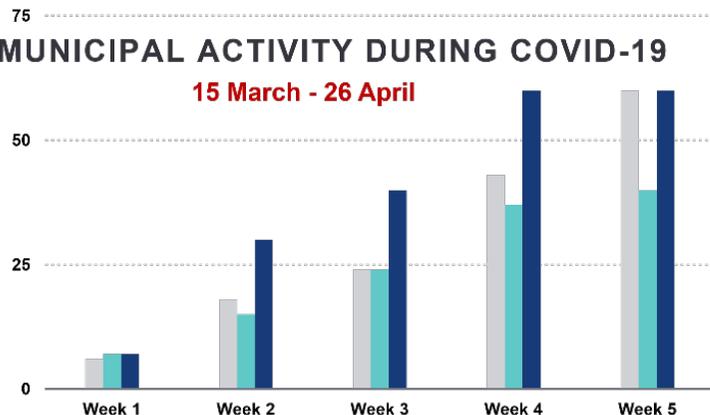


MUNICIPAL ACTIVITY DURING COVID-19

15 March - 26 April



Council heads and secretaries trained
 Replicated Practices
 Online decisions

Online Decisions
60
 Councils

Replicated Practices
40

60
 Heads of council and secretaries trained in online decision making aspects

THREE MOST REPLICATED PRACTICES

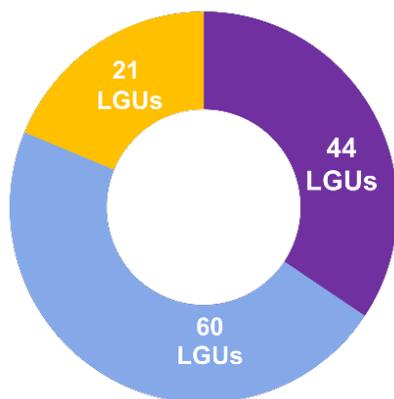
15 March-26 April

Decision making

Online decision making is the most replicated practice with by municipal councils. From just 7 online council meetings in the first week, by week five 60 councils have held online meetings at least once.

Safety in markets

Safety measures such as social distancing markings and point of sale spacing in marketplaces were adapted swiftly by municipalities. In week 3 only 25 municipalities had implemented such measures. By week 5 there are 44 municipalities that implementing this practice



Volunteering

21 municipalities mobilized quickly to form teams of volunteers to collect and distribute aid for families in need. Municipal staff and councilors part of volunteering effort.

COVID 19 - REPORT - 21 - 27 APRIL

REPORT

**ON A FUNCTIONAL GOVERNMENT
IN RESPONSE TO THE COVID 19
CHALLENGE IN COOPERATION
WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES**



21-27 APRIL

This project is initiated and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC, and implemented by Helvetas Albania

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DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Municipal Council Activity	Transparency	Other activities
<p>Decision-making: In the sixth week of the emergency, the municipal councils are in a favorable situation to conduct their decision-making activity. 60 of them have held at least one online meeting, where 42 municipal councils have done this through video conferencing platforms. 39 of these municipal councils have been technically assisted by BtF. Municipal councils through online platforms have approved 18 Regulations of Council Functioning, 31 Codes of Conduct and Ethics, 29 Regulations of Public Relations and 1 Petition Regulation and 1 Regulation of Community Structures. This week 1 council meeting was held in large hall maintaining social distance. There is noticed a preference to hold meetings in this format in several other municipalities as well.</p> <p>Oversight: Initiatives for the exercise of the oversight function of the council have been undertaken in a number of municipal councils in this period. In 6 municipalities¹ the executive reports to the municipal council on the aid/assistance distribution process and provides details on the list of beneficiaries. While 13 of them oversee the patronage groups for lonely retirees. Civil society organizations have reported an increase in the number of cases requiring treatment / counseling for cases of violence, while the number of cases reported to the police has decreased. Based on these findings, Commissions of Gender Equality and Social Protection in municipal councils² facilitated by the BtF have adopted a resolution, which mobilizes municipal structures in monitoring, preventing and managing cases of domestic violence. Through this resolution, the executive is required to report to the Commission of Gender Equality and Social Protection on the followed-up cases. 9 municipal councils have approved this resolution and 2 others have put it on the agenda of the next meeting. The first outcomes of the resolution are making available social housing (Kucove and Vlora) and the mobilization of the Police to follow up the cases (Vlorë).</p>	<p>Transparency:In order to be transparent and interact with the citizens, three municipal councils, Shkodra, Fieri and Kukësi, have held online municipal council meetings by broadcasting them live on Facebook and local media. While in Lezha and Mirdita the full meetings held through video conference were posted in on Facebook. Municipalities inform citizens through electronic space on coercive measures or on the legal framework of the emergency situation. Reporting of the work done by all municipal structures is provided on Facebook and local media in 21 Municipalities. In Kukës, the mayor holds a weekly conference broadcast on local TV for public information.</p> <p>Financial Aspects: Municipal councils have acted to reduce the fiscal burden on local businesses by lowering taxes and fees/tariffs for a range of activities and deferring deadlines for others. The municipalities of Fier, Vlora, Saranda, Himara, Kavaja, Korca, Përmet, Gjirokastra joined this week the municipalities of Berat, Durrës, Kolonjë, Kukës Lezhë Pogradec, which took these measures in previous weeks. In Berat, the rent of the April-May period is waived for 146 traders of the Industrial Market with a budget cost of 2,565,000 ALL. While in Kuçova, the market rent is waived for the whole extension of the pandemic. This week, there was also a reduction in the taxes of businesses that provide tourist services, such as hotels (-30% of municipal duties for cleaning tax). Also, 5 municipalities are applying waivers or deferrals of social housing rents. The lockdown measures are expected to affect local governments' revenues. While municipalities are reporting a considerable lowering of revenues, such as the tax for small business, hotel sleeping tax, and the tax on personal income and tariffs are also affected such as the tariff for the use of public space, veterinary services, hunting, car parking, further falls are expected in the coming days. This fall in revenues combined with the budget reallocations done these past two months will require a review of the budgetary plans for the second half of the year</p>	<p>Technical assistance: Bashki të Forta project has provided technical assistance for 35 municipal councils through daily online training (click here) for municipal council chairs and secretaries (60 participants). The focus of training was on "Regulation of the council functioning", "Regulation of Community Consultations", "Drafting of the Activity Plan of the Municipal Council and Budgeting". The Agency for the Support of Local Government has addressed municipal councils to encourage approval of regulations. Municipal Council of Roskovec, marks the opening of the electronic register and making notifications according to the new regulation.</p> <p>Human resources and organisation: Municipal teams have worked long hours to provide additional services to the community, while for another part reduced hours have been applied and rotation in physical appearance at work, which have been increased this week.</p> <p>In addition to volunteering, municipality employees and municipal council members have donated to the neediest people. Last week, 300 families were provided with food packages from the donation of honorariums members of Shkodra municipal council made for those families that have been most affected by the situation created by COVID-19.</p>

¹ Pogradec, Kolonjë, Devoll, Shijak, Korçë, Kukës

² Polican, Kuçovë, Krujë, Shijak, Patos, Peqin, Has, Kukës, Delvinë

NATIONAL-REGIONAL –LOCAL GOVERNMENT COOPERATION

Chambers of Commerce and Business

Business: The Business Association in Kukes Region addresses issues of a fiscal nature regarding the deferral of the payment of local taxes and proposes changes to the security and safety measures. In order for the business activity to proceed, it is required to limit the way and frequency of movement, not the movement schedule: mandatory wearing of masks in public places; mandatory and periodic temperature test for each institution and enterprise at the beginning and end of work in addition to the measures that the business must implement.

There has been a communication of the Vlora Chamber of Commerce with the mayor for the creation of a facilitation package for the tourism business. Work has begun to assess the reduction and deferral of deadlines for the payment of taxes and fees/tariffs by tour operators.

Trilateral cooperation and Civil Society

Quarantine: Municipalities are cooperating by providing services to citizens placed in quarantine after returning from abroad. A number of municipalities in Korça region are assisting the prefect and state police in enforcing a 14-day quarantine order for emigrants arriving at border crossing points in the municipality's territory. The service consists of monitoring by the municipal police and meeting food or medicine needs during the stay, through patronage groups.

Safety rule implementation: In the region of Vlora, joint inspections have started between the prefecture, the municipality and the Institute of Public Health for the implementation of the measures taken for the safety in the markets. More frequent inspections in city markets are taking place in the region's center municipality where consumer density is the highest.

After testing the online form prepared by the Ministry of Interior for the registration of distribution of food packages and assistance for the elderly, field reporting by three municipalities (Korça, Patos, Lezha) has begun.

Civil Society: Civil society has begun to act in various municipalities via the internet. In Roskovec last week an online training for the prevention of domestic violence took place. In Ura Vajgurore and Roskovec another online training took place based on youth taking part in local government decision making.

Disinfection (calculating tariff cost)

Disinfection: This week, the Ministry of Tourism and Environment has officially forwarded to all municipalities the model of calculating the costs of disinfection of public premises and spaces, along with the relevant recommendations for its application. The model assists municipalities by facilitating the calculation of costs for providing service quickly, effectively and transparently in fund management.

The municipalities of Shkodra, Gramsh, Kurbin and Lezha have helped to make this model as complete and applicable as possible with their experience and expertise.

BtF and GiZ are supporting partner municipalities for its implementation by ensuring on the one hand optimization of funds, on the other hand transparency for the public and informed decision-making for the municipal council.

The work for the disinfection of the environments and public buildings continues in a systematic way, while in municipalities such as Tirana, coordination has been observed with the administrators of the buildings to advise and promote the wider scope of this service.

PERFORMANCE OF LOCAL FUNCTIONS

Tourism and Public Services

Tourism: The Municipality of Kolonjë has been in contact with local agro-tourism businesses that provide tourist services; mainly small guest houses for the tourist season and is discussing the addressing of reservations made and how to proceed with the tourist season. It is estimated that mountain tourism, thanks to the nature of the service, has the potential to better adapt to the rules of social distancing. Preparatory work in this direction has started in mountainous municipalities such as Puka and Tropoja.

The municipalities, whose revenues depend on maritime tourism, are considering drafting concrete measures and plans for the new tourist season, which is expected to be oriented to local vacationers. While waiting for guidelines from the Ministry of Tourism for the approach to be followed this season, municipalities are considering a series of mitigating measures of a fiscal nature (tax and tariff reductions) as well as measures to ensure the safety of beach-goers (space between umbrellas, distance shifting of street vendors, marking of car and speed boat/boat parking lots, etc.) and service- providing businesses.

Social distancing: After markets and businesses, marking to maintain social distance is also being applied to spaces where public institutions provide service.

While the health emergency has received all the attention, the emergency offices near the rural municipalities are also facing the extinction of sporadic forest fires. Fushë- Arrëz Municipality has joined other municipalities such as Lezha, Mirdita, Klos, Mat that have had such cases.

Psycho-social assistance, assistance to farmers

Domestic violence and psychosocial assistance:

Intensification by municipalities in relation to measures for information and prevention of domestic violence. 14 municipalities³ have made available the phone numbers of social workers to denounce cases of domestic violence. In Lezha, an application is provided to facilitate this service. In the same municipality, the social service in partnership with World Vision has launched a social program that provides home services for children with disabilities, in remote areas of the municipality. In municipalities such as Dibra and Kukës, phone therapy and counseling are provided or practitioners have been conducting visits at home. While in larger municipalities remote counseling is provided by phone or online as in the case of (Shkodra and Elbasan).

At the initiative of BtF, 10 municipalities have signed agreements to cooperate with LOPUEs for the provision of psycho-social services to children aged 3-6, based on the good practice of the municipality of Durrës. As a result of this engagement 10 cases have been treated in Durrës and Kukës. While in Lezha the LOPUE has instructed local offices to assist with psychological help also children in the 3-6 age bracket while coordinating with municipalities.

Managing the returnees

Returned emigrants: Municipalities have reduced the quarantine costs of returned emigrants by providing free food (Pogradec, Korça and Gjirokastra) or by adapting public buildings such as schools (Libohova, Saranda,) for their accommodation avoiding thus high hotel costs. Municipalities cooperate with business or NGOs to provide and deliver the food.

Farmer assistance: Patronage groups in each administrative unit of Kolonjë municipality have enabled the transport of fertilizers, seeds and livestock food according to the requirements of farmers, in order not to hinder their activity even in the most remote administrative units. The transport was carried out with the help of the Department of Services in the municipality of Kolonjë.

³ Dibër, Klos, Malesi e Madhe, Fushe Arrëz, Shijak, Lushnjë, Selenicë, Himarë, Pogradec, Lezhë, Durrës, Gramsh, Mirditë, Has