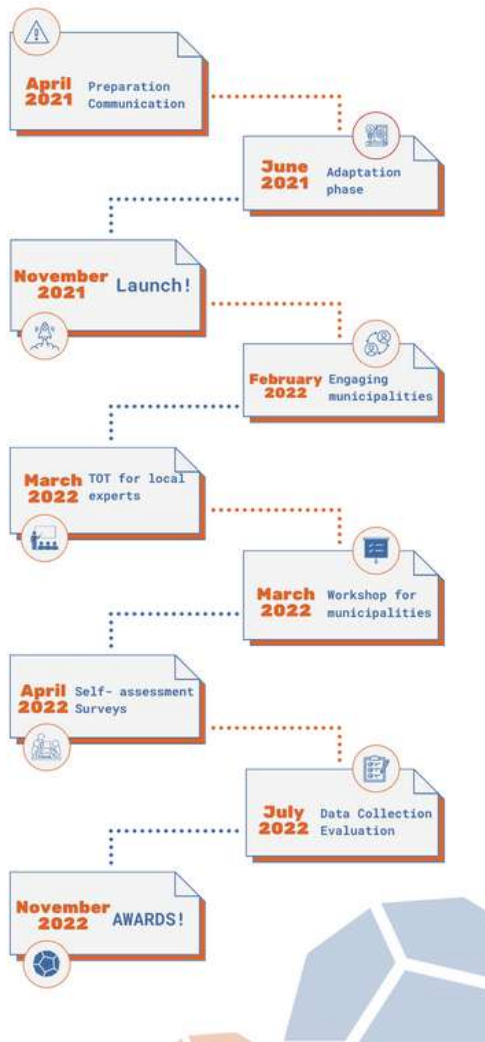
In any case, the financial burden for the organization of such activities is borne by the municipalities. Moreover, the local governments must establish two other participatory bodies: The Commission for inter-community relations and the Council for protection of the consumers.



# ELOGE in North Macedonia

## ELOGE IN NORTH MACEDONIA

### TIMELINE



## Local Experts

The implementation of the activities was done by ALDA and the local expertise in North Macedonia was provided by ALDA's office in Skopje and its competent staff.

A training session for trainers was organized in March and May 2022, where throughout 3 sessions the local experts were trained in the implementation of the program of ELOGE.

## Introduction

The Project "European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) in North Macedonia" is a 2-year project funded by the Council of Europe. The first phase of the project started on 1 April 2021 till 30 November 2021, and the second phase from 15 February to 30 November 2022.

The project "European Label of Governance Excellence (ELOGE) in North Macedonia" is designed to support municipalities to enhance their performance and provide high-quality services in an improved system of local self-government. It includes a way to measure verification of compliance by each participating local government unit with the Council of Europe's 12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance and is promoted in all Member States as part of the implementation of the European Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at the Local Level.

## Objectives

- To provide selected Municipalities from North Macedonia with trainings on good local governance standards and methods
- To raise awareness among selected Municipalities in North Macedonia on the role of the COE
- To raise awareness among Municipalities from North Macedonia about the 12 Principles of Good Governance
- To inform citizens in North Macedonia of the existence of tools to measure the performance of their local authorities.
- To make citizens of North Macedonia aware of what good governance means
- To facilitate citizen participation in all the decision-making processes in general in North Macedonia.
- To involve civil society organisations in the implementation of good governance principles in North Macedonia
- To assist the selected Municipalities in North Macedonia in the application process for the ELOGE accreditation at the Council of Europe, filling the benchmark

# Methodology and Implementation

## Implementation on Institutional Level

This project is placed in ALDA's institutional path on the EU level and on the National level in North Macedonia. In this regard, letters of information about the project were sent to relevant national and international stakeholders in North Macedonia such as the Ministry for Local self-government, Association of Municipalities – ZELS, UNDP in Macedonia, EU Delegation in North Macedonia, the Council of Europe programme office in Skopje, DG Near, and the Regional Statistic Centres in North Macedonia.

From the 29th to the 30th of September 2021, ALDA's Secretary General, Ms. Antonella Valmorbida, took part in an institutional mission in North Macedonia to convene with colleagues, delegates, and ministers at the local and European level.



More specifically, on September 29th, Ms. Valmorbida and Ms. Janeva, Director of the ALDA Office in Skopje and SEE Coordinator, were received by Ms. Lejla Dervisagic and Ms. Katalin Tamus, respectively: Head of Operations and Head of Programmes from the Council of Europe, in Skopje, North Macedonia, in fruitful encounters.



On September 30th, 2021, another important institutional meeting took place in North Macedonia, with Mr. Zoran Dimitrovski, Deputy Minister of Local Self-Government of North Macedonia in the premises of the Ministry. In this vein, the ELoGE project in North Macedonia was presented and it received the support of the Ministry, asking to be actively included in the assessment process.

During this visit, a meeting to present the project was organised with the representatives from the EU Delegation in Skopje, UNDP, the French Embassy in Skopje, and other stakeholders.

The cooperation on the institutional level continued in the second phase of the project, as the Ministry of Local Self-Government supported the project activities in 2022, and took part in the award ceremony in November 2022.

## Preparation phase

As is the procedure, in the preparation phase all of the activities were mapped, and the action plan was created in order to better follow the project activities. For better coordination, the project team regularly met. Mapping on experts, municipalities, and different stakeholders was put into place during this period.

In this phase, a communication strategy was created covering the program, aims, activities, and achieved results, as well as the promotion and dissemination of the project activities and results during the whole duration of the project, which was adapted to the Macedonian context. These activities include the visibility image of the project, designing of promotional materials, visibility activities for the targeted groups, a plan of networking as mentioned above, and communication/information. A website dedicated to ELoGE was created ([www.alda-elope.org](http://www.alda-elope.org)) where a section was dedicated to the ELoGE project translated into Macedonian.

[www.alda-elope.org](http://www.alda-elope.org)

## Adaptation phase

One of the biggest challenges was adapting the ELoGE materials to the local context, more specifically translating them into Macedonian. The first document that was tackled was the Benchmark, which was translated with the support of the local expert.

The content and the indicators were discussed with experts in local democracy in order to ensure that they correspond to the Macedonian context and legislative responsibilities of the municipalities. The other documentation was prepared accordingly.

In this phase, the format of the benchmark was decided. Excel was chosen as the format for the benchmarking tool in this project. Following the final version of the benchmark, a guidelines document was prepared to support the process.



## Launching ceremony

The launching event intended for Local government in North Macedonia – in order to present the 12 Principles of Good Governance, the ELoGE program and the overall project was organised on 18th November 2021 in Skopje and online on Zoom.



The hybrid event opened with the intervention of Eli Chakar from the Ministry of Local Self-Government; followed by Antonella Valmorbida, Secretary General of ALDA, who illustrated the experiences of ALDA on the topic of good governance, and Emir Coric, ALDA's Governing Board member, who dedicated his speech to ALDA's work in the Balkans. Moreover, Niall Sheerin from the Center of Expertise for Local Government Reform presented the important work of the Council of Europe and the different programs for the development of local governance.



The visibility of the event was broadly disseminated among the relevant stakeholders in the country, such as the Association of Local authorities, the Ministry of Local self-government, the Bureau for local and regional development, and ALDA's members in North Macedonia.

## Engaging Macedonian municipalities

After the Launching, interested local authorities were asked to officially adhere to the programme by signing and sending an official consent form from the Mayor and the Municipal council.

13 local authorities decided to join the ELoGE programme in North Macedonia.



# Benchmarking process

## Workshops for participating municipalities

The Workshop for the Macedonian ELoGE coordinators was organized in March 2022. The 1-day workshop started with a session dedicated to the programme of the label and the goals, phases, and tools of the programme. A short intro to the functioning of the programme was made as well as different programmes of the CoE.



The second session was dedicated to the role of the municipality in the programme was followed by practical examples. The workshop was finalized with a practical exercise of filling the benchmark and going through the different indicators and possible evidence.

## Self-assessment

The self-assessment process for the Macedonian municipalities started on the 11th of April 2022. A package containing the following documents was sent.



- The Benchmark in Excel format
- The Benchmark in pdf format for consultation
- The Guidelines for filling the benchmark
- A document containing examples and evidence for each indicator.
- Link to additional documents (promotional items, the questionnaires in pdf format etc.)
- A link to a google drive folder created for each municipality to be used as an evidence depot.

The deadline established for the delivery of the benchmark was set as June 2022. During this period, the local experts were in constant contact with the Elogé coordinators to offer support, both with visits and contact by telephone and the internet.

By September 2022, from 13 municipalities, 9 Municipalities delivered the filled Benchmark.

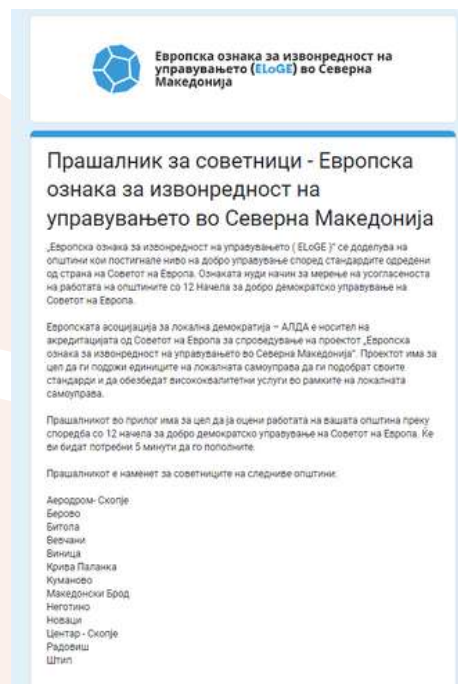
## Surveys for local authorities and citizens

3 separate surveys were prepared, 1 for citizens, 1 for employees of the municipalities, and 1 for councilors. The Surveys were created in Google forms in Macedonian, and QR codes were made to ease the distribution. The Guidelines document contained instructions on how to distribute and promote the surveys. Upon request of some of the municipalities, paper versions were made to be distributed that were individually added in the system.

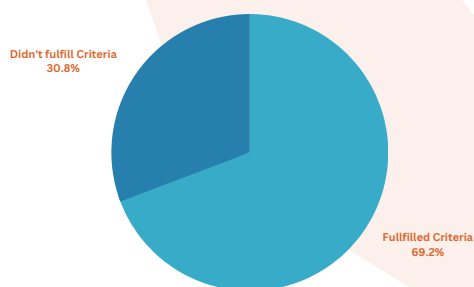
Targets were set for the different surveys that corresponded to the following criteria:

- For Citizens: 0.5 % of the population per the last census, from which 70% was acceptable.
- For Employees: All of the employees, per information obtained from the municipality, from which 70% was acceptable.
- For Counsellors: All of the counsellors, per the information obtained from the last local elections, from which 70% was acceptable.

The surveys stayed open until October 2022 to ensure a better data collection. The local experts worked with the ELoGE coordinators to reach the targets.



## Evaluation and Results



The collection of the data and the creation of the final dossiers of each municipality started in July 2022. To ensure that the data was complete, ALDA made sure that the benchmarks were filed correctly and that the survey's targets were met, before creating the final dossier for the evaluation.

When the evaluation committee was created in June 2022, and finalized as a two-member committee, a representative of the Macedonian NGO sector and a representative of academia. In the period of 2 months, the evaluators had the opportunity to check the dossiers in detail and ask for additional explanations or documentation.

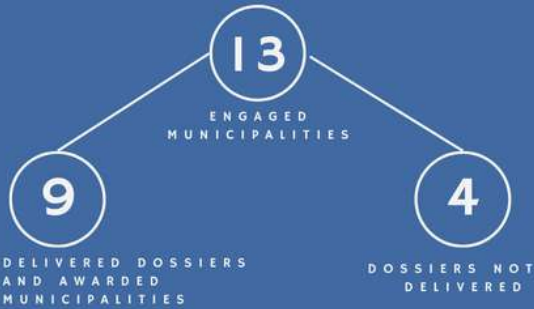
After an extensive deliberation of the committee and ALDA, the final scoring revealed that all of the 9 municipalities were deemed to have met the criteria to be awarded the label and receive the dodecahedron. For the municipalities from North Macedonia, the recipients of the label were Aerodrom, Berovo, Bitola, Vinica, Kumanovo, Negotino, Novaci, Radovis, and Stip.

# ELOGE IN NORTH MACEDONIA STATISTICS

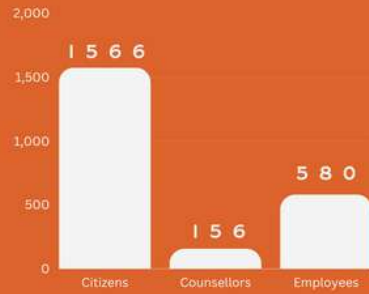
## BENCHMARKS

3 . 4 4

AVERAGE SCORE AWARDED MUNICIPALITIES



## SURVEYS



AVERAGE SCORE 2 . 6 8

# Kosovo\*

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## Country Report

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



Centre of Expertise  
For Good Governance



# KOSOVO\*

## Local governance in Kosovo\*: a brief overview

Local self-government in the republic of Kosovo\* is guaranteed by both the 2008 Constitution and the Law. The promulgation of the Constitution was a real breakthrough for the country: first of all, it represented the most significant transfer of power from the United Nations to Kosovo\* in terms of central administration.

Furthermore, the contemporary adoption of the Law on Local Self-Government defined the areas of competence of the central and local governments respectively. In doing so, even without having ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government yet, Kosovo\* possesses a legislation in line with its principles.

### How is local government organized?

The Kosovar system of government consists of two different levels: the central and the municipal one. Since the 2000 UNMIK reform (United Nations Mission in Kosovo), Kosovo\* is divided into 7 districts that are further subdivided into 38 municipalities (komunë/opština).

However, the municipalities represent the only administrative units that have power in local governance. They consist of two main bodies: the Mayor and the Assembly. On the one hand, executive powers are in the hands of the mayor, who exercises them within the limits prescribed by law. On the other, the municipal Assembly holds the legislative power. It oversees the work of the executive and adopts municipal policies. The municipality thus constituted is legitimized every four years by popular and direct vote.

After the 2013 Brussels Agreement, Kosovo\* agreed to the creation of a Community of Serb Municipalities with a special status and competencies. The aim of this self-governing association is to unite the Serb-majority municipalities of Kosovo\* into a single entity. Despite the fact that 9 years have passed since the agreement was signed, and although it is in accordance with the Kosovo\* Law and with the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Community has not been implemented yet.

### What are the responsibilities of local government?

The responsibilities of individual municipalities vary significantly depending on the municipality in question. Generally speaking, all municipalities deal with urban and rural planning, the environment, and economic development. They are also in charge of a vast range of services offered to citizens, such as education, health care, welfare and public services, culture, tourism and so on and so forth.

\*All references to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations' Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Alongside these basic responsibilities, some municipalities are given greater autonomy by law. This is the case, for example, of the Pristina municipality. The capital city of Kosovo\* has been given special treatment since 2018, when the Law on the Capital City was ratified. In addition to the powers given to other municipalities in Kosovo\*, Pristina has its own Directorate for Municipal Police and holds more responsibilities in the health sector. Moreover, the capital city administration can bypass the central government approval concerning the establishment of public enterprises.

The second exception concerns the aforementioned Serbian municipalities. They also have additional powers in policing, but over the administration of cultural and religious sites, universities and secondary health too. The implementation of the Brussels Agreement and the constitution of the Community of Serb Municipalities should give them even greater autonomy from the central power, but the deal has not been implemented so far.

### How are local governments financed?

Municipal resources mainly come from building permits and various types of taxation, especially the immovable property tax. Several fiscal powers have been transferred to local governments over time, increasing their financial autonomy and fostering the process of decentralization. Serb-majority municipalities can also count on the financial support from the Republic of Serbia.

### Citizen participation

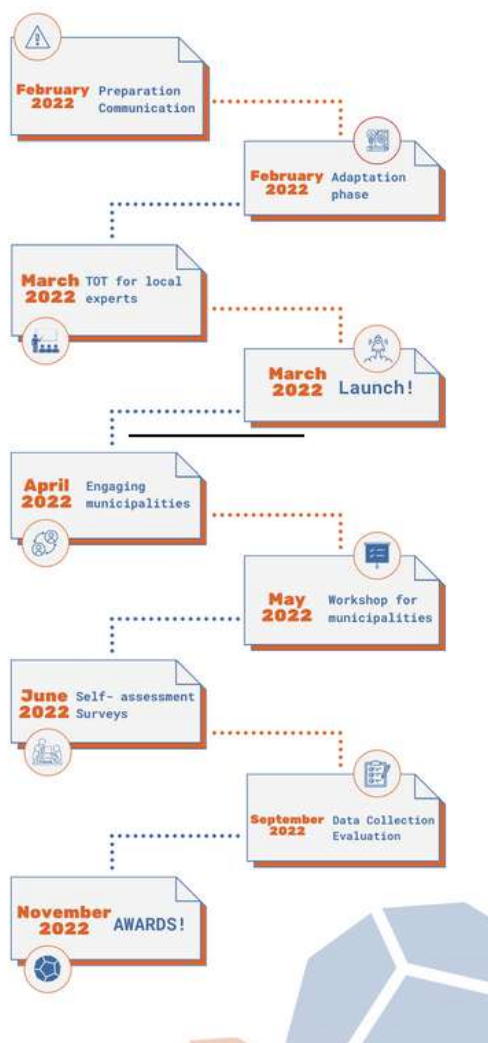
Kosovo\* has a legislative framework that protects the right of citizens to be informed about public interest activities and to participate in the decision-making process of the local governments. Municipalities have an obligation to be transparent to their citizens by making the documents concerning the territorial administration public and accessible and by organizing at least two public meetings a year.

Citizen participation in public life is regulated by local government legislation, which determines the instruments of direct democracy that can be used. They range from the convening of a public assembly to citizens' initiatives to referendums. Moreover, the legislation on local government also requires municipalities to create special commissions for the purpose of involving citizens in the decision-making process. These committees of citizens and non-governmental organizations have the right to make proposals and develop opinions on behalf of and with respect to the Municipal Assembly. .

# ELoGE in Kosovo\*

## ELOGE IN KOSOVO

### TIMELINE



## Local Experts

Being local support in the territory of Kosovo\*, ALDA turned to Local Democracy Agency Kosovo\*, our local partner in Peja. The director of the agency, Shpresa Berisha, was trained as a Local ELoGE expert.

A training session for trainers was organized in March and May 2022, where throughout 3 sessions, the local experts were trained in implementation of the program of ELoGE.

## Introduction

The Project “European Label of Governance Excellence (ELoGE) in Kosovo\*” is a 1-year project funded by the Council of Europe. The first phase of the project started on the 15th of February until the 30th of November 2021.

The project aimed to develop a strong partnership between the Centre of Expertise and ALDA to be of mutual benefit for its respective missions, exchanging practices, disseminating the instruments of evaluation proposed in ELoGE, and raising the competencies of local governments in Kosovo\* in order to deliver better governance to their citizens.

## Objectives

- To provide the identified Municipalities from Kosovo\* with trainings on good local governance standards and methods
- To raise awareness among selected Municipalities about the role of the COE
- To raise awareness among Municipalities in Kosovo\* about the 12 Principles of Good Governance
- To inform citizens on the existence of tools to measure the performance of their local authorities.
- To make citizens aware of what good governance means
- To facilitate citizen participation in all the decision-making processes in general
- To involve civil society organisations in the implementation of good governance principles
- To assist the identified municipalities with the application process for the ELoGE accreditation at the Council of Europe, filling the benchmark.

# Methodology and Implementation

## Implementation on Institutional Level

The project started with the full cooperation of the Ministry of Local Government Administration of Kosovo\*. In preparation of this project ALDA had an institutional mission to Kosovo\* in September 2021 in order to create a proposal for the support of local governance, encourage and facilitate capacity building, and grow regional cooperation in the Country and the rest of the Balkans. Important factors are the promotion of good management of EU funds and the promotion of EU programmes.



The minister, Elbert Krasniqi supported the project by taking part in the Launching ceremony and the Award ceremony, and by providing one of the evaluators of the evaluation committee

## Preparation phase

As is the procedure, in the preparation phase, all the activities were mapped, and the action plan was created in order to better follow the project activities. For better coordination, the project team regularly met. Mapping on experts, municipalities, and different stakeholders was put into place during this period.

In this phase, a communication strategy was created covering the program, aims, activities, and achieved results, as well as the promotion and dissemination of the project activities and results during the whole duration of the project, which was adapted to the Macedonian context. These activities include the visibility image of the project, designing of promotional materials, visibility activities for the targeted groups, a plan of networking as mentioned above, and communication/information. A website dedicated to ELoGE was created ([www.alda-elope.org](http://www.alda-elope.org)) where a section was dedicated to the ELoGE project translated in Macedonian.

[www.alda-elope.org](http://www.alda-elope.org)

## Adaptation phase

Once again, the biggest challenges were adapting the ELoGE materials to the local context, more specifically translating and adapting them to the context of Kosovo\*. Using previous experience was useful in this process, due to the similarities of Balkan laws and procedures. Once again the first document that was tackled was the Benchmark, which was translated with the support of the local expert and checked by several linguistic experts.

The content and the indicators were discussed with experts in local democracy and experts from the Ministry of Local Government Administration in order to ensure that they correspond to the local context and legislative responsibilities of the municipalities. The other documentation was prepared accordingly.

As in previous cases, Excel was adopted as the format for the benchmarking tool in this project. Following the final version of the benchmark, a guidelines document was prepared to support the process.



## Launching ceremony

The European Label for Governance Excellence was introduced in Kosovo\* during the kick-off event organized on the 6th of April 2022 in Pristina.

The Minister of Local Government Administration of Kosovo\*, Mr. Elbert Krasniqi, opened the event by highlighting the importance of democratic principles in the process of local development. During the opening remarks, ALDA's Secretary General, Ms. Antonella Valmorbida, presented the experience of the Association in implementing ELOGE in different countries and contexts.



The Head of office of the Council of Europe office in Pristina, Mr. Frank Power, put forward the work of the Council of Europe in the country and the advanced environment when it comes to good governance in the past years. Mr. Niall Sheerin from the Centre of Expertise for Good governance concluded that the ELOGE label is awarded to municipalities that have achieved a high level of good governance. A detailed presentation of the project was done by ALDA Skopje.

More than 20 mayors and representatives from municipalities followed the presentation of the phases of ELOGE implementation and expressed their interest in engaging in the self-assessment process.

## Engaging Kosovar municipalities

The call of interest for local authorities to express their interest in applying for the ELoGE benchmark was launched in April 2022. 13 Municipalities expressed their interest to take part in the project with an official letter.

The municipalities varied from small rural municipalities to big urban municipalities, with all of them being from Albanian-speaking regions. Each municipality appointed ELoGE coordinators or ELoGE teams for further cooperation.



## Benchmarking process

### Workshops for participating municipalities

As part of the implementation strategy of the ELoGE assessment, a training session for Kosovar municipalities was organized on the 19th of May 2022 in Pristina. The training was focused on presenting the phases of the self-assessment process that the Municipalities are supposed to put in place over the next several months in order to get the European Label of Governance Excellence.



Representatives from 11 Municipalities attended the training and expressed their interest to participate in this process. During the workshop, the assigned coordinators had the possibility to get familiar with the process, the steps of implementation, and the requested documentation.

## Self-assessment

The self-assessment process for the municipalities in Kosovo\* started on the 1st of June 2022. A package containing the following documents was sent.



- The Benchmark in Excel format
- The Benchmark in pdf format for consultation
- The Guidelines for filling the benchmark
- Document containing examples and evidence for each indicator.
- Link to additional documents (promotional items, the questionnaires in pdf format etc.)
- A link to a google drive folder created for each municipality to be used as an evidence depot.

The deadline established for the delivery of the benchmark was set as July 2022. During this period, the local experts were in constant contact with the Eloge coordinators to offer support, both with visits and contact by telephone and internet consultation.

By September 2022, from 13 municipalities, 9 Municipalities delivered the completed Benchmark in the given timeframe that was acceptable to be evaluated.

## Surveys for local authorities and citizens

3 separate surveys were prepared, 1 for citizens, 1 for employees of the municipalities, and 1 for councilors. The Surveys were created in Google forms in Albanian, and QR codes were made to ease the distribution. The Guidelines document contained instructions on how to distribute and promote the surveys. Upon request of some of the municipalities, paper versions were made to be distributed, that were individually added in the system.

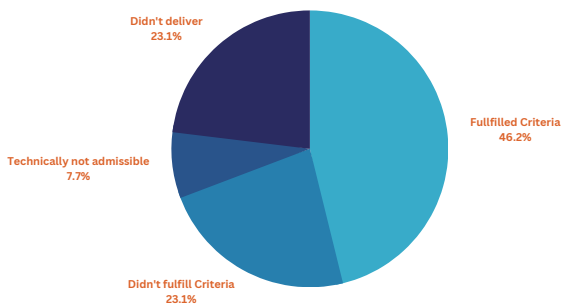
Targets were set for the different surveys that corresponded to the following criteria:

- For Citizens: 0.5 % of the population per the last census, from which 60% was acceptable.
- For Employees: All of the employees, per information obtained from the municipality, from which 60% was acceptable.
- For Counsellors: All of the counsellors, per the information obtained from the last local elections, from which 60% was acceptable.

The surveys stayed open until October 2022 to ensure a better data collection. The local experts worked with the ELOGE coordinators to reach the targets.



## Evaluation and Results

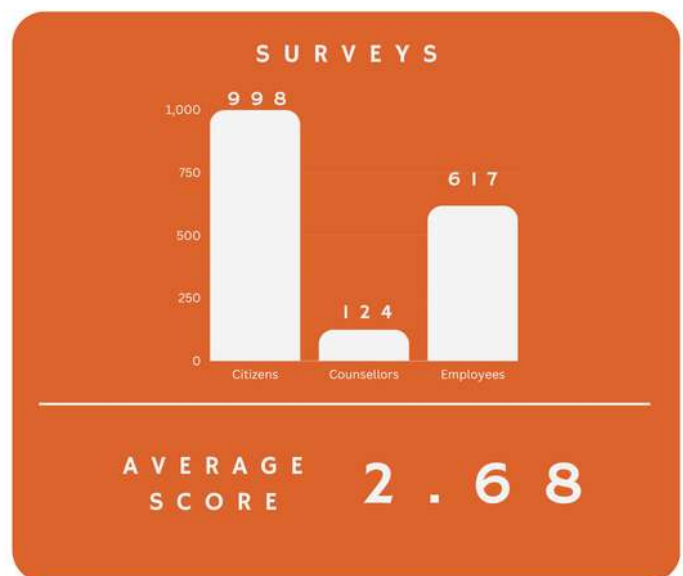
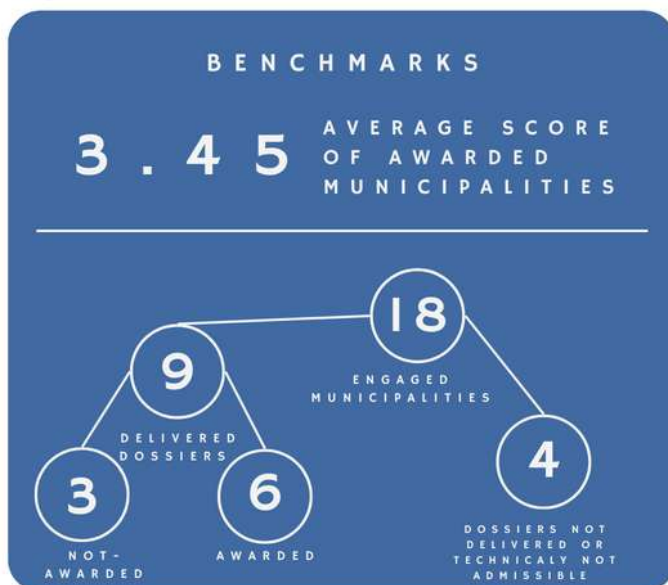


The collection of the data and the creation of the final dossiers of each municipality started in September 2022. To ensure that the data was complete, ALDA made sure that the benchmarks were filed correctly, and the survey's targets were met, before creating the final dossier for the Evaluation.

The evaluation committee was created in August 2022, with 2 members, one representative of the NGO Sector of Kosovo\* and a representative of the Control Body from the Ministry of Local Government Administration of Kosovo\*.

The evaluators had a short period to check the dossiers. After several e-mail exchanges and consultations and the final evaluation meeting, with the final scoring, 6 of the 9 municipalities fulfilled the criteria to be awarded the label and receive the dodecahedron. For the municipalities from Kosovo\*, the recipients of the label were Gjilan, Glogoc, Han i Elezit, Lipjan, Mitrovice, and Shtime.

## ELOGE IN KOSOVO\* STATISTICS





## Award ceremony



With all activities and evaluations finalized, the European Association for Local Democracy, ALDA, presented the label to the achieving municipalities on behalf of the Council of Europe in a joint event for North Macedonia, Kosovo\* and Croatia on the 22nd of November 2022 in Skopje, North Macedonia.

65 mayors and representatives from the various participating municipalities attended the ceremony. Opening the ceremony was a speech by Risto Penov, the Minister of Local Self-Government of North Macedonia, Elbert Krasniqi, the Minister of Local Self-Government of Kosovo\*, Oriano Otocan, the President of ALDA, and Antonella Valmorbida, the General Secretary of ALDA.

Following was a discussion about the importance of the European Label of Governance Excellence with Niall Sheerin of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. After that, one representative from each participating country spoke about the ELoGE experience. The participants had the opportunity to hear the testimonials from Berovo, North Macedonia, Labin, Croatia and Lipjan, Kosovo\*.



Finishing off the event was the handing out of the awards themselves, followed by an opportunity for the participants to network and exchange. The municipalities will hold the label for one year.



## Challenges

While implementing the projects “European label for Governance Excellence in Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo\*” ALDA encountered similar challenges due to some similarities in governmental systems and circumstances. ALDA and the local expert detected **3 major challenges** during the ELoGE process.

**The first challenge** was the translation and adaptation of the ELoGE materials. Due to the specificity of the Croatian, Macedonian, and Albanian languages, several experts were consulted about the terminology and the translation of the Benchmark, and the municipalities themselves were consulted about the content. Indicators were also heavily discussed on whether they correspond to the local context, legislation, and processes, and a final decision was made so that no changes were needed, except on a linguistic level. In order to make the indicators more understandable, a document with examples and evidence was created for the municipalities.

**The second challenge** was maintaining the deadline for the delivery of the benchmarks and the surveys. One half of the benchmarks were delivered on time or after a short delay, but for the other half the delays were given an extension until September 2022. When they were asked about the reasons for the delays, the ELoGE coordinators explained that it was mainly due to the overall coordination on the municipal level, either waiting for input on certain indicators from different sectors, or different levels of bureaucracy that they needed to overcome. **The solution** to push the deadline gave them the possibility to successfully finalise the process.

**The biggest challenge** was gathering the targeted number of responses to the surveys. For all 3 projects, the surveys stayed open until the end of October 2022. For the rural municipalities, the challenge was smaller as the coordinators even shared paper versions of the surveys and then manually added them to the online system, but for the bigger and more urban municipalities, there was a sense of reluctance to participate in the surveys, due the lack of interest of the general public in some cases, or political disagreements and tension in others.

**A third challenge** was encountered in the process of implementation of ELoGE in Kosovo\*. For North Macedonia and Croatia, ALDA had 2 years to implement the projects, but in the case of Kosovo\* it was only 1 year, which was a challenge. The experience that ALDA gained during the first phase of the other two projects and the support from the local experts and the ministry was indispensable for the timely organization of the activities.

## Positive experiences

On the question of what **the positive experiences** from this project were for the municipalities, the ELoGE coordinators noted that after detecting weaknesses, they immediately started working on different approaches on overcoming them. Several municipalities expressed that participating in this project has developed their capacities for working on projects and has improved their vision in the eyes of the general public. Some municipalities started projects directly connected to their weaker indicators such as the capacity building of employees and creating risk or development strategies.

**The second** positive experience noted was the cooperation. All the municipalities declared that they stayed in contact and offered mutual support during the self-assessment process, by sharing experiences and offering assistance on different levels. The joint projects and cooperation of neighboring municipalities was crucial in the process, as Macedonian municipalities explained by giving the example of joint contacts for internal and external audits. The ELoGE projects prompted the municipalities to take part in more development projects and all of them are willing to repeat the process in the future.

The project also **encouraged** competition between the municipalities, especially in Kosovo\*. The ELoGE coordinators explained that it helped them be of higher quality and implement the process in a more timely fashion.