ActionSEE

Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in SEE

Regional Road Map for the Western Balkans

ACTION STEPS FOR COMMON RECOMMENDATIONS FROM COUNTRY ROAD MAPS PUBLISHED BY ACTION SEE NETWORK

Based on **measuring for 2017**

Regional
Road Map

on Good governance
for the Western Balkans

Action steps for common
recommendations
from Country Road maps
published by ACTION SEE Network

**Based on the
measuring for 2017**

Sarajevo, December 2018

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INTRODUCTION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

Openness represents a key condition for democracy. It allows citizens to receive information and knowledge necessary for equal participation in political life, effective decision-making and holding institutions accountable for policies which they conduct. Institutions worldwide undertake specific activities with the aim to enhance their transparency and accountability before the citizens.

Open governance is based on four organizational principles: transparency, accessibility, integrity, and awareness. These principles apply to all branches of government, from the central executive to the local self-government, the parliament and the judiciary.

The Index of Openness is a composite indicator that measures the degree to which governments in the Western Balkan countries are open to citizens and society and is designed in order to define to which degree citizens of the Western Balkans receive opportune and understandable information from their institutions.

In order to measure the degree of institutional openness, the ACTION SEE partners assess institutions, adhering to international standards, recommendations as well as examples of good practice, through special quantitative and qualitative indicators.

They assess institutions on the basis of the access to information on official websites of institutions, quality of a legal framework for individual cases and other sources of public informing and questionnaires delivered to institutions.

The responsiveness of institutions to the questionnaires was an additional indicator for their openness. Plenty of institutions scored negatively on indicators due to their non-responsiveness. This is important for two reasons. First, the institutional responsiveness is an indicator on openness itself, and second, the institutions' non-responsiveness affected their index scores negatively because they were automatically assessed with 0. Additionally, some of the indicators could have been assessed positively only if the existing laws were implemented.

The assessment was conducted in the period from December 2017 to the end of February 2018. On the basis of monitoring data and the findings, a set of recommendations and guidelines dedicated to institutions was developed based on the research results.

The recommended steps for each category of institutions were made on the grounds of indicators that were not entirely fulfilled.

The methodology and general project information can be found at the end of this paper.

STATE INSTITUTIONS

EXECUTIVE

The openness of the executive branch in the region is not on a satisfactory level. Instead of the expected progress in the area of openness, executive institutions had even worse results in comparison to 2016. Openness in this year approximately amounts to only 38% of fulfilled indicators, whereas the percentage for the previous year was 41%.

However, during the latest research, new indicators for measuring the openness of institutions were added. This made the criteria more demanding, which might have caused this decrease in the openness of executive institutions. Upon further research, however, results and the analysed data suggest that the institutions themselves generally performed no activities to further develop their openness, which is why the introduction of new indicators does not counterbalance the drop in openness.

As found and stated in the analysis performed in the previous year, policies of openness which are clear, consistent and grounded in strategic documents do not exist. The data also reveals that openness levels decrease from higher to lower levels of government and bodies with activities and policies closer to citizens.

Each country has its own specific political conditions in which it develops its transparency and openness, however, a significant space for the joint regional cooperation regarding the improvement of situation can be noticed.

The decrease in the openness on the regional level, with the exception of the Government of Macedonia which made significant progress, shows that executive institutions performed no activities on the development of their openness in the past year. Stakeholders in executive and legislative branches were primarily focused on elections and elective process in the past year, which had a determining impact on priorities set forth by governments in regional countries, and our research only offered a confirmation of that fact.

The lack of strategic approach to openness is still evident in the regional countries. The data obtained suggests that in a large number of cases there is still no expression of openness and transparency of executive institutions in relevant documents (strategies, procedures or policies related to the issues). Although a few executive institutions have documents which generally regulate their openness, the practice is not uniform, neither in approach to openness, nor in type of document or bylaw regulating the issue. Uniformity is not present between the regional countries nor in executive institutions within one country.

Not even the presence of international initiatives advocating openness in regional countries contributed to an increase in openness and transparency of institutions of the executive branch. The lack of internal policies and aspiration to work on improving these areas is clearly reflected on the presence of countries in such initiatives.

The fact that willingness to work on the improvement of openness and transparency of the executive institutions in the region is lacking, was confirmed by the lower number of institutions which had taken active part in the conducted research and delivered answers to questionnaires, in comparison to the previous year. The lack of willingness to answer the questions in the questionnaire is by itself an indicator of decrease of openness and lack of interest in promotion of openness.

The recommendation that strategic documents and annual action plans addressing the development of openness must be adopted remains. Within countries it is necessary to plan development but also to secure uniformity of openness of institutions of executive power.

LEVEL OF OPENNESS (%)

■ Core executive ■ Line ministries ■ Executive agencies

Country	Core executive	Line ministries	Executive agencies
ALBANIA	54.92	42.24	21.12
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	45.9	27.08	23.08
KOSOVO	41.29	37.75	15.4
MACEDONIA	75.61	45.88	23.55
MONTENEGRO	68.94	61.82	35.97
SERBIA	56.66	57.61	40.73
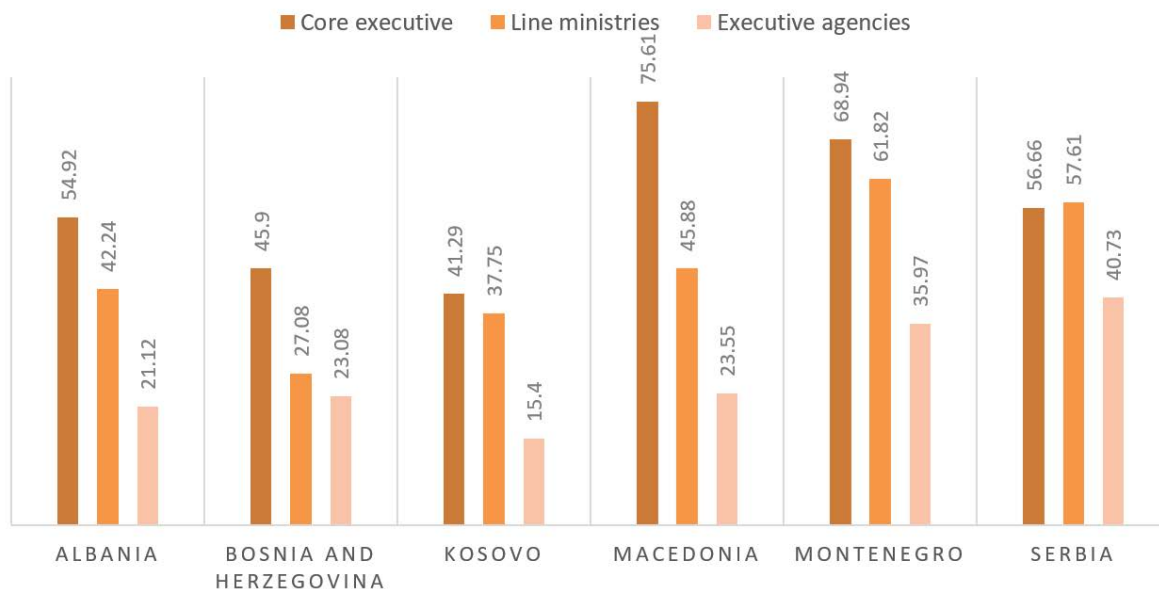
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ACTION STEPS

Transparency

- Create an official website which is regularly updated
- Create a functional search tool on official websites
- Publish reports on activities for the past three years at least on official websites
- Publish minutes and/or transcripts of meetings on official websites
- Publish the organisational structure of institutions on the website, including competencies of each institution, notable biographies and a list of all employees and, if needed, their contact details
- Publish annual plans for public procurement on individual websites
- Develop the Budget for Citizens
- Ensure the maintenance of archived documents and present them on official websites

Accessibility

- Publish registers of documents on official websites
- Publish the guide to access to information on official websites, containing contact details of responsible officials
- Follow deadlines related to access to information
- Educate employees on accessing the archives of documents
- Ensure that the laws on freedom of access to information are binding for related institutions
- Publish information for which free access is granted
- Use online tools for communicating with citizens
- Publish the proceedings of public consultations on official websites
- Ensure that all published information is in open data format

Integrity

- Publish asset cards of officials on official websites in the open data format
- Implement a sanction system for those officials who falsely present information on asset cards
- Define procedures for fully implementing ethical codes and sanctions when they are breached
- Regulate lobbying activities
- Educate employees on conflict of interest, prevention of corruption and whistleblowing

Awareness

- Create procedures for quality planning and control of how policies are implemented and their impact, as well as indicators for evaluating their efficiency
- Implement a uniformed system of mandatory annual reports of each institution
- Create a system for regulating inter-ministerial consultations and publishing these reports on official websites

LEGISLATIVE

The openness of parliaments at the regional level is not satisfactory. As with executive authorities, it was noted that the overall result of parliamentary openness at the regional level was lower than in the previous observation and measurement cycle. On average, 61% of indicators were fulfilled in 2017 in the area of openness, unlike in 2016 when it reached 63%.

Similar to the executive branch, this year's research advocated a higher degree of openness of institutions in relation to last year. This was the result of adding new indicators by which this openness is measured, thus augmenting the measurement criteria themselves. We believe that such a tightened approach to the research added up to the fact that the results show a decrease in openness of the legislative power. On the other hand, the results and analysed data show that the legislative branch has not made any effort to develop openness since the publishing of the previous results, which clarified that new indicators are not of the crucial importance for a general decline in the openness.

The highest legislative bodies in the region did not have a strategic approach to openness policy even in 2017, similar to the analysis of the parliament openness in 2016. Conclusions on openness can only be indirectly derived from constitutions, rules of procedures and other acts, and as such are subject to different interpretations of the parliamentary majority. Although the existence of the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance in the region greatly contributes to larger transparency of parliaments, it is necessary to further strengthen its application.

The decline in the level of openness of all parliaments at the regional level, with the exception of the Albanian Parliament that achieved a better result in 2017 (75%), compared to 2016 (60%), shows that parliaments did not strive to maintain the achieved degree of openness for an entire year, nor invest in its development.

It is necessary to constantly improve the existing level of culture of parliamentary openness. Openness policy should be developed as the pace of new technology picks up. New technology should be used fully, as it would support and facilitate the publishing of data in a machine-readable form. Parliaments in the region are not committed to publishing data in an open format, thereby refuting and minimising the usable value of the published information. The average result achieved by parliaments in the region in the area of communication with citizens, which amounts to 35% of fulfilled indicators, is yet another reason for concern. Parliaments in the region continue to be inactive and do not strive to invest in new channels of communication that can help bridge the gap between citizens and their representative body.

The lack of desire to work on improving the openness and transparency of the parliaments is genuine and is confirmed by the fact that in 2017 half of parliaments that were the subject of research did not submit answers to the questionnaires, which are a key part of the entire project. The reluctance to answer the questionnaire is in itself an indicator of insufficient openness and of a lack of interest in promoting openness.

This year's research also shows that information on the activities of deputies by committees, documents originating from the work of the committee or submitted amendments have not yet been published by most of the parliaments in the region. Furthermore, publishing information on the work of parliaments and of deputies is rarely accompanied by their accountability for the achieved results and the quality of work of these institutions. What certainly raises concern is the fact that transparency and communication with citizens are at the lowest level when it comes to preparing, discussing, adopting and presenting (in open data format) the most important annual legislative act in every country – the state budget. Albania scored 86% in this area, whereas Serbia only 19%.

It is essential that parliaments in the region make an effort to fully appreciate the significance, role and opinion of civil society in democracy and to improve the mechanisms of cooperation with it. Despite the existing mechanisms and declarative determination of the holders of legislative power, parliamentary cooperation with civil society in the region has been generally violated.

Parliaments in the Western Balkan region have established good bases for conducting parliamentary oversight - except in the case of Kosovo that meets only 19% of the indicators set. However, it is necessary that this function of the legislative branch is significantly strengthened at the level of the entire region, with an emphasis on ensuring its full implementation in practice. A good legislative basis for the exercise of parliamentary oversight does not imply that it shall actually be implemented in practice. Parliaments in the region continued to formally apply this function in 2017, which led to the fact that the results of the parliamentary oversight were actually lacking.

This situation brings us back to the conclusion from 2016. It is extremely important that parliaments are not places of uncritical adoption of the executive branch proposals but rather of their review and of an efficient control of everything that has been done. Legislative duties of deputies must not be a reason for neglecting the controlling function, which is one of the most important guarantees of democracy. All parliaments in the region must make efforts to fully implement the existing mechanisms, thereby contributing to raising the level of political accountability.

LEVEL OF OPENNESS (%)

■ Parliaments

74.83	45.66	49.04	58.44	80.09	55.37
ALBANIA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	KOSOVO	MACEDONIA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA
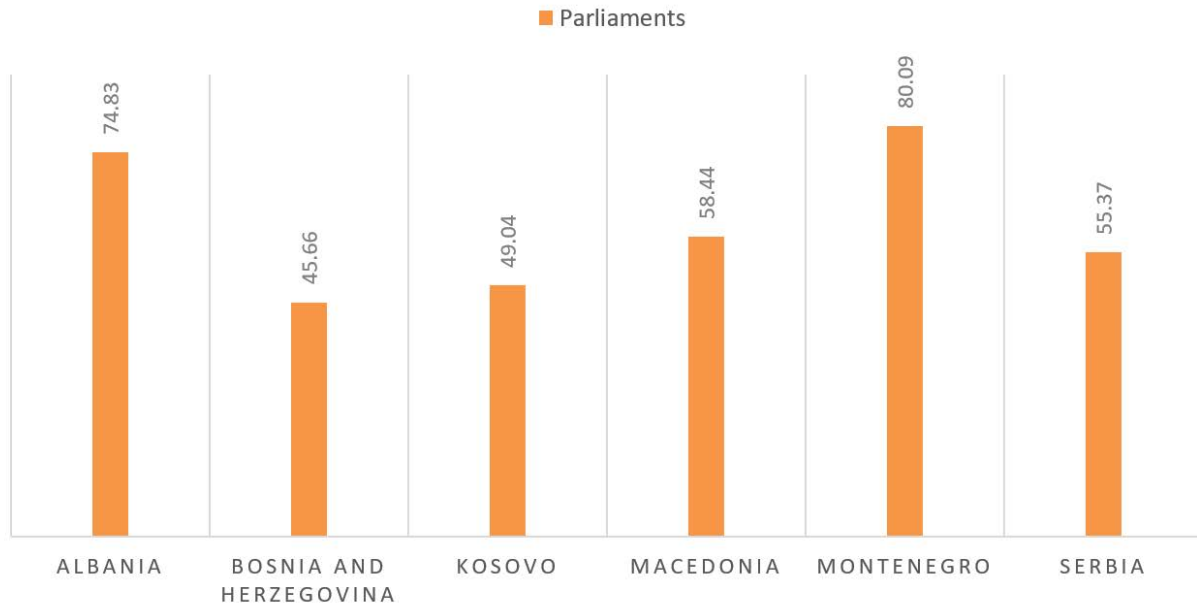
Even in 2017, the work of parliaments in the region was not based on the establishment of a uniform methodology and appropriate indicators for measuring the results and the quality of their work and the work of the deputies. Strategic planning of parliaments at the level of the entire region meets only 25% of the set indicators, with the parliaments of Serbia and Kosovo scoring zero points in this dimension. This situation, which keeps repeating from year to year, continues to have an impact on the quality of parliamentary work and on informing citizens about the effects and outcomes of the work of the legislative power.

In most of the parliaments in the region, the law on lobbying has not yet been adopted.

Additionally, the integrity of the parliaments remains low due to the fact that the codes of ethics of parliaments in some countries of the region have not yet been adopted, or that their application is extremely weak. As in 2016, even in this measurement cycle, low ethics in the work of parliament and of deputies were recorded, and last year's recommendations in this area were not applied.

ACTION STEPS

Transparency

- Publish annual work plans and report on activities for the three years at least
- Publish annual plans for public procurement on official websites
- List names, positions and contact details of civil servants on official websites
- Develop and implement report mechanisms of parliamentary representatives and their official activities
- Publish video transmissions and recordings of sessions, including agendas, documents revised at sessions, data on voting and similar documents
- Maintain an archive of all documents and publish them on official websites
- Publish the Citizens' budget on official websites
- Ensure all published information is in open data format

Accessibility

- Consistently publish the register of information
- Appoint a responsible person for dealing with requests for accessing information
- Educate responsible employees on archiving and accessing documents
- Establish stronger supervision over the implementation of the law on freedom of access to information
- Publish received requests for accessing information
- Create new communication channels with citizens by using social networks and online petitions
- Develop a system for involving the public in consultations on legislations in parliamentary procedures
- Ensure all published information is in open data format

Integrity

- Adopt codes of ethics with clear supervision procedures
- Publish codes of ethics on official websites, as well as who is responsible for supervising them
- Revise and continuously improve current codes of ethics
- Publish asset cards of all members of parliaments on official websites
- Regulate lobbying activities

Awareness

- Promote mechanisms which increase the participation of citizens and professionals in parliamentary procedures
- Enable participation and expertise of professionals in evaluating the impact of laws and other acts prior to their adoption
- Regularly publish all information related to public consultations
- Establish methods and impact assessment procedures

JUDICIARY

The openness of the judiciary sector in the region of Western Balkans for 2017 meets 36% of the indicators of performance. This result that shows the decreasing performance of judicial bodies represents an alarming situation for transparency, openness and accountability of the administrative activity of these institutions. The challenges of the ongoing reform of these bodies across the region, as well as the low score on transparency, do not give the perception that tangible commitments are being made to promote transparency, citizens' empowerment and anti-corruption actions. Open government is not a goal only for the executive and legislative powers, but also it is a need for judiciary, to understand what it can do to improve the government, society and democracy.

This year's research comprised and advocated a higher degree of openness of institutions in relation to last year, adding new indicators by which this openness is measured, and thus tightening the measurement criteria themselves. We believe that such a tightened approach to the research added up to the fact that the results show a decrease in openness of the judicial bodies. On the other hand, the results and analysed data show that the judiciary sector has not made any effort to develop openness since the publishing of the previous results, so new indicators are not of crucial importance for the general decline in the openness.

The results of the conducted research show a decrease of the performance of courts in effectively fulfilling the indicators of openness. On average, regional courts scored 48% of the fulfilled indicators in 2016 measurements, while in 2017, they reached only 41.6% of the indicators.

Albania with 45% and Serbia with 39% had better court results compared to the results reached in 2016, where they scored 33% and 36%, respectively. However, Albania shows a substantial decrease regarding the court council by reaching only 2% of the indicators, compared with the analysis of the 2016, with 45% of fulfilment. While all the countries of the region show a decline in the level of openness, the Montenegrin court council performs in line with the previous measurements and the Bosnian court council achieved a score higher by 14%.

Most of the courts in the region failed in providing the opportunity to the citizens to access their offices, using mechanisms that provide information for vulnerable groups about their rights and available adequate remedies on the websites, no guidelines or online mechanisms for raising concerns and making appeals, as well as low results reached in publishing the verdicts along with their respective rationales.

The access to public information of the courts in the Western Balkans does not reach more than 30% of the fulfilment of indicators. Most of the courts in the region do not have a website and due to this, citizens face difficulties in finding public information or access the progress of their cases. A column of relevant information is rarely found on courts' websites, because most of the courts, in practice, do not develop policies that deal with institutional openness.

Public proceeding scores 39% indicators of openness. It is difficult for people with disabilities to access the courtrooms, even though there are legal acts according to which it is an obligation to all the public institutions to adapt the infrastructure of their buildings to facilitate the access of this marginalized group.

Indicators measuring the prevention of conflict of interest reached approximately 20%. Integrity plans are tools which verify the willingness of the institutions to deal with unethical and corruption practices. Lack of these plans represents a serious concern regarding the judicial proceeding of the Western Balkans' courts. Additionally, most of the regional courts have stated that they have not conducted any training or workshops on the topics of conflict of interest, preventing corruption or whistleblowing in the case of irregularities. It should be noted, however, that the judicial bodies of the region are currently under reforms and they are faced with a lot of changes and challenges in the near future. This means that there are future measurements and recommendations to be made to these institutions for the continuous improvement of the judiciary in the Western Balkans.

Only 33% of the information on the budget and 23% of public procurements procedures are published on the websites of the courts of the region. Furthermore, 41% of the organisational information is transparent. Partially, this result comes from the lack of official websites or, in the cases that there is a website, the fact that the information is not updated.

When it comes to prosecution as a general term, it includes the prosecution council, public prosecution and state prosecution. The results for this year's research show a significant decrease of the performance of the prosecution in the region. In 2016, prosecution in the region scored 40% of set indicators while in 2017 they scored only 27%.
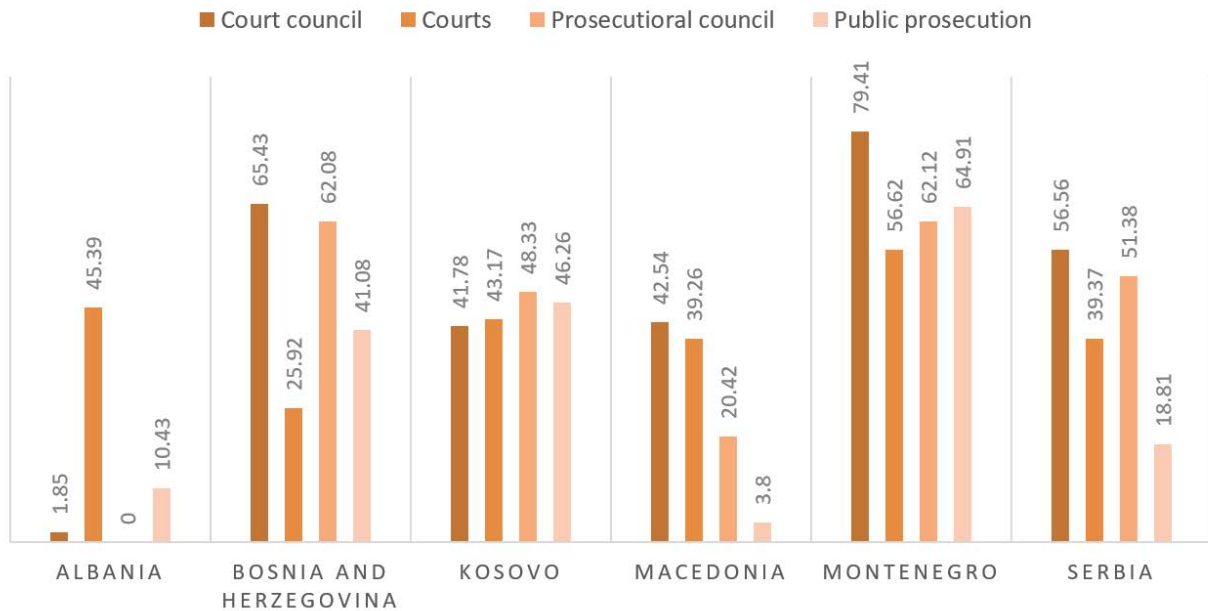
Montenegro had 65% of the indicators fulfilled, and Bosnia and Hercegovina and Kosovo 44%, which makes them one of the most open prosecutions in the region. Compared to last year's measurement, only Kosovo has increased its openness in set indictors by 4%. Apart from Kosovo, all other countries have slightly decreased their performance, which is a worrying element in the region.

Prosecution offices in the region had low scores in regard to accessibility and communication with citizens with only 23% indicators fulfilled. The most of public prosecution offices do not offer any type of mechanisms for direct communication with the prosecutors. Moreover, websites of prosecution offices in the region do not offer adequate information on their websites.

The justice system as a whole has not managed to create an online system which will track indictments and their progress online. Despite some countries having established this system, it still fails to be fully functional.

A proactive approach needs to be implemented. This is related to the obligation of institutions to make their information available to citizens, in a timely and self-initiated manner. The right to access information is limited by the fact that only half of institutions publish contact information for those who are responsible for this.

LEVEL OF OPENNESS (%)

■ Court council   ■ Courts   ■ Prosecutioral council   ■ Public prosecution

	Court council	Courts	Prosecutioral council	Public prosecution
ALBANIA	1.85	45.39	0	10.43
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	65.43	25.92	62.08	41.08
KOSOVO	41.78	43.17	48.33	46.26
MACEDONIA	42.54	39.26	20.42	3.8
MONTENEGRO	79.41	56.62	62.12	64.91
SERBIA	56.56	39.37	51.38	18.81

When it comes to media relationships, almost two thirds of public prosecution offices in the region have not adopted any guidelines on cooperation with the media. Such a guideline is more than necessary in order to avoid jeopardizing the course of the proceeding and investigation.

The most common problems, violations of international standards and principles of reporting in criminal proceedings, are usually those which deal with one-sided media reporting, violation of privacy and presumption of innocence, "information leakage" from prosecutors' offices and the police, publishing of confidential information in the phase of investigation, and similar.

Four countries in in the region have established mechanisms of controlling and monitoring the work of public prosecution offices by higher instance. Moreover, another important mechanism adopted among public prosecution offices is the one which deals with case allocations which more than 80% of public prosecution offices have adopted. However, the functioning of these two mechanisms in practice is still questionable. This is due to most of the public prosecution offices not publishing reports or disciplinary measures, complaints towards prosecutors or reports of the past year to the supervisor authority. The non-documentation and their lack of publication online make it impossible for interested parties to know if the mechanisms are working and actually having an impact.

ACTION STEPS

Transparency

- Publish annual budgets and budget spending for the last three years
- Publish data on salaries of prosecutors, judges and other officials on official websites
- Publish the annual work programmes for the last three years, as well as current strategies, on official websites
- Publish organisational charts on official websites
- Publish contracts on public procurement on official websites
- Create and enforce strategies which ensure openness and transparency

Accessibility

- Publish requests on freedom of information (FOI), as well as the register of information
- Present the information in open data format
- Train responsible officials in dealing with freedom of information requests
- Publish guides on accessing information on official websites, including the contact details of responsible officials
- Establish and maintain electronic databases for court verdicts
- Publish verdicts and explanations
- Establish a special department for communication with the public
- Set up procedures for cooperating with the media
- Ensure documents are also published in languages of minorities and include sign language interpreters and use Braille texts

Integrity

- Publish codes of ethics on official websites
- Develop and publish integrity plans
- Monitor and implement codes of ethics
- Ensure that violations of the codes of ethics are properly sanctioned

Awareness

- Deliver annual reports to responsible authorities on time
- Add information on disciplinary measures and complaints, as well as information on solved cases and verdicts in the annual reports

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS

Analyses of numerous indicators in the second year of measurements showed a significant difference compared with last year's results. Namely, Albania had only 12.12% level of openness in the region in 2016 and in 2017 the measurement is 27.55%. All other countries in the region have a decrease in the percentage from the last measurement. This can be explained by introducing new indicators this year, similar with other branches.

The regional level of openness of the local self-governments this year is 31.39%, which is a decrease of 2.61% when compared to last year. Having in mind that municipalities are the key institutions of citizens' service, it is very significant for them to be active on the local level. The policy of openness has to be fully applied by all municipalities and it needs to find its place among other significant state policies. If not dealt with accordingly, the decrease of the level of openness affects the level of citizens' participation in creating local policies and the possibilities to influence and reshape the decisions made by the local self-governments.

The regional accessibility level shows that there are still no reports from the public debates published on their websites. Reports from public consultations do not have written explanations and provided answers, and the information for which free access is approved is not published. With such a low level of accessibility, the local self-governments in the region are not enabling the citizens to be well informed and to duly participate in debates related to local issues.

In terms of strategic management and the awareness level in the region, which is unsatisfactory and only at 48.12%, Albania and Bosnia and Hercegovina have improved the most. Albania had 20.09% in 2016, but managed to climb to 63.21% in 2017. In general it can be seen that the local self-governments are lacking indicators of performance when developing their annual work programme and the programme for the municipal assemblies. In order to assure higher level of awareness, local governments have to create an action plan for implementing development strategies which contain specific timelines, budget allocations and responsible implementing bodies. An annual budget is typically the key instrument which is used by local self-governments to translate their policies into action plans. Therefore, budgets should not only be available to the public, they should also be accessible by the public in a way to understand the objectives and how to reach specific goals.
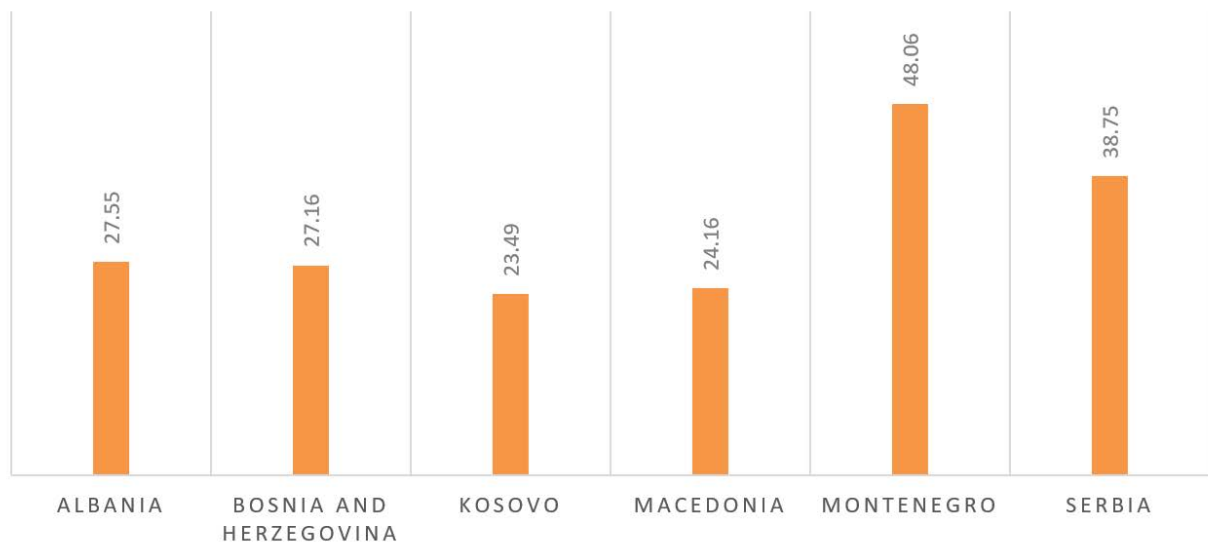
Instead of the expected progress in the area of integrity, institutions of local governments in the region had even worse results in comparison to the previous year. A substantial decrease of the level of integrity comes from not having foreseen several issues, one of which is conducting trainings, workshops or other educational activities for its officers on the topics such as conflict of interest, preventing corruption, and whistleblowing, in case of irregularities. Also, one of the main concerns is the lack of a direct online communication channel available at the website through which citizens can raise complaints, voice concerns and make appeals. This is not only an indicator of unused communication, but rather of no potential to transform the existing relations between the local governments and the citizens. These debates and interactions can even be substantially increased by using some form of technical support. Examples may include video streaming the assembly sessions on their website, or video or audio records.

Most importantly, the citizens' budget is not published on websites. It is essential that local self-governments issue such reports. Apart from that, they also need to have the capacity to produce such reports on a regular basis. In terms of public spending, it very important to have prior debates and draft decisions on budgets being submitted to local assemblies in advance, so they can be reviewed properly.

The lack of strategic approach to openness is still evident in the context of open data formats with the information published on their websites. In a large number of cases there is still no expression of openness and transparency in relevant documents (strategies, procedures or policies) related to the issues. The absence of internal policies and lack of willingness to work on improving these areas is furthermore clearly reflected in providing no information on the shares of public enterprises held by the municipality.

LEVEL OF OPENNESS (%)

■ Local self-governments

ALBANIA	BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA	KOSOVO	MACEDONIA	MONTENEGRO	SERBIA
27.55	27.16	23.49	24.16	48.06	38.75

ACTION STEPS

Transparency

- Ensure financial transparency by publishing the Citizen's Budget and reports on budget spending on official websites
- Make public procurement plans, calls, decisions and contracts available on official websites
- Present all information in open data format
- Present names and contact information on civil servants on official websites

Accessibility

- Frequently update official websites with necessary information
- Maintain control over the implementation of the law on free access to information
- Publish the official guide for access to information on official websites
- Indicate officials who are in charge of processing requests for access to information
- Increase the scope of communicational channels with the citizens (e-consultations and social media)

Integrity

- Organise and participate in trainings and workshops dealing with anti-corruption policies, conflict of interest and whistleblowing
- Establish and maintain a direct online channel through which citizens can file complaints and express concern

Awareness

- Publish evaluations and work reports of the last three years on official websites
- Ensure that annual work programmes are planned in accordance with performance indicators
- Prepare development strategies and action plans

METHODOLOGY

The Openness Index is a composite indicator that measures the degree to which governments in the countries of the Western Balkan are open to citizens and society. Openness is a key condition for democracy because it enables citizens to obtain the information and knowledge they need to equally participate in public debates, to make educated decisions and to hold governments accountable. Openness also supports good governance because it allows governing elites to reconsider and draw on ideas and expertise dispersed in society.

The Openness Index measures the extent of institutions' openness to citizens and society based on the following four principles: **transparency, accessibility, integrity and awareness**.

The principle of transparency means that the government provides clear and relevant public information on its work. This information relates to the organisation and work of government institutions, mostly to budgeting and public procurement procedures.

Accessibility is related to ensuring and adhering to procedures on free access to information and strengthening interaction with citizens as well.

Integrity includes mechanisms for preventing corruption, adopting codes of conduct and regulating lobbying activities.

The last principle, awareness, is related to monitoring and assessment of policies which are conducted. It also focuses on the availability and provision of information, as well as the knowledge within the government.

The four principles are further disaggregated into individual questions that are assessed on the basis of information availability on official websites, legal framework's quality for specific questions, other sources of public informing and questionnaires delivered to institutions. The Openness Index assesses how these four principles are implemented in the following institutions or sets of institutions: core executive, line ministries, executive agencies, parliament, courts, public prosecution and local self-government. Since these institutions perform different functions in the process of governing or policy-making, individual questions are adapted to match the profiles of the respective institutions.

About ACTION SEE

Good governance is key to rule of law. While corruption, transparency, rule of law and good governance are always in the spotlight, the understanding of systemic problems, which hardly receive sufficient coverage, remains inadequate. The "ACcountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in South East Europe – ACTIONSEE" project aims to raise awareness of such challenges by facilitating cooperation among civic organizations and consolidated strategic efforts for representation.

ACTION SEE provides a platform for dialogue and a concrete tool for measuring the degree to which state institutions uphold principles and standards of open governance through its Index of Openness.

The project aims to increase the inclusion of civic society and media organisations in decision-making processes and the creation of public opinion and policies, as well as to raise the capacity of civic societies to address sensitive issues.

Specific project goals:

•   Promote a dynamic civic society which effectively mobilises citizens for active participation in issues related to the rule of law and good governance, and affects policies and decision-making processes at a national and regional level;
•   Strengthen mechanisms for dialogue between civic organizations and government institutions and influence good governance and public administration reforms;
•   Stimulate civic and media organization networking at local and EU level, allowing the exchange of know-how, skills and connections, as well as increase the influence of their representation efforts.

ACTION SEE project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the Metamorphosis Foundation, the Westminster Foundation for Democracy, CRTA – Centre for Research, Transparency and Accountability, Citizens Association "Why not?", the Centre for Democratic Transition, Open Data Kosovo (ODK) and Levizja Mjaft!

5. READ MORE

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