



NEW VISION OF LOCAL  
COMMUNITIES (MZs) IN  
BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

2018





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“Strengthening the Role of Local Communities – MZ in BiH” is a joint project of the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Sweden. Implementing partner is United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in BiH in partnership with the BiH Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees, Ministry of Public Administration and Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska, Ministry of Justice of Federation BiH, the Government of Brcko District and both entity Associations of Municipalities and Cities.



## Foreword

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Having a community vision in place is fundamental to advancing its underlying values. Without a vision, it is difficult to set the desired direction for community development or to define its future. This was the basic idea that guided the drafting of this document. It defines the vision for local communities (MZs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) and offers an image of an ideal inclusive and gender sensitive future MZ as seen and agreed by citizens. Mindful of this goal, different population categories were included in the development of the MZ vision so that the vision reflects their different needs and the voices of women and marginalised groups in particular. The findings and conclusions of this report are based exclusively on the views expressed by respondents in the research through different methods of involving citizens in this process.

In addition to citizens, the process also gathered representatives of relevant institutions at higher levels of government. This included both entity Associations of Municipalities and Cities, and representatives of local government units (LGUs), MZs, civil society organisations, academia, the media and others seen as central to the vision of MZs in BiH.

In line with the definition of the vision, this document is aimed at setting the foundation for the development of MZs as a form of citizen participation in the decision-making process at the local level. In this way, MZs can make a significant contribution to strengthening democracy and empowering civic participation in BiH. The vision also envisages the MZ as a service provider to citizens and as a gathering point for and facilitator of citizen initiatives aimed at improving the quality of life.

However, the vision of the future MZ alone will not lead to the realisation of a better future unless accompanied by the application of practices and legal arrangements that will lead to the fulfilment of this vision. Therefore, this document suggests a structured approach to the development of MZs that relies on best practice already in place in many areas and the solutions proposed by the citizens themselves throughout this process. This vision reconciles theory and practice and can bridge traditional and modern approaches to community development by utilising novelty and creativity and by involving different segments of society. In this sense, it is applicable to different environments and parts of the country. It does not prescribe but instead recommends and opens up space for creative solutions that should be harmonised with the needs of citizens and their communities.

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## Abbreviations used in the Report

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**AMC:** Associations of municipalities and cities  
**BAM:** Bosnian Convertible Mark  
**BiH:** Bosnia and Herzegovina  
**MZ:** Mjesne Zajednice / local community  
**LGU:** Local Self-Government Unit  
**UNDP:** United Nations Development Programme  
**CSO:** Civil Society Organisation  
**NGO:** Non-Governmental Organisation

# 1

## INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** Research goals
- 1.2** The process of the Research and Development of the Vision of MZs in BiH
- 1.3** Research Methodology
  - 1.3.1** Quantitative Research
  - 1.3.2** Qualitative Research
  - 1.3.3** Structure of the Report
  - 1.3.4** Other Methodological Remarks



# 1.1 RESEARCH GOALS

The following report is based on a quantitative (questionnaires) and qualitative (focus groups, discussions) survey that involved twenty-one meetings held at the local and regional level in BiH in local government units (LGUs), most of which are partners in the project Strengthening the Role of Local Communities/Mjesne Zajednice (MZs) in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project is a joint project of the Government of Switzerland and the Government of Sweden that is implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in partnership with the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Ministry of Administration and Local Self-Government of Republika Srpska, the Ministry of Justice of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Government of Brčko District, and both entity Associations of Municipalities and Cities.

The objectives of the research were as follows:

- Conduct comprehensive consultations involving all relevant stakeholders and initiate debates on the future role of MZs in BiH.
- Present and jointly discuss the current situation, good practice and the challenges MZs face.
- Analyse, determine and harmonise the vision of the future role and function of the MZ in BiH.
- Identify the concrete steps necessary to transform the vision gradually into a realistic framework, including legislative, educational, promotional and civic actions.

The first step in the process of defining the vision was the qualitative and quantitative survey carried out in thirteen partner LGUs. After conducting the survey, eight roundtables based on the research findings were organised throughout BiH in order to facilitate a detailed discussion on the vision and the future model for MZs. As a final activity in the vision design process, the vision and recommended models were validated at a conference that was held in December 2017.

In the report, the term local community/mjesne zajednice (MZ) refers to a sub-municipal unit that is either a formal or an informal part of the local government structure. However, because of the differences in the regulation, status, role and organisation of MZs in BiH, the term MZ does not refer specifically to the bodies of the MZ, the governance structure or to citizens. Accordingly, the definition of MZ used in the report stems from the report 'Local Communities/Mjesne zajednice in Bosnia and Herzegovina – Challenges and Perspectives of Institutional Development'.<sup>1</sup>

The latter describes sub-municipal units as follows:

*“Launching mechanisms and processes at the neighbourhood level that lead citizens’ participation, planning, decision-making, coordination and implementation of activities within the neighbourhood, representing neighbourhood interests to external stakeholders and assigning and enabling responsibility for actions taken.”<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>1</sup> Jusić, Mirna. Publisher: Analitika – Centre for Social Research (2014).

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Chaskin, “Fostering Neighborhood Democracy: Legitimacy and Accountability within Loosely Coupled Systems”, Non-profit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly 32, No. 2 (2003), p. 162.

# 1.2 THE PROCESS OF THE RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VISION OF MZs IN BIH

## 13 meetings held in partner municipalities and cities

- Representation of women, youth, the elderly and minority and marginal groups
- Representatives of MZs, LGUs, ministries, NGOs, etc.
- Quantitative research - survey
- Qualitative research - focus groups
- Principles, elements of the vision and the basics of the model of MZs

## Eight regional roundtables

- Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Mostar, Brčko, Bijeljina, Bihać, Trebinje
- MZ, LGU, cantonal and entity representatives, NGOs, RRA, academia
- Proposal of the vision and model of MZs

## Final conference

- Adoption of the vision and model for MZs in BiH

## 1.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Within the process of defining the vision of MZs in BiH, quantitative and qualitative research was carried out in two steps. The first step was research conducted through meetings held in thirteen local self-government units (LGU) in BiH (Gradiška, Tešanj, Gračanica, Ključ, Žepče, Gradačac, Sanski Most, Stari Grad, Petrovo, Laktaši, Brčko, Kotor Varoš and Bijeljina) using the focus group methodology. The second round of qualitative research centred on eight regional roundtables organised in Sarajevo, Mostar, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Brčko, Bijeljina, Bihać and Trebinje.

### 1.3.1 Quantitative Research

Quantitative research was conducted on a sample of 333 respondents according to the following structure:

- 81 from urban areas, 152 from rural areas and 100 unrecorded respondents;
- 216 representatives of MZs, 36 representatives of LGUs, 16 representatives of civil society organisations (CSOs) and three representatives of the RS Association of Municipalities and Cities and one representative of the FBiH Association of Municipalities and Cities, and 19 representatives of other organisations.



*Participants at the meeting in Gračanica.*

The respondents provided answers to questions covered by the questionnaire that they had filled out individually, which is attached to this report under Annex I. The questionnaire contained the following chapters:

- I. Function 1. MZ as an Advocate of Community Interests
  - a. Advocacy and Access to Governance
- II. Function 2. MZ as a place for enabling and providing Services
  - a. Infrastructure and 'hard' Services
  - b. 'Soft' Services
  - c. Potential Informative Functions
- III. Function 3. MZ as a Social and Cultural Hub in the Community
  - a. Social events, Culture and Sport
- IV. Form follows Function
  - a. Structure, Finance and Work

## 1.3.2 Qualitative Research

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The qualitative research was conducted in two stages. In the first stage, using the focus group methodology, it was possible to deepen the discussion about the vision of MZs and different groups had an opportunity to express their specific attitudes and opinions. Accordingly, individual focus groups were comprised of representatives of young people, women from urban areas, rural women, men from urban areas and men from rural areas, pensioners, minority groups (Roma women) and three mixed groups. A total of 92 respondents participated in the focus groups, of which 42 were female and 50 male.

The focus groups gathered between 7 and 12 respondents, selected according to the criteria set individually for each group (women, men, youth, pensioners, minority populations, etc.).

The focus group discussion centred on the questionnaire attached under Annex II. The focus group questionnaire relied on the structure of the survey questionnaire containing issues sorted in accordance with the following chapters:



*Focus group participants – Žepče*

- I. **General Remarks**
- II. **Advocacy and Access to Governance**
- III. **MZ Service provision**
- IV. **MZs as a Social and Cultural Hub in their Community**
- V. **Structure, Operation and Financing of MZs**

In the second round of qualitative research, eight regional roundtables were held using the methodology of guided discussion wherein moderators used the recommendations from the research report obtained through the focus groups as the basis for the discussion. The aim was to explore further the findings from the first step of qualitative and quantitative research in order to come up with recommendations to support the development of the MZ model in BiH.

These meetings were attended by participants from **80 LGUs at the regional level (55%** of the total number of LGUs in BiH), while **84 LGUs attended regional and/or local meetings** across BiH (**57% of LGUs in BiH**). The gender structure of the meetings was around 65 per cent male and 35 per cent female.

Both questionnaires for the quantitative and qualitative research were structured in accordance with the findings and recommendations of the report 'Rethinking Local Community in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Comparative Overview and Assessment of Community Governance Models and Practices in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina', which lists four options for the role of MZs in BiH.

- I. Option 1: MZs as advocates of community interests
- II. Option 2: MZs as venues for service facilitation or service delivery
- III. Option 3: MZs as a social and cultural hub in their community
- IV. Option 4: MZs as a forum for civic participation<sup>3</sup>

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3 Analitika (2016), p. 53

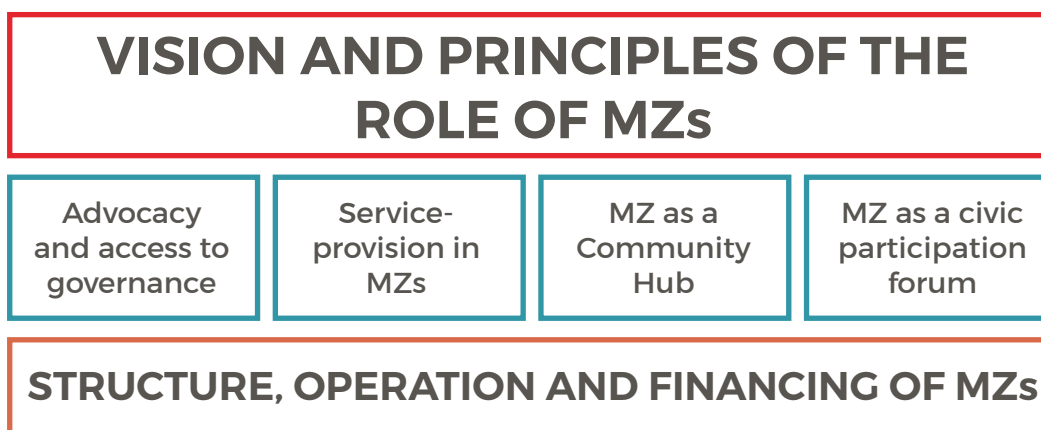
### 1.3.3 Structure of the Report

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In accordance with the above structures of the questionnaire as well as the recommendations of the aforementioned Comparative Report, this report outlines the following chapters:

- i. Vision and Principles of the Role of MZs
- ii. Functions of MZs
  1. Advocacy and Access to Governance
  2. MZs Service provision
  3. MZs as a Social and Cultural Hub in the community
  4. MZs as a Forum for Civic participation
    - a. Participation of Women in the Work of MZs
    - b. Participation of Youth in the Work of MZs.
    - c. Participation of Pensioners in the Work of MZs
    - d. Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Work of MZs
- iii. Structure, Operations and financing of MZs
  1. Financing of MZs
  2. Territorial Organisation of MZs
  3. Information Dissemination and Communication
  4. Organisation of MZs
- iv. Concluding Remarks
- v. Models of MZs in BiH

The above structure of the report is designed to correspond to the structure of the vision and model of MZs in BiH:





### **1.3.4 Other Methodological Remarks**

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The quantitative and qualitative research was conducted with the sole purpose of drafting the future vision of MZs in BiH and as such provides input for this process as part of this project.

The quantitative research was conducted in such a way that the participants of the meetings filled out the questionnaires themselves. Yet because respondents only partially filled out some parts of the questionnaire certain personal data was missing. The focus groups were anonymous, but an audio recording was made of each discussion. Transcripts were made of the audio recordings to allow for analysis in preparation for this report.

The report used descriptive statistics to describe the data. However, as this was not a statistically representative sample of LGUs and their MZs, inferential statistical methods (methods based on a representative statistical sample, such as statistical tests, confidence intervals and alike) were not used. Instead, the data is presented as a whole.



# PRINCIPLES AND VISIONS OF THE ROLE OF MZs IN BIH

- 2.1 Principles
- 2.2 Elements of the vision of MZs

## 2.1 PRINCIPLES

The basic principles underlying the vision and future role of MZs in BiH, as emphasised in this research, are as follows: representativeness, inclusiveness, accountability, coordination and communication, transparency and openness, professionalism and expertise, focus on citizens, efficiency, independence and depoliticisation.

**Representativeness:** The process for the election of bodies should include as many residents from the MZ as possible, from different population groups, with their equal or proportional representation in the bodies of the MZ as well as in the activities and initiatives of the MZ.

*“More activism – more work done. I believe this one sentence sums it all up. Not only one part of the population, but everyone. From youth, women to pensioners and all that. Just more activism.” (Female, Sanski Most)*

**Accountability:** The MZ must be accountable to its citizens and represent their interests, but it must also be accountable to local authorities. The same principle applies to citizens who should behave responsibly toward the property of the MZ, respond to the actions organised by the MZ and contribute to the development of the MZ.

**Inclusiveness:** All citizens should be involved. In this regard, one participant shared her view,

*“Active citizens tackling their identified problems or priorities... to have women’s activities, to have more women involved in the MZ council, young people to be involved, and it will be easier for them to solve their problems. So, organised activities that are linked and that bring together residents in that local community.” (Female, Sanski Most).*

**Coordination between all bodies of the MZ:** The speakers of the assemblies and councils, and the municipal administrative bodies as well as the coordinator in charge of local communities must be included. In addition to coordination, good communication and cooperation within the MZ as well as externally are also important.

*“It would be the first service providing institution collecting all the problems or anything else from citizens in the MZ and forwarding it further. This would make the local administration more aware of the problems in its territory.” (Female, Petrovo)*

**Transparency and hierarchy:**

*“I see it as a well-kept household where everyone knows their role and where some hierarchy is respected. Although, of course, it is the basis of the entire society. So, for the MZ to function like that the whole society in a vertical and horizontal division of labour and tasks must know its place.” (Female, Petrovo).*

Under ideal conditions, the leadership of the MZ would be depoliticised, professional and educated.

*“It’s the mirror of all the next levels of government. The arrangement of MZs will be passed on further!” (Male, Ključ)*

*"I would define the MZ as my macro-house that concerns me and that I would like to see, of course, in agreement with all members of this macro-house, to see it functional, to have it as beautiful as possible, to be as productive, flexible and the like." (Female, Stari Grad in Sarajevo).*

**Professionalisation and capacities of staff:** Ensure adequate equipment as well as improved communication between locals and staff at the MZ and between the MZ and the municipality.

*"Professional engagement in the MZ of this type is very important. We reached a certain level with our staff, the MZ secretary. This proved to be a good method." (Male, Ključ)*

It is important to define the role of the MZ and the way citizens can exercise their rights precisely.

*"It is very important to elaborate this procedure a bit in order for citizens to reach some local goals as directly as possible." (Male, Brčko)*

**Focusing on concrete priorities of relevance to citizens is yet another important factor.**

*"As a citizen of this MZ, my ideal MZ would be solving problems... around buildings... surfaces without holes, addressing architectural barriers for persons with disability, so that every building, say, has some access, every institution an elevator, a toilet for the disabled... simply put, that would be an ideal MZ for me." (Female, Ključ)*

The role of citizens, each individual, as well as the system as a whole is undeniable.

*"In any case, there must be an institutional system that will in some way run all these activities; starting from the MZ and beyond. What is most important to us here, we should also work through sessions like this to promote the importance of every citizen within their MZ and the MZ as a form of organisation... So, a promotion in the sense of creating the awareness that we are the most important here and that's the basis." (Male, Ključ)*

*"Greater acknowledgment of proposals, decisions and suggestions of citizens of the MZ and ensuring conditions, meaning, work, gatherings, technical secretariats and better communication in all things, with higher levels of government." (Male, Ključ)*

**Independence:** When it came to project funding, respondents felt that the functioning of the MZ could be improved through independent decision-making. This was irrespective of whether these funds came from the municipality or other donors. An example of grants based on depoliticisation was given in the form of projects originating from the community itself. The MZ and citizens identified these priorities. Yet although the issues of financing, staffing and MZ premises have been resolved in some municipalities it is believed that this is not sufficient if the local authorities fail to respect the priorities for which the MZ advocates along with the decisions of its bodies.

## 2.2 ELEMENTS OF THE VISION OF MZs

Attitudes regarding the **role of the local community (MZ)** and its importance to citizens were largely consistent among all focus groups and most participants. The respondents emphasised the importance of the MZ through all of its functions: services to citizens, as a part of the wider system of local self-government, as a forum for civic participation and as a cultural and social hub at the community level.

**MZs as a step in the process of decentralising decision-making:** The decentralisation of tasks and decision-making would bring the processes of the MZ closer to the level of citizens and would have a positive effect at the level of the municipality.

*“The municipality is also more developed if MZs are more developed and if the system is functioning as it should.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

*“The MZ is the fundamental cell of society, meaning the first step. It is very important for the development of infrastructure, social and cultural life in a local community.” (Male, Sanski Most).*

*“The MZ is the first and the primary stop and the starting point for solving certain problems and meeting the demands of the locals in that area or community. (Male, Sanski Most)*

**MZs facilitate an active role for individuals** who can contribute to the development of society through their expertise.

*“For example, I would like to see my neighbours, who are successful in their jobs, in their walks of life, to be asked and called to deal with some issues; if they are already doing a good work, to do it then for the benefit of all citizens.” (Female, Stari Grad in Sarajevo).*

This could apply, for example, to social workers or legal advisers who could occasionally volunteer at the MZs.

This underlines the **potential of individual initiatives** and the importance of an individual to the whole community. In this way, the MZ enables the realisation of the role of the individual within society.

*“We have to contribute to a better situation ourselves, to commit ourselves. No one will do anything for us unless we do it ourselves.” (A group of pensioners, women, Laktaši)*

In a number of cases, individual initiatives resulted in concrete changes in MZs:

*“We are located on the Banja Luka-Teslić main road and we don't have a single square meter of sidewalk, not a single square meter, not a photo radar, nothing! I was the first one to say, ‘Guys, I am in favour of a photo radar. Let's hold a meeting. My kids are grown up, they go to Banja Luka, but I'll be the first one to give fifty BAM to get a photo radar... We'll pay for it ourselves, but to save the life of at least one kid at risk today how do you put a price on that. Here, we'll collect money and we will get the photo radar.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš).*

**MZ as a direct link between citizens and local authorities:** In this respect, the MZ is described as the first step toward local authorities or the first instance where citizens seek solutions to certain problems in their community.



*"The MZ is the first level or the first step in the organisation of social reality... in a way, the foundation of everything else that follows. If we do not have a good foundation in the house then the rest of the structure is questionable. (Male, Ključ)*

The MZ was perceived as a 'micro unit' reflecting the functionality of the entire institutional system, while the role of the MZ in society was seen as improving the lives of its citizens and the development of democratic relations and non-discriminatory relations.



*"By investing in MZs as a smaller area-based unit, we can improve the situation in the entire municipality."  
(A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš).*

**MZ as a service provider to citizens for resolving their everyday problems:** By providing means for the quality of life of its citizens in the areas where they live the MZ can ensure funding for infrastructure and a better quality of staff to manage projects. The MZ plays an important role for citizens living in remote areas by ensuring access to services provided by local self-government units through the MZ. Citizens often lack the structure to channel specific initiatives, while the MZ should provide and enable this.

*"An ideal local community should have a branch outpatient clinic, it should have its own school, one kindergarten, sidewalks; it's a big problem: waiting for ambulance for a bed-ridden person."  
(A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

**MZ as a support to citizens in advocating their interests:** MZs facilitate access to local authorities and enable problem solving. Some respondents believed that facilitated access to MZs would encourage activism by itself. This is because citizens would have the chance to, "create the climate in the community where they live".

Institutions at higher levels of government were considered inaccessible, with extremely complicated procedures; however, the atmosphere at the MZ was considered 'homely', which is encouraging for citizens who wish to claim their rights.

*"Obviously, it is the most important one. We grew up and live here and of course we try to improve the lives of people living here and ourselves." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

**MZ as an institution of trust:** The respondents considered the MZ an adequate means of advocating their interests to higher levels of government.

*"My view of the MZ is that citizens look at it more intimately, as their own, where it is easier for them to address someone who they already know for a number of years and to whom they can tell their problems and from whom they can seek help." (Male, Brčko)*

*"...because MZs are a micro-environment where we all know each other and we all want to make the most of it. As soon as we change or improve life we can automatically influence the entire population in our municipality." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

*“Family is the pillar of the society and the MZ is a pillar of the local community.” (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši).*

### **MZ as an ‘extended arm’ of local authorities:**

*“The local community is an extended arm of the government, meaning the legislative and executive branch, so that it can communicate problems of the local community to them. To have this done every year, as it has been so far. So, without the MZ and without the people in the MZ bodies, it would be very difficult for everyone to go to the government individually and look for those in charge of something and to put forth all their problems; instead, it is consolidated so that the MZ applies and solves the problems of all citizens.” (Male, Brčko)*

*The MZ is in fact the first link in the local community where all the problems can be recorded and further impulses for solutions provided. (Female, Sanski Most)*

**MZ as a mechanism for involving citizens in the decision-making process:** Respondents expressed the view that, in relation to higher levels of government, results are most visible at the level of the MZ, which encourages citizens to seek its support. Given the competence of the MZ, the respondents believed that MZs act when it comes to problems that directly affect citizens and that this results in the opinion that the MZ cares more about its citizens. Therefore, there was the commonly held belief that in future the role of MZs should be strengthened, especially their role in infrastructure projects and in the fields of agriculture and development.

**Preventing further brain drain of young people from rural areas:** The MZ can play a role in keeping young people in their areas. The condition for this is that MZs function well, especially in terms of the efficiency and good organisation of the bodies of the MZ. Based on the experience of MZs that have already worked on such improvements, it is clear that this will require time and patience.

**MZ as a mechanism for the articulation of citizen interests:** Apart from citizens, the intermediary role of the MZ is also important for representatives of local government. The latter’s perspective was that the persons representing the MZ can play a key role in involving the municipality in solving their problems or providing support for such projects. The better the MZ representatives articulate a problem the easier it is for municipal representatives to understand the need and to address the problem more efficiently.

MZs should therefore allow for the articulation and channelling of different or identical interests by different groups in order to better target decision makers at the municipal level. By incorporating the funnel principle, MZ representatives can collect suggestions and ideas for projects or for solving certain problems and then formulate them into proposals. These proposals can then be passed to higher levels of decision-making. One of the main obstacles to this is disinterest among citizens in the work of the MZ and their resistance to being included in the decision-making process in general.

**MZ as a forum for discussion:** A group of women from rural areas put forward their vision of the MZ. They saw it as a place where locals talk more, where everyone has a voice and an opportunity to make decisions. They believed that everyone should respect the opinions of others and that all residents should feel able to turn to the MZ to solve a problem. They thought that the council should hold regular and frequent meetings and ensure that all residents are informed about such meetings on a timely basis. They believed that the MZ has clearly defined competences and that the statute defines all of the tasks of the MZ as well as the funds available to meet such tasks. They also thought that more attention should be given to the specificities of the environment.

*"Is the economy and agriculture developed, what is the structure of the population? For example, a larger MZ has more employed population, it should have primary schools, some sort of kindergarten, extended stay, outpatient clinics..." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

### **MZs have a good insight into the 'situation on the ground' and the needs of citizens:**

*"Listen, the MZ has proven to be a good system... Screening of the overall situation in the area of the local self-government unit for the sake of making it easier to come into contact with decision makers and those who have specific problems." (Male, Brčko)*

Local communities were considered best placed to react to and solve problems. This is because they are closest to the source of the problem and should have the best insight into the various obstacles and the conditions required for solving the problem.

**Connecting Citizens through the MZ:** This is the first step in the more active engagement of citizens. The next logical step is to link all of the MZs in each municipality.

### **MZ as a part of the tradition of society:**

*"I think that the MZ has a tradition and that the people earlier turned to MZs more than the municipalities, because the MZ had its own bank account to meet some of the demands of citizens at the MZ level. And the MZ as it is now... is not as powerful as it should be." (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši)*

A commonly held opinion among respondents was that citizens had a developed habit of addressing the MZ when it came to some everyday needs and that this was not the case with the municipality. This suggests the need to restore some of the elements formerly attached to MZs (status of legal entity and a bank account).

*"I would now see it for what it used to be: a school with three classes, a functional community centre, that it was packed, that citizens met, that the football club already exists, that it is on Sunday, that competitions are held, that it is packed with cheering, those kids back then, like in those times, selling something to nibble on. Life as it once was." (Male, Brčko)*

**To bring society closer to the standards and values of the European Union through the role of the MZ:** In order for certain good practices that already exist in the EU Member States to be introduced some municipalities are already including MZs into the decision-making processes.

*"We simply adopted the European Union standards and thus included local communities in all decision-making phases." (Male, Žepče)*

### **MZs play an important role in developing the wider community:**

*"I think the MZ is the cornerstone of the development of a municipality." (Male, Ključ)*

However, it is not enough just to include the MZ in the municipal development structures, but rather to give them an essential role in designing and implementing projects through an integrated approach.

*"Streets would gain much importance if it would be organised, say, through infrastructure projects, through educational projects, through diverse activities, that MZs are integrated with economic development. So, what happens now. A very important thing. Economic development happens on some phantom basis. So, it is all some agencies coming from a side, writing some*

*guidelines in exchange for some money. They leave and so, more or less, none of this needs to happen. It would be very useful to integrate MZs, to make it a concrete basis... To make a medium-term basis through some activities and to make it a continuous process, that it is a lively process, that it is a concrete process.” (Male, Brčko)*

According to the participants, this would require redirecting projects through the MZ as opposed to just through non-governmental organisations (NGOs), as is often the case. Having a larger and more responsible role in projects would mean that MZs would gain special importance with the local authorities and with citizens.

### **MZs should be well organised, functional, equipped and efficient.**

*“I know where the centre of the MZ is, I know who the president of the MZ council is and I know who the members of the MZ council are. And I know who to turn to and on what matters I can turn to them. For those questions I do not know, I know to ask them and to whom to turn. The MZ is well equipped in modern times. In every MZ every day, not to say every hour, there is a person who will give me the answers I need and to be sure that my questions, even suggestions and proposals, will be passed on to the highest levels.” (Male, Petrovo)*





# FUNCTIONS OF MZs

## 3.1 Advocacy and access to governance

**3.1.1** The role of MZs in Advocacy and in representing the interests of Citizens

**3.1.2** Modalities of the MZ function to advocate for and Present the Interests of Citizens

**3.1.3** Recommendation to advance the Advocacy Function of MZs

## 3.2 MZs Service provision

**3.2.1** The Role of MZs in the provision of Services to Citizens

**3.2.2** Modalities of the MZ function in providing Services to Citizens

**3.2.3** Recommendations to improve the provision of Services to Citizens

## 3.3 MZs as a social and cultural hub in the community

**3.3.1** MZs as a Social and Cultural Hub in the Community

**3.3.2** Modalities of the role of MZs as a Social and Cultural Hub in the Community

**3.3.3** Recommendations to advance the function of MZ's as a Social Hub

## 3.4 The Role of the MZ as a Forum for Civic Participation

**3.4.1** Modalities of the MZ role as a Forum for Citizen Participation

**3.4.1.1** Participation of Women in the Work of MZs

**3.4.1.2** Participation of Youth in the Work of MZs

**3.4.1.3** Participation of Pensioners in the Work of MZs

**3.4.1.4** Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Work of MZs

**3.4.2** Recommendations to advance the role of MZs as a Forum for Citizen Participation



Based on the wider concept of the principle and vision of MZs in BiH, this chapter explains the functions of the MZ in more detail. The starting point for exploring the function of the MZ was the report on 'Rethinking the Local Community Role in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Comparative Overview and Assessment of Community Governance Models and Practices in Croatia, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland and Bosnia and Herzegovina', which lists four options for the role of MZs in BiH.

- I. Option 1: MZs as advocates of community interests
- II. Option 2: MZs as venues for service facilitation or service delivery
- III. Option 3: MZs as a social and cultural hub in their community
- IV. Option 4: MZs as a forum for civic participation.

The research conducted for this report aimed at developing the vision of MZs in BiH is based on the options contained in the previous research, but in relation to realistic upgrades and opportunities to strengthen the existing system. The quantitative and qualitative research examined each of the listed options with the participants in meetings organised in thirteen LGUs. This chapter outlines the extent to which the participants either supported or challenged the proposed role of local communities in relation to these four functions.

The current research confirms the findings of the aforementioned Comparative Review. Participants believed that it is possible to achieve the model of MZs in BiH through the application of these four functions; to the extent required and allowed by local conditions and needs.

*"The roles that MZs will take on will depend on the local context and needs. Also, it is important to emphasise that they are not mutually exclusive and can be complementary. In other words, there may be significant overlaps or synergies between these four models of action. So, each MZ can have different combinations of characteristics of these four roles, depending on the context and the need."<sup>4</sup>*

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4 Analitika (2016), p. 53

# 3.1 ADVOCACY AND ACCESS TO GOVERNANCE

## VISION OF THE ADVOCACY ROLE OF THE MZ



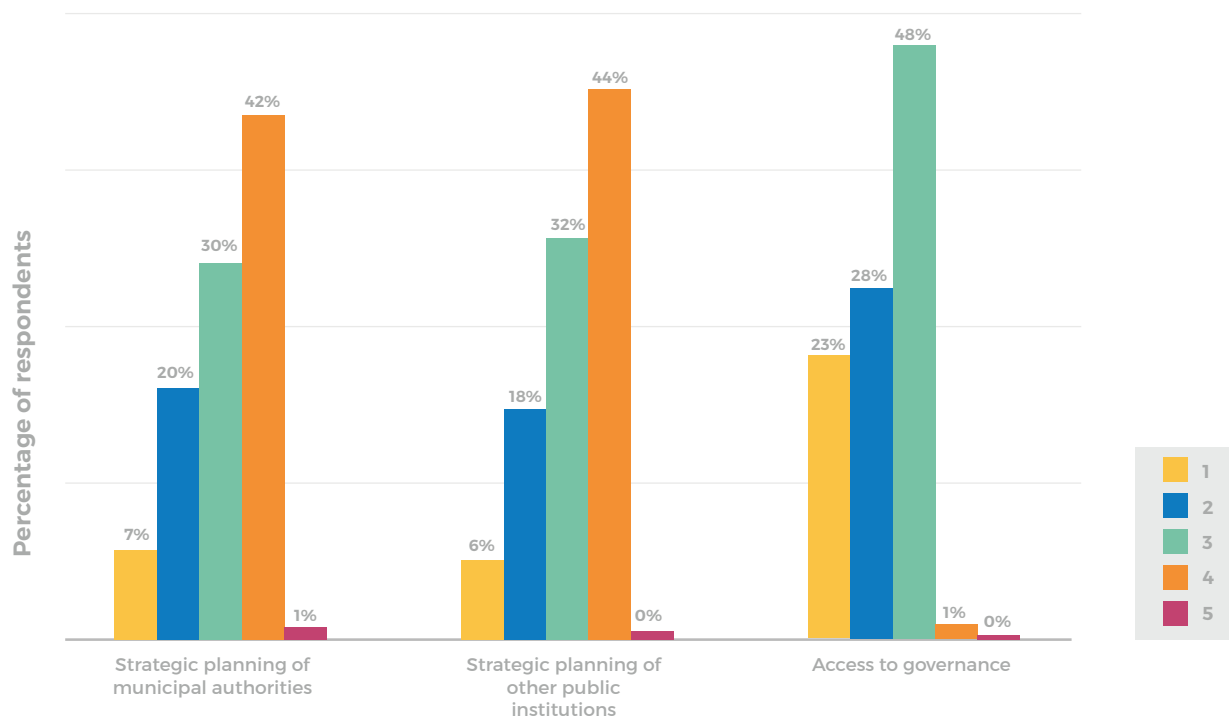
### 3.1.1 The role of MZs in Advocacy and in representing the interests of Citizens

As noted in the previous chapter, one of the **basic roles of MZs in society is to be a service provider and a coordinator between citizens and higher levels of government and with NGOs.** According to the findings of the Comparative Research conducted by Analitika, "The MZ in BiH has already assumed the role of coordinator and information provider; that is, intermediaries between residents of a particular community, local authorities and local service providers."<sup>5</sup>

The legal basis already exists in both entities for such a role for MZs. In addition, according to the respondents and the views expressed in this research, the MZ should be more open to citizens and local authorities. The latter can be achieved through the activities described in this chapter.

5 Analitika (2016), p. 54

## The MZ as an advocate of community interests



Graph 1. Advocacy Functions

Question	1	2	3	4	5									
<p><b>The municipality/city is in the process of drafting a new budget/spatial plan/rural development strategy. Should the MZ:</b></p> <p><b>The education authority is considering whether to open a school in the community / The health authority is considering whether to open, close, increase or reduce the local healthcare institution / Social services are considering changes to the local social welfare centre. Should the MZ:</b></p> <p><b>The population in rural MZs has difficulty traveling to the administrative body in order to submit a request or receive a response, namely to deliver or obtain a document. Should the MZ:</b></p>	<p>7% – Have the option to comment on a call for the submission of comments.</p>	<p>6% – Have the option to comment on a call for the submission of comments.</p>	<p>23% – Advise the citizens where they need to go for various administrative affairs.</p>	<p>20% – Have the option to comment through the regular procedure.</p>	<p>18% – Have the option to comment through the regular procedure.</p>	<p>28% – Set up a place where citizens can submit and obtain documents.</p>	<p>30% – Be formally consulted, with the obligation to consult with the local community and provide answers in writing.</p>	<p>32% – Be formally consulted, with the obligation to consult with the local community and provide answers in writing.</p>	<p>48% – Provide access to user-friendly e-government, with networked computers and a person who can help those who are less skilled in working on a computer to complete the tasks they need online.</p>	<p>42% – To participate in working group work on drafting the document.</p>	<p>44% – To participate in working group work on drafting the proposal.</p>	<p>1% – Other.</p>	<p>1% – Other.</p>	<p>0% – Other.</p>
	<p>1% – Other.</p>	<p>0% – Other.</p>	<p>0% – Other.</p>											

Table 1. Advocacy functions of MZs

## 3.1.2 Modalities of the MZ function to advocate for and Present the Interests of Citizens

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**Systemically address the engagement of MZs within the decision-making process:** MZs need to have certain powers in order to make decisions about their population through its bodies, as they have a better insight into the needs at that level. The involvement of the MZ in the decision-making process must be solved systematically to enable it to contribute in a timely manner to the development of certain proposed solutions or to participate in projects. Representatives of the MZ expressed their disapproval over problems affecting the everyday life of their citizens, such as water supply, sewerage or waste disposal, whereas some municipalities had a reactivate approach and operated ad hoc as opposed to in a planned and systemic manner. Yet even in situations where municipalities systematically did regulate the participation of MZs in the decision-making process this was not applied in practice. In both cases, MZs address influential individuals to seek intervention with the local authorities on their behalf.

*“Here, as far as the playground is concerned, I’ve been through this practically from the street, from the idea to implementation, all these stages. So, there is one rule here and it is that there are no rules. This means to lobby where you can, whichever way you can, irrelevant of whether it is the MZ or a political party... Simply put, lobby where you can, whichever way you can, to get it done.” (Male, Brčko)*

**Participation of MZs in the work of working groups at the level of LGUs:** 42 per cent of respondents who participated in the quantitative research supported MZ participation in the development of key documents such as the budget, spatial plan and development strategies. Through the qualitative research, the need for advocacy through the inclusion of MZs in the municipal working groups when drafting strategic documents or preparing legislation was pointed out. Respondents emphasised that this would require drawing up rules whereby in certain cases the inclusion of the MZ in the working groups would be mandatory. Alternatively, they suggested the establishment of permanent bodies at the level of the municipality in order to maintain regular contact and communication with the MZ, as proposed in the recommendations in the coming sections.

**Mandatory consultation with the MZ** and delivery of responses in writing was also emphasised as an essential activity in exercising this function. **In certain areas, local authorities consult with MZs during the process of drafting key documents such as the budget, strategic plans, development plans and urban plans. However, some respondents believed that this is not enough.**

*“The current practice is for all MZs to have public consultations on strategic documents... The population must be informed about consultations being held. However, based on prior experience, I learned that this is not enough. The turnout is very weak; citizens do not think that this concerns them and that the decisions and other acts will be adopted in the form that someone else wants, not how they think it is necessary.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

**There is room for improvement and a need to ensure that the participation of representatives of MZs is extended and that not only the presidents of the MZ councils attend discussions but also other members of the council as well as all interested citizens. This applies in particular to the inclusion of special groups, such as pensioners or disabled persons with specific needs. These needs must be taken into account when drafting such documents.**

**The presence of MZ representatives at municipal council sessions:** In the focus groups, respondents highlighted this as an important activity of the MZ. It is also in line with the responses given in the survey, where 20 per cent of respondents stated the MZ should have the possibility to comment within the regular procedure. It would be useful if municipal councils were to submit their agenda to all of the MZs in order to inform them in a timely manner about any items that might concern them. There was also the idea of forming councils of MZs at the level of the municipality.

**Expand the circle of MZ representatives that participate in advocacy activities:** Poor communication and poor information between the municipality and the MZ means that there is a need for more openness and the expansion of communication outside the closed circle of decision makers. The role of the MZ is crucial for opening this communication, because it would allow a wider circle of interested citizens to access information. The 'centralisation' of services and poor funding and the consequent dependence of the MZ on local government funds further undermine the relationship between the MZ and the municipality. At the same time, there was the view that communication exists nevertheless. The mere fact that municipalities consult with MZs when making decisions confirms that a certain level of trust exists between these institutions and that a balance between 'wishes and possibilities' has to be found.

*The MZ is a place and an opportunity to actively involve citizens in determining their priorities and solving problems related to their local community. (Female, Sanski Most)*

**Building mutual trust between citizens and the MZ and between the MZ and the municipality.** "We honestly have trust, when it comes to the local community and MZs; our people towards us and us towards them. Only perhaps a bit more work, I say this from experience, on joint actions... With joint work and continuous presence in the population. Do not run away from the population. Be present in society, always and in every aspect. To know the situation on the ground and then that is it." (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši). Respondents stressed that transparency and publicity on the work of the MZ best builds trust: "To implement projects on time... To launch implementations of projects that are already approved... Not to stall projects... Not to have investments only on the eve of elections." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš). Accordingly, there have been several recommendations.

*"When there is an incoming request from citizens, not to wait for one year. There is some expeditiousness in work, a two-way communication... not just I filed a request and it was forgotten: no answer. Now, that is concerning administration. And as far as these other things, there is definitely communication lacking between elected authorities and the locals. No, there is no slot for citizens to meet delegates, no visits to local communities by the highest authorities in the municipality. Communication is lacking and as soon as good communication is established it is likely that people's confidence and trust in a better future would be restored." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

**Depoliticisation of decision-making processes at the local level can also contribute to strengthening the role of the MZ.**

*"So, greater influence, greater trust... across local communities and something that we put forward... to really respect it and to accept it. Not to seek someone else's assistance or from someone who is in a political post to have more influence than a local community." (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši)*

**Joint appearance and building of the MZ network within the territory of one municipality:** This should apply, for instance, when developing a budget or a joint proposal for allocating funds or launching certain initiatives that would be in everyone's interest. Joint appearance would also be desirable in spatial planning.



**Media promotion:** Advocacy actions should be promoted so that as many citizens as possible are aware of their demands. It is not enough to have a request, it is necessary to awaken the interest of citizens so that the pressure on the local authorities is as strong as possible.

**Institutionalisation of coordination and communication between MZs and LGUs:** A positive example of good communication and coordination is the Municipality of Ključ, which organises regular weekly meetings with representatives of all MZs. This practice is particularly useful when adopting the budget, since the MZs are informed about all aspects of the process on a timely basis; this is why they believe that they are adequately consulted during the decision-making process. This practice formed the basis for the suggestion to form a body at the level of the municipality, comprising the secretaries of the MZs and a coordinator in charge of MZs, to suggest projects that could be included in the municipal budget.

Another positive example was the MZ in the Municipality of Žepče, which regularly consults citizens about projects and priorities.

*“In the MZ, we have recently been conducting some surveys on what is the priority. Every year we submit three projects, whether it is a playground, if most people think the playground is a problem... and then we apply to the municipality, then from the municipality to the canton, if it is a bigger investment.” (Male, Žepče)*

### 3.1.3 Recommendation to advance the Advocacy Function of MZs

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- + **Monitor legislation and monitor the enforcement of legislation:** It is necessary to introduce mechanisms to monitor the implementation of those parts of laws that relate to MZs. This could be done, for example, through coordination bodies at the level of local self-governance. Although the FBiH Law on Local Self-Government stipulates the obligation to consult with the MZ on local planning, this is not done consistently in practice.
  - **Knowledge of procedures and regulations:** Representatives of the MZ should be informed about the specifics of the work of the MZ and the regulations related to its operations. They should be familiar with, for example, the procedure to access information and on the implementation of the Law on gender balance in the bodies of the MZ.
  - **Systemic cooperation with the LGU:** The issue of the enforcement of monitoring mechanisms is pending in many local communities. Most respondents expressed the view that this issue should be solved systematically through better cooperation among the bodies of the MZ and the relevant LGU services. In practice, this means that the competent city/municipal expert department should assist the bodies of the MZ and provide explanations for the regulations or inform the representatives of the MZ about key provisions before these regulations come into force and/or immediately after their adoption. Particularly important are, amongst others, the areas of spatial planning,

housing and communal activities, social protection, social activities, and environmental protection.

- **Training function:** Introduce regular training for representatives of the MZs on various aspects of legislation enforcement, pay attention in particular to becoming familiar with the new laws. It is very important to train members of the MZ councils on the application of regulations but also on the basic topics related to the functioning and operation of the MZ. In that sense, training should be organised immediately after the election of the members of the council. The training can be conducted by individual LGU departments or through joint projects with civil society organisations.
- **Technical capacity:** Prior to the training of members of the MZ councils, it is necessary to provide the technical preconditions: at least one computer in each MZ, access enabled to all official gazettes (electronic), timely instruction from the municipal/city service on the regulations concerning MZs as well as those that do not concern the MZ.
- **Harmonisation of regulations:** Align the statutes and regulations of the MZ with the regulations currently in force. If not already the case, cooperation between the competent municipal/city authorities and the MZs regarding monitoring of the implementation of the regulations should be formalised and prescribed as an obligation under the LGU acts.
- **Consultative function:** By defining a normative framework at the level of the LGU, it is possible to prescribe that each act relevant to the work of the MZs (in addition to planning documents such as the budget and strategic and spatial plans) is sent to the MZs for consideration and discussion prior to sessions.

Public consultation can be a mechanism not only for the adoption of laws but also for monitoring their implementation. Experience shows that public consultation is one of the best methods for addressing specific problems and the needs of citizens as well as for gathering different opinions in MZs.

- **Distribution of tasks and responsibilities:** The MZ assemblies should play a greater role in monitoring the enforcement of regulations as well as in determining the budget funds, according to the priorities set by the MZ.
- **Involvement in decision-making processes:** When it came to the application of regulations pertaining to the MZ, respondents thought the responsible LGU expert service should provide an explanation of the regulations and inform local community representatives about the key provisions prior to the regulations entering into force or, possibly, immediately afterwards (e.g. the departments for housing and utilities, finance and social affairs in relation to regulations under their jurisdiction).
- **Establishing a body to monitor the enforcement of regulations:** The practice of establishing a gender equality commission at the level of local assemblies/councils has proven to be a good mechanism for monitoring the implementation of gender equality legislation. Similar mechanisms could be established in other areas (e.g. commissions to promote citizen participation). These bodies do not necessarily have to comprise solely of delegates/councillors but also representatives of other interested parties, including the MZ councils.

- **Inclusiveness:** In regard to monitoring the enforcement of regulations, different interests and the specifics of rural and urban local communities have to be taken into account. Many laws do not concern rural local communities, because, for example, there are no homeowners associations and economic activity is focused on agriculture.

+ **Coordination and communication:** Institutionalise communication and coordination between the MZ and the local authorities.

- **Formalise participation:** The MZ is a form of direct involvement of citizens in local self-government and needs to be directly incorporated into the general acts of local government (statutes and decisions), where this has not already been done. Firstly, the statutory decision on each MZ at the level of each LGU should precisely define the work, including the performance of the advocacy function, of the MZ.
- **Institutionalisation of the advocacy function:** Within this context, the question of the status and role of the MZ should be raised in accordance with the current normative solutions. Participants of the regional meetings thought that a statutory decision on the MZ at the level of each individual LGU should define the work of MZs precisely, including performance of the advocacy function. Regarding the status of MZs, most respondents expressed the view that MZs should have legal subjectivity and gain more powers than they currently have (especially in Republika Srpska).
- **Timely Responses to Citizens' Requests:** The existence of two-way communication between the MZ and the local government is a prerequisite for any kind of cooperation and it is very important to improve this aspect. The local government should respond to each citizen's proposal or request sent on behalf of the local community and it is necessary to formalise this as an obligation.
- **Institutionalising cooperation and coordination:** It is necessary to establish formal structures that deal with cooperation with MZs (exchange of information, coordination, and technical and professional support) at the LGU level. Where there are conditions and needs (e.g. a large number of MZs), it is possible to organise a separate department (service). Where the conditions are not available, it would suffice to assign cooperation with MZs to one or more official (under the job descriptions in the job classification).
- **Training and qualifications:** If only one officer is appointed for coordination activities with the MZ then it would be preferable that this person is from the mayor's cabinet and someone who has daily contact with the mayor. He/she should have the authority and the power to make decisions in cooperation with the relevant municipal services. In smaller municipalities with only a few MZs, this job description could be incorporated into one of the existing posts. Yet it is important that there is a focal point in each LGU or a link between the MZs and the local government.
- **Partnership relations:** The practice of regular meetings of the presidents of the MZ councils with mayors and city mayors and the speakers of assemblies/councils should be promoted and, where possible, formalised. Such meetings represent a unique opportunity for direct communication between the highest governance structures of the LGU and MZs. In those LGUs where there is already such a practice, it has proven to be very useful.
- **Coordination bodies:** Establish coordination bodies at the municipal level where all

MZs will be represented:

- Coordination at the municipal level needs to be resolved in a uniform manner throughout the country, taking into account, where necessary, the needs and possibilities of different areas (especially the smaller ones).
- Depending on the capacities of the LGU, it is necessary to establish a service/department/coordinator in charge of the MZ at the municipal level.
- It is also necessary to establish a permanent coordination body for the MZ at the municipal level. The speaker of the municipal council body should head this body (municipal assembly speaker in RS) and it should include representatives of all MZs within the territory of the municipality, a representative of the service/department/coordinator for the MZ and involve the municipal mayor. The coordination body should meet regularly at least every two months and more often if needed.
- It is recommended that municipal mayor and speaker of the council/assembly visit all of the MZs in order to gain a better understanding of the situation and the needs of citizens.
- **Accountability, monitoring and valuation:** Appoint a permanent coordinator in the municipal administration for the MZ:
  - If the LGU decides to appoint a coordinator for the MZ then that person must be ready for fieldwork, show initiative and have an excellent knowledge and experience of the work of the administration. Therefore, it is recommended that the coordinators be placed through transfers within the LGUs in order for them to have a good insight into the work of the administration.
  - The MZ coordinator should provide continuity through coordination between the LGU and the MZ.
  - The MZ coordinator submits MZ reports to the council/assembly.
  - The MZ coordinator submits a report on the work of the MZ to the mayor and the municipal council/assembly.
  - The task of the coordinator is to monitor the processes within the municipality and the work of the MZ, to monitor and evaluate the implementation of projects financed by the municipality in the MZ, monitor the enforcement of laws and the adoption of new laws and regulations and to inform the MZ representatives thereof.
  - The coordinator also consolidates the needs of all MZs and efficiently submits these to the municipal assembly/council.
  - The MZ coordinator keeps records of MZ needs as well as records of correspondence between the MZ and the LGU. The coordinator should keep a record of all requests and letters from the MZ to the LGU for better follow-up in the further procedure.
  - The MZ coordinator (or service/department) arranges a schedule of visits by representatives of other LGU services to MZs as needed or periodically in agreement

with the MZ (for example, a representative of the urban planning service to visit the local office once a month).

- **Cooperation and networking:** Establish networks/forums of MZs within the territory of one municipality:
  - Set days when all MZs can address their problems directly to the LGU.
  - Set the task of the MZ coordinator at the LGU level.
  - MZs should form networks through project implementation.
- + **Normative framework:** Clearly define cooperation between the LGU and MZs through legal acts and the statutes of the municipality and the MZ.
  - Adopt law(s) on local self-government or address amendments to the Law on the Principles of Local Self-Government in the FBiH.
  - The recently adopted RS Law on Local Self-Government defines the general normative framework for LGUs, including MZs. The role of MZs has not changed significantly in relation to the previous law. The Law leaves the possibility for specific issues in the work of MZs to be regulated by acts at the LGU level. In this sense, the LGU acts (statute and decisions of the municipal assembly) can be used for interventions to cover any gaps in the normative framework. It also offers some flexibility to regulate these issues individually at the level of each LGU.
  - **Limited decentralisation and/or deconsolidation:** When it comes to the role of MZs, this area needs to be defined in a better and a more precise manner. It is necessary to strive for decentralisation through the acts of the local self-government units, given the instances of neglect relating to some MZs, especially rural compared to urban. Yet going to the other extreme where MZ councils become overburdened in normative terms should be avoided, as this would merely lead to it becoming just another bureaucratic structure.
  - **Support for civic initiatives:** It is important to promote civic initiatives that do not necessarily have to be written down; however, it is important that such initiatives be heard publicly. For this reason, it is necessary to stimulate the environment for the development of civic initiatives through the assemblies of citizens and other forms of gathering such as panels, roundtables and cultural, artistic or sporting events organised within the MZs. These events also represent an opportunity to initiate civic initiatives.
  - **Distinguishing between responsibilities and competences:** When it comes to joint projects between the LGU and MZs, it is very important to prescribe the conditions for eligibility to enter specific projects for those MZs that have the status of legal entity. It is necessary to limit the ability of MZs to take on large projects independently without the consent of the competent LGU body.
  - **Exchange of good practice:** There are good experiences from some MZs to follow. One such example is clearing snow and road maintenance in rural communities. Based on a signed agreement on cooperation between the LGU and the MZ, the MZ assumes a certain role. The MZ submits proposals on how many streets should be cleared of

snow and on the number of vehicles and fuel required. Based on this, the municipality then transfers money to the MZ for clearing snow and road maintenance. The MZ then allocates this funding to the engaged individuals.

- **Systemic communication:** Communication with the municipal/city structures should not be left solely to the agility of the presidents of the MZ councils but should be solved systematically through acts of the LGU itself (municipal statute).
  - **Participation in working bodies:** Communication between the MZs and the assembly and delegates requires improvement. It should also enable the MZ presidents to participate if the agenda includes certain topics that are of importance to them. In addition, citizens should be allowed to participate in the work of the municipal committees and working groups. The profession and level of participation of the MZ representatives in the work of the commissions should be relevant and allow them to contribute through their experience.
  - **Territorial representation:** The issue of representativeness through the election law is also important. Because of the poor election law, delegates do not cover all areas at the municipal level. This leaves some MZs without representation on the municipal assembly and leads to neglect, while most delegates are from urban areas. This is why local elections need to be organised in such a way that each MZ or a group of MZs has at least one councillor/delegate on the municipal council/assembly.
  - **Systemic recording and documenting:** Initiatives and suggestions submitted by the MZs to the local administration should be formalised through standard forms so that all correspondence is documented. Yet the MZ councils should not be overburdened in normative terms. The latter would create the other extreme where the MZ councils become just another bureaucratic structure.
- + **Informative Function:** Provide regular and timely information to the MZs on issues relevant to them at the level of the LGU.
- **Efficient community leadership:** Consider the possibility of recall for those council presidents or councils that are inactive. In the event of such situations, the legal possibilities that a delegate/councillor on the municipal assembly/council has should be enhanced. Namely, the ability to convene a gathering of citizens at the MZ where he/she has his/her place of residence.
  - **Availability:** The presidents of the MZ council should always be available to citizens (if not physically available then at least available for contact via telephone or e-mail).
  - **Strategic and integrated approach:** When it comes to public consultation on the preparation and drafting of planning documents, it is necessary to ensure linkage and to integrate the plans of MZs into the strategic development plans. There is an important proactive relationship between local government representatives and MZs. For example, when preparing a strategic development plan to submit to all MZs a special questionnaire and a form by which citizens (either directly or through the councils) can address the most vital questions regarding the development of their micro-areas is forwarded to the MZ.
  - **Advisory function and articulating interests:** When discussing a draft budget or



other act that is often written in technical language, the content of the document for public consultation needs to be adjusted and presented to citizens in a simple and comprehensible manner (where the budget is concerned, there is a practice of budgeting for citizens). Additionally, the content of a document should include those parts that will have a direct impact on the MZ where the discussion is taking place. This approach at the same time stimulates citizen participation in decision-making and contributes to the transparency of the LGU and the MZ structures.

- **Systemic information dissemination by the LGU:** Although it is already a practice in some MZs, it is necessary to introduce a system for the regular sending of agendas of municipal council/assembly sessions to all MZs together with invitations to attend the sessions. All municipal council/assembly conclusions should be submitted regularly to all MZs.
- **Reporting and planning:** It is of utmost importance that the representatives of the MZ are suitably familiar with the annual work plan and the LGU budget. This can be ensured through the LGU coordinating body or through direct contact between the MZ and the LGU. In either case, it is important to provide the MZ representatives with the possibility to give their opinions on the documents mentioned. When preparing the municipal assembly/council work programme, include information on both the work and the needs of the MZs.
- **Predictability and transparency:** The inclusion of citizens into the work of MZs is sometimes not sufficiently clear. It is therefore recommended that all procedures and modalities for citizen involvement be clearly defined, particularly through the relevant legal acts.
- **Involvement in formal decision-making processes:** Through the statute, it is necessary to enable the MZ to request the convening of special sessions of the municipal council/assembly and to submit proposals to the collegium of the municipal council/assembly.

In the municipal council/assembly rules of procedure, the status of the representatives of the MZ and councillors/delegates should be made equal in the sense that authorised MZ representatives may propose items for the agenda, submit initiatives (introduce changes to the statute that would enable this) and have the right to file amendments.

- **Open communication and consultative role:** Allow all MZs to have e-mail addresses and internet access and introduce regular communication between the LGU and MZs via e-mail.

Ensure the more regular and frequent presence of municipal delegates/councillors at the sessions of the MZ councils/assemblies.

- + **Mediation function:** Strengthen the role of the MZ as a mediator between the population and the LGU, and the population and providers of public services (utility companies, social welfare centres, etc.).

- **Clear responsibilities and procedures:** There are examples of good practice when it comes to strengthening the capacity of MZs to act as a mediator between citizens and the LGU. In this segment, municipal services can further assist by preparing detailed and precise instructions for the MZ councils on how to maintain a protocol book, prepare

records, reports, participate in organising consultations, prepare acts, formulate civic initiatives, and alike (a form of a guide with practical examples).

- **Financial sustainability:** In cases where the MZ does not have legal personality and the ability to collect funds independently, the MZ should be provided with certain financial support from the municipal/city budget. In addition, certain funds should be foreseen in order to compensate the councils or the presidents of the MZ councils for operating costs.
- **Professionalisation and leadership role:** The president of the MZ council is the key link in strengthening this role of the MZ. Unfortunately, in the absence of the necessary authority and the mechanisms and means of action there is very little that the president of the MZ council can resolve alone. Therefore, it would be good to professionalise this post and to assign it additional responsibilities and rights. The MZ council president should be more active in communicating with citizens, preferably carrying out door-to-door campaigns and making sure that he/she knows the situation in the MZ in detail.

It is proposed that the president of the MZ council be engaged in the local community for at least half of the working hours. The LGU should determine the level of compensation for his/her professional engagement.

- **Centre for civic activism:** This role of the MZ does not warrant close consideration as it only serves to solve certain infrastructure problems; however, it should have a wider mandate and take on the role of a centre for civic activism in one local area.
- **Planning and reporting:** In regard to the functioning of MZs, it should be emphasised that some MZs have already produced annual and four-year work plans based on previously organised gatherings of citizens. This practice should be reintroduced in order to follow and supervise the work and functioning of MZs and to prevent possible misuse. It is necessary to monitor and analyse the proportion of requests citizens have proposed at the gatherings of citizens in relation to the defined plans of the MZs. This would also stimulate citizen involvement, because their initiatives would increasingly be taken into account.
- **Technical equipment:** The MZ offices must be technically equipped to be able to provide more services to citizens. The equipment must also be secured.
- **Limited decentralisation of services:** Officials of the reception office in the municipality should regularly visit remote MZs and through visits to local offices receive requests, certify copies of documents and (where possible) mediate on the issuance of excerpts from the registry.

Where necessary and feasible, consider the possibility of providing basic health services in local offices as well as the ability to provide home care in cooperation and coordination with the competent healthcare centre and social welfare centre.

- + **Provision of services:** The services that MZs could provide include, amongst others, receiving submissions, requests, initiatives and complaints, mediation in assisting vulnerable categories of the population, collecting feedback, initiating discussions at the LGU level and giving opinions.
- **Clear procedures and facilitated access to the administration:** List the forms that

are submitted to the LGU through the MZ. Upload all forms so that applications can be completed on the LGU website. Representatives of the MZ are to be trained in the preparation of applications, the types of forms and the procedures for providing answers. Introduce the obligation to respond to applications or letters sent from the MZ.

Introduce sanctions for services or individuals who do not provide timely information or response.

Introduce mechanisms in the MZ to monitor feedback from the LGU or other public services.

- + **Mediation role and cooperation with service providers:** Provide clear definitions of criteria for issues addressed to the LGU and service providers through MZs, define procedures for all services (requests/applications, suggestions, initiatives, complaints, etc.), define deadlines for providing answers and feedback and introduce the policy of mandatory response to a MZ application.

The laws on utility services in the cantons of the FBiH and in RS define the obligations of the MZ in situations where there is no adequate provision of certain services. It is necessary to conduct an analysis of these laws from the perspective of the MZ as well as an assessment of the application of this law in areas where such laws already exist. Consider the possibility of amending the law in order to better define the role of MZs in the performance of utility services.

If there is a need to establish local offices to provide services at the LGU level, municipal employees should perform these services for a certain number of days per week/month.

The Law on Local Self-Government or amendments to the Law on (Principles) of the LGU should specify more precisely the services that MZs can provide.

- + **Training function:** There is a need for additional and continuous training of representatives of MZs on different aspects of their work. The emphasis should be on effective communication, the use of technology, advocacy, etc.

- **Training for members the MZ council:** It is recommended that the training of members of MZ councils be organised as a thematic programme. Training should include some important aspects such as the role and functioning of MZs, communication skills and advocacy, the use of information technology, preparation and writing of projects, management skills, the application of existing and new laws, the competences of LGU services and of higher levels of government, administrative tasks, drafting of project documentation, modern forms of communication, the use of new technologies and thematic education (e.g. firefighting drills and drills in preparation for natural disasters).

Train all members of the MZ council on different aspects of the work and functioning of the MZ, especially when it comes to project preparation and implementation.

In particular, train all MZ council members in project preparation, implementation and project cycle management.

- **Planned and regular training:** Prepare annual LGU level training plans that will specifically target MZ representatives.

Provide regular, at least quarterly, training on these matters.

- **Post-election training:** It would be good to implement some training programmes immediately after the election and the constitution of new members of the MZ council. Training should not be limited to just the basic aspects of the MZs functioning but should also include wider areas such as communication skills, the use of new technologies, project preparation, forms of civic activism and so on.
  - **Cooperation with NGOs:** Training can be organised by local government or through various projects in cooperation with non-governmental organisations. It is important that one of the local stakeholders be trained during the first cycle of training in order to ensure the transfer of knowledge over the following cycles (Training of Trainers).
  - **Training of citizens:** Parallel to training MZ council members, there is a need to educate citizens on how to exercise their interests and rights through engagement in MZs.
- + **Open communication:** Grant more powers to the MZs and help make them more open to citizens. This primarily involves extending communication outside of the closed circle of decision makers. Provide information on different aspects of the functioning of the LGU in order to make it more accessible to a greater number of citizens.
- **Motivating civic activism:** The biggest problem is the inadequate motivation of citizens. It is therefore recommended that special activities be introduced to educate citizens about the work of MZs. This would increase citizen involvement and make people more aware of the benefits of participation in MZs.
  - **Promoting civic activism:** The promotion of civic activism remains insufficient, especially in relation to activism through MZs. It is therefore recommended that specific information and education (if possible) on how citizens can contribute to the development of their area and of society through activism in MZs be introduced. This is especially true of young people who have no experience of engaging in the work of MZs.
  - **Organising civic activism:** Practice has shown that citizens get more involved in the work of tenants associations, which can be an additional mechanism for encouraging civic activism. It is therefore necessary to define the role, organisation and election of tenants associations under legal regulations (e.g. the Law on Maintenance and Management of Buildings in Canton Sarajevo). RS has a law where every collective housing unit must elect a tenants association, but this law is not implemented adequately. It is noteworthy that tenants associations are more active where the post of the president and members of the association is paid.
- + **Mandatory public consultation:** Where it is not yet the case, introduce the obligation to conduct public consultations through the MZ during the process of adopting key documents at the LGU level (budget, spatial plan, work plan, etc.). It is recommended that MZs extend the level of participation of their representatives (presidents and members of the MZ councils, citizens (especially women), pensioners, the disabled, minority and marginalised populations, and socially vulnerable categories) in these processes.
- **Legality of work:** Although public consultation is a legal obligation, it is not applied consistently in practice and in some cases only formally organised. In many cases, public consultations are not organised through the MZ, although representatives of the MZ are present.

- **Formalising the role of the MZ in public consultation:** It is recommended that public hearings are organised in and through the MZs. Where this is not the case, it is necessary to introduce the obligation to organise public hearings at the municipal level or in the MZ. This is especially necessary when key documents are being adopted (budget, spatial plan, programme of work, etc.).
- **Greater participation of citizens in public consultation:** Particular attention should be paid to involving a greater number of citizens in public consultation.

In order to awaken interest among citizens in participating in decision-making direct communication with them and timely information is important. Therefore, the MZ councils should communicate regularly with citizens and where this is not the case consider the possibility of introducing a formal obligation (minimum number of events during one year, mandatory number of citizens present, etc.).

- **Recording and documentation:** It is proposed that communication with citizens be better organised so that all communication takes place in written form on pre-prepared forms so that each application is recorded and documented. Templates could be made for individual categories/services or universal forms that cover all initiatives/requests.
- **E-communication:** It is necessary to promote the electronic communication aspects that are currently underutilised and the possible introduction of submission via e-initiatives and similar means. Local communities should be technically equipped for this purpose and have a computer, printer and internet access as well as adequate applications for these needs.
- **Decentralised public consultation:** Public consultations should be conducted in the MZs and not exclusively in one place merely to meet the formal obligation. Although the statutory obligation prescribes that public consultations are to be organised for certain planning documents over a thirty-day period, the current practice is that public consultations are held in one place or in only a few MZs. This practice significantly limits the engagement of citizens from other MZs in the consultative process. Therefore, it is necessary to insist on the consistent application of regulations when organising public hearings.
- **Strategic and integrated approach:** When it comes to public consultation on the preparation and drafting of planning documents, it is necessary to ensure linkage and to integrate the plans of MZs into strategic development plans. There is an important proactive relationship between local government representatives and MZs. For example, when preparing a strategic development plan to submit to all MZs a special questionnaire and form allows citizens (either directly or through the councils) to address the most vital questions regarding the development of their micro-areas.

+ **Regular consultations with citizens:** These are organised at the level of the MZ through surveys and gatherings of citizens (town hall meetings).

- Surveys have proved to be a very efficient and useful way of examining the opinions and attitudes of citizens (e.g. on the provision of utility services). These are particularly important when initiating large infrastructure projects at the LGU or MZ level, where citizen support can be of great importance.

- It is recommended that a mandatory citizen survey be introduced at regular intervals (depending on the needs and capacities of the LGU and the MZ).
- A survey is conducted through a service provision centre or online via a website. Citizens are surveyed at the level of one or more MZ about issues that concern them specifically.

+ **Transparency, publicity and depoliticisation:** Building greater confidence in MZs and LGU requires transparency and publicity on their work as well as the depoliticisation of the decision-making process and depoliticising of structures at the MZ level.

- **Restoring trust in MZs:** Many LGUs stressed the problem of trust in the work of the MZ council. They cited the fact that MZ decisions are subjective and lack transparency as the biggest problem. It is therefore understandable that citizens are distrustful. This practice needs changing, especially when deciding on the priorities and projects of the MZ.
- **Planning and reporting:** Introduce the practice of regular annual reporting on the work of the MZ councils in municipal assemblies/municipal councils. This involves the MZ councils preparing and submitting regular annual reports on their work using pre-determined templates. In addition to discussion by the assembly, these reports should be made public and posted on the MZ bulletin board and/or the municipality/city website.
- **Introducing measures for increased transparency:** In addition to the work reports, the MZ councils should prepare work plans for the next year and submit them to the relevant municipal structures.
- **Transparent leadership of MZs:** Transparency in the work of the MZ council contributes to building citizen trust, not only toward the MZ council but also toward the LGU. It is therefore necessary to encourage the introduction of various measures to strengthen transparency in the work of MZs.
- **Transparency of the election process:** The presidents of the MZ councils are often key figures in building trust toward the MZ council among citizens, which is why the election procedure for the MZ council members is particularly important.

Elections for MZ council members in RS are conducted in accordance with the Election Law and the accompanying Guidelines on the Organisation and Implementation of Elections for Members of MZ Councils by the RS election committees, effective from 2012. Although this has improved the electoral process in RS, only a small number of MZs have gone through the process of electing members of the MZ council through this procedure. It is recommended to continue the process of electing the MZ council as prescribed by the Law.

- **Clarity and availability of information:** One of the proposals was to distribute a leaflet at the time of the MZ council election to all residents at their home address. The leaflet should contain all of the names of the proposed members and the president of the MZ council together with their phone numbers and information on when and how to contact them as well as the activities for which they are competent. If possible, the municipality should do this at its expense.
- **Involvement in decision-making processes:** Establish procedures that will enable the coordination body in charge of the MZ at the LGU level to be involved in the vote on the



adoption of the plan and the capital investment budget. In the LGU where such bodies are established, it is necessary to incorporate into the statute the obligation to include them in the process of budget preparation and other key documents at the LGU level.

- **Transparency in capital projects:** Transparency can be achieved by introducing scoring when adopting a capital investment plan. It is recommended to introduce compulsory scoring into the procedure for selecting projects and allocating funds for capital investment.

When selecting projects for capital investment it is necessary to separate projects of general interest from capital projects for the MZ. Capital investment funds need to be divided in such a way that a certain percentage of funds is allocated for projects of general interest and a part for projects in the MZs. Ideally, it would be appropriate to allocate the capital grants to MZs evenly and to set priorities accordingly. It is important to provide NGO grants separately.

- **Transparency of work:** Sessions of the municipal council/assembly should be made public through the media, in order to increase transparency on public works of the municipal bodies.
- **Limited depoliticisation:** Although politicisation in the decision-making process at the MZ level is considered undesirable, a perception of respondents considered it unrealistic to remove politics completely from the MZ. Depoliticisation of the MZ bodies is not possible in practice. Yet at the same time, it is necessary to depoliticise the work of these structures and, regardless of the way in which the MZ structures are elected, make them more transparent.

In addition, it is necessary to work more on strengthening the civil structures and reducing the influence of political parties in the work of MZs.

However, depoliticising the work of the MZ councils is a double-edged sword. Under the condition of general apathy among citizens, political parties are one of the ways to engage citizens more actively.

A certain level of depoliticisation is achievable by having citizens propose and elect the MZ councils through their gatherings. In this way, citizens as opposed to political parties would have a greater influence on the selection of the MZ bodies.

- **Consistency in the application of regulations:** An alternative approach to depoliticisation could be consistency in the application of regulations. The consistent application of regulations would also contribute to a reduction in misuse by and in the interests of political parties in the electoral process and work of the MZ councils.
- **Balanced representation:** The issue of balanced representation in all areas of the MZ is important as the relationship between urban and rural areas. In terms of representativeness, it is important to regulate the election of members of the MZ councils so that each hamlet has its representative on the council. This would facilitate a more balanced form of development in local communities and all citizens would know their local community representative, to whom they could always turn to for assistance.
- **Sanctions for inactive MZ councils:** A current problem is the fact that there is no

possibility to dissolve inactive MZ councils. Considering the fact that some councils are highly inactive, this option should be regulated.

- + **Networking of MZs:** There should be a network of MZs at the level of the municipality in order to reach higher levels of government for the purpose of more effective and efficient advocacy. Therefore, the MZ councils should be established at the level of the municipality.
- + **Promoting advocacy:** Awaken the interest of citizens through public promotion of advocacy activities.
- + **Communication with the LGU:** Involve MZs in working groups at the municipal level by developing clear rules for their inclusion and applying appropriate corresponding modifications to the legal framework.

Adopt amendments to the rules of procedure of municipal councils/assemblies that will enable the presence of the MZ representatives at their sessions, with mandatory and timely delivery of the agenda of municipal councils/assemblies to all MZs.

Maintain regular weekly meetings between the representatives of the MZs and the MZ coordinator at the municipality.

# 3.2 MZs SERVICE PROVISION

## VISION OF MZs AS HUBS OF SERVICE PROVISION

The MZ should have the necessary capacities to provide basic services to its citizens, but also to coordinate additional support to citizens through cooperation with other institutions and organisations.

As the first level of government, the MZ should be open and accessible to all citizens and a place where all citizens can exercise their rights and resolve common problems in close cooperation with the LGU.

The future MZ should motivate citizens to be proactive in establishing joint priorities and initiating and implementing joint actions for better conditions of life for all residents.

The MZ is seen as a place where citizens receive basic information and advice directly and where citizens are informed about the services they can seek and receive.



In order to directly respond to the needs of citizens by ensuring quality service provisions, MZs are either territorially defined units providing services in areas where no such services are available, that is, where services have been decentralised for greater efficiency, or mediate between residents and service providers to determine which type of service is needed. (Analitika, 2016)

Human and technical capacities of the MZ need strengthening in order for the MZ to ensure the necessary level of service provision to citizens.

The MZ should provide services to citizens and address most of their joint problems.

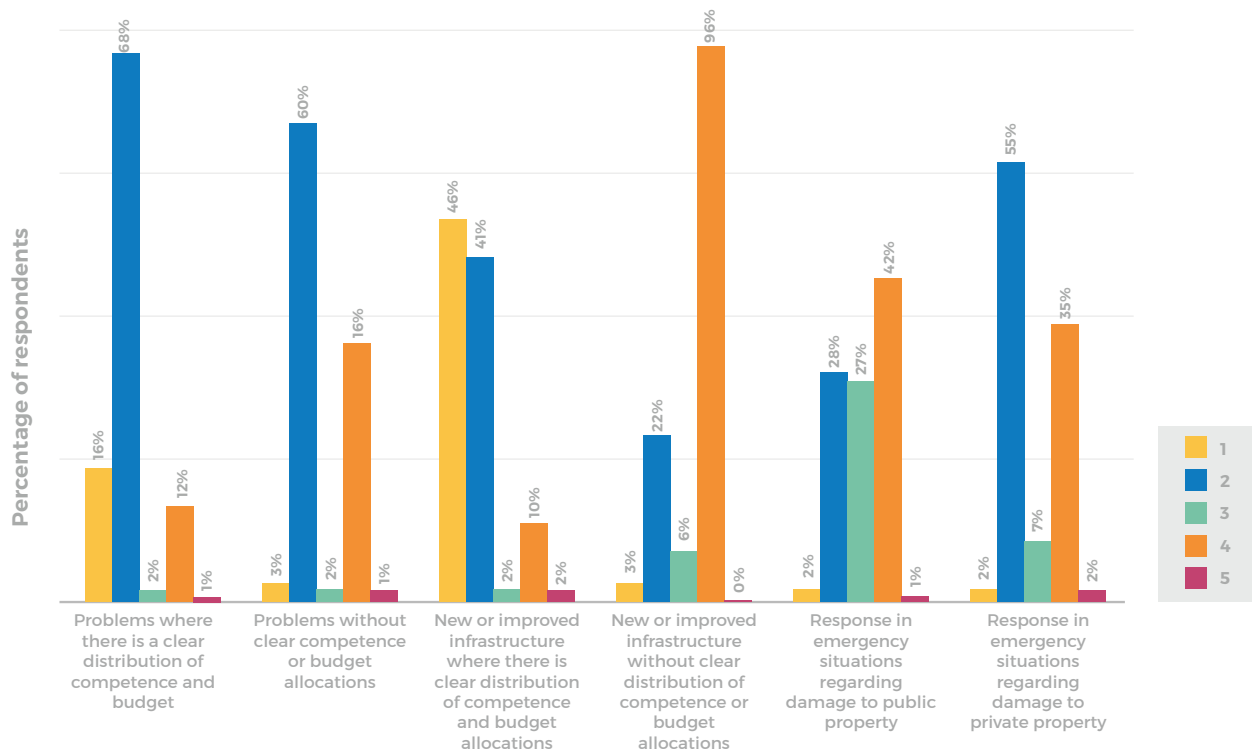
The future MZ is foreseen as a 'mini governance unit'. Citizens know their problems best and that is why the MZ is the first address for addressing and solving these problems.

### 3.2.1 The Role of MZs in the provision of Services to Citizens

In the focus groups, the view was expressed that one of the roles of the MZ is to provide services to all citizens, non-governmental organisations, legal business and religious entities and to develop and maintain the existing infrastructure. MZs should be the first level of authority where citizens can exercise their rights and solve their problems, whether individual or collective, to the extent to which the remit and resources of the MZ allows. A 2016 Comparative Report by the agency Analitika notes that in accordance with the subsidiarity principle, "...services provided by units at a sub-municipal level may be justified to respond to specific needs of a certain community." It also states that the legal framework related to MZs in BiH, "...does not exclude the possibility for MZs to provide services." Although the current laws do not grant executive powers to the MZ to provide a particular service, they do include provisions under which local authorities may delegate tasks within their jurisdiction to the MZ.<sup>6</sup>

6 Analitika, 2016, p. 56.

## Infrastructure and operational functions



Graph 2. Infrastructure and operational functions

Question	Citizens complain to their MZ because of holes on the road / rubbish piling up around containers / street lighting that do not work / trees that the wind blew down onto telephone wires. Should the MZ:	Citizens complain to their MZ about large quantities of litter in popular pedestrian areas / unregulated drainage channels that flood private yards. Should the MZ:	A new part of the settlement has been built but there is still no asphalt / street lighting has been built ... Most residents of the settlement are members of an ethnic minority and do not have construction permits. Should the MZ:	Citizens want a new playground / to expand the sports ground / to build new bicycle tracks or a skateboard park. Should the MZ:	Bad weather conditions (flood/storm) caused damage to public infrastructure. Should the MZ:	The same bad weather caused extensive damage to private homes and business entities, most of which are not insured. Should the MZ:
1	<b>16%</b> – Help citizens find the right person in the municipality or a competent public company.	<b>3%</b> – Inform citizens that it cannot help.	<b>46%</b> – Advise the population to obtain a building permit and then contact the municipality/public company.	<b>3%</b> – Inform citizens that they have no money for these activities and advise them to contact the municipality.	<b>2%</b> – Refer citizens to the relevant public services.	<b>2%</b> – Inform citizens that they do not have the money to help.
2	<b>68%</b> – Request that the municipality/public company solve the problem.	<b>60%</b> – Pass the problem on to the municipality/public company to solve.	<b>41%</b> – Pass the problem to the municipality/public company to solve.	<b>22%</b> – Lobby the municipality.	<b>28%</b> – Call the competent public services to repair the infrastructure.	<b>55%</b> – Lobby local or higher levels of government and/or the non-governmental sector to assist.
3	<b>2%</b> – Pay someone to solve the problem locally.	<b>2%</b> – Pay someone to solve the problem locally.	<b>2%</b> – Pay someone to solve the problem locally.	<b>6%</b> – Ask a non-governmental organisation to ensure the provision of the infrastructure.	<b>27%</b> – Use their local knowledge to help services coordinate and identify priorities for action.	<b>7%</b> – Provide a certain amount of financial assistance from own budget.
4	<b>12%</b> – Engage staff and own equipment to solve the problems as listed.	<b>33%</b> – Agree an action in the community to solve the problem.	<b>10%</b> – Agree an action in the community to solve the problem.	<b>68%</b> – Agree an action in the community and fundraise to build the infrastructure, potentially with joint financing from the municipality and/or a non-governmental organisation.	<b>42%</b> – Organise actions in the community to help protect/repair the infrastructure, potentially in cooperation with public services and/or non-governmental organisations.	<b>35%</b> – Agree an action in the community and fundraise to assist affected citizens.
5	<b>1%</b> – Other.	<b>2%</b> – Other.	<b>2%</b> – Other.	<b>0%</b> – Other.	<b>1%</b> – Other.	<b>2%</b> – Other.

Table 2. Infrastructure and operational functions

## 3.2.2 Modalities of the MZ function in providing Services to Citizens

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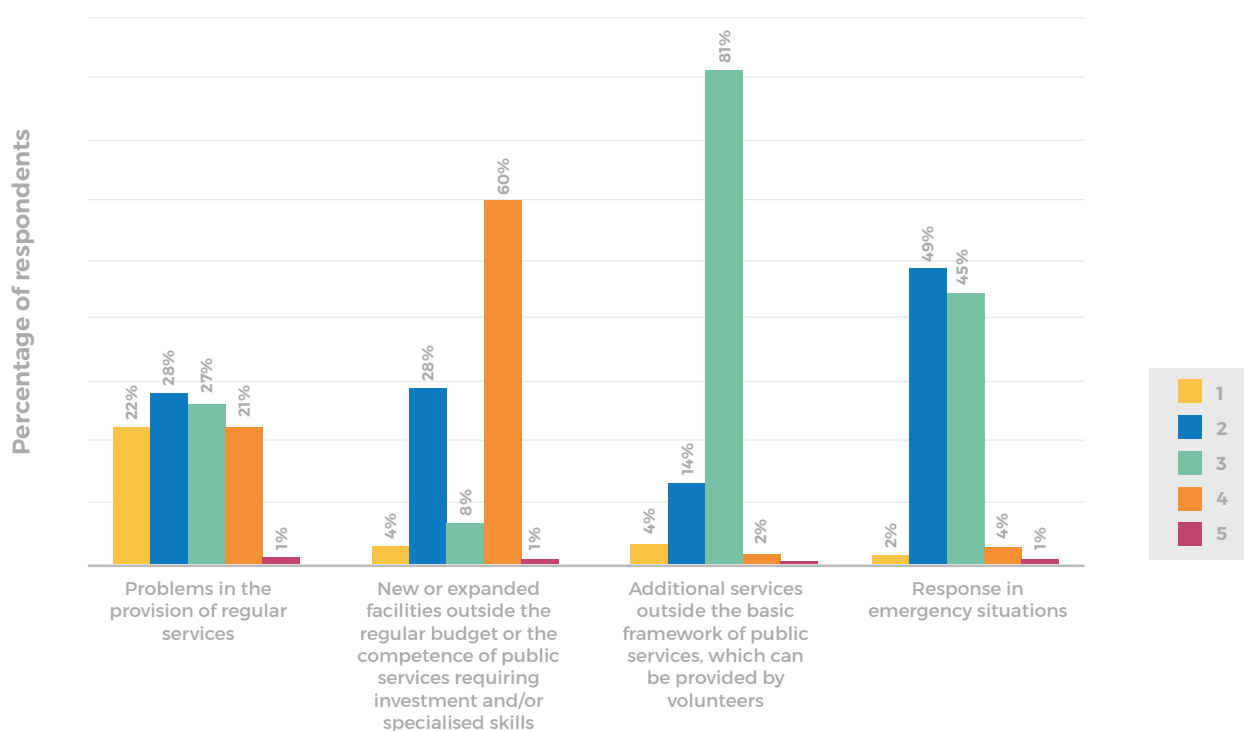
**Community actions:** When it came to smaller infrastructure projects, the survey showed that 68 per cent of respondents thought that in these cases it is necessary to agree an action in the community and fundraise to build the infrastructure with the potential for joint financing from the municipality and/or non-governmental organisations. In the event of damage caused by natural disasters, 42 per cent of respondents thought that the MZ should organise actions in the community to help protect/repair the infrastructure, potentially in cooperation with public services and/or non-governmental organisations. An additional 27 per cent of respondents were of the opinion that it is necessary for the MZ to use its local knowledge to help services coordinate and identify the priorities for action. In the event of major damage caused by bad weather, 55 per cent of respondents thought that the MZ should lobby local or higher levels of government and/or the non-governmental sector for assistance and 35 per cent thought it is necessary to agree on community action and fundraise to help the affected citizens.

**Activities in urban areas:** When it came to urban areas, respondents thought that the MZ should cover a large spectrum of citizen needs, because they cover a large number of residents in a small area. This applied in particular to sport, education and cultural activities, "... a lot of people live in a small area and they need to provide themselves an adequate and normal living space. Meaning, to have a kindergarten, a school, sports grounds and premises for cultural events." (Male, Brčko)

**Fight against corruption:** Respondents provided numerous examples of corruption involving attempts to bribe the representatives of MZs and proposed the introduction of certain anti-corruption measures at the level of the MZ.



## Additional and extraordinary functions



Graph 3. Additional and extraordinary functions

Question	1	2	3	4	5
Citizens complain to their MZ that the standard of teaching or discipline in the school is unsatisfactory / that patients are waiting too long for healthcare services and medical services are of no help / that social services are not doing enough for those in need. Should the MZ:	Citizens would like to see the paediatric ward at their local hospital renovated or for the hospital to provide specialist equipment / the school to set up a computer teaching cabinet or start a summer language school / a new route for the school bus. Should the MZ:	Citizens would like to see extracurricular assistance in learning for Roma children / services that help the elderly and feeble to go to hospital or to social services. Should the MZ:	Snowfall blocks transport routes during a long cold winter and causes difficulty in heating homes. Should the MZ:		
1	22% – Help citizens to find the right person to whom they can file a complaint (e.g. school board).	4% – Inform citizens that it does not have the money to help and advise them to turn to the competent bodies.	4% – Inform citizens that it does not have the money to help and advise them to cooperate with the non-governmental sector.	2% – Leave the problem to individuals and the competent services.	
2	28% – File a complaint on behalf of citizens.	28% – lobirati kod nadležnih.	14% – Ask the non-governmental sector to ensure new premises or services.	49% – Establish a list of the most affected individuals and sites and provide this information to the competent services.	
3	27% – Make use of all of its contacts in local authorities in order to generate the pressure needed for change.	8% – Ask the non-governmental sector to ensure new premises and/or services.	81% – Agree a scheme for volunteering in the community to ensure new premises or services and that will help in finding the resources for its establishment.	45% – Organise volunteers for snow clearance and conduct visits to remote households and alike.	
4	21% – Intervene directly with the local service provider (e.g. visit the school).	60% – Agree a community action and fundraising to establish the new premises or services, potentially with joint financing from the municipality and/or the non-governmental sector.	2% – Other.	4% – Other.	
5	1% – Other.	1% – Other.			

Table 3. Additional and extraordinary functions

**Inform local authorities about the needs of citizens:** The MZ can facilitate and simplify the life of citizens by enabling that their requests are met, by informing the local authorities about the needs of citizens and continuously fulfilling the demands of citizens in different aspects of community life. When asked what the MZs should do in cases where citizens complain that the standard of teaching or discipline in the school is unsatisfactory, that patients have to wait too long for healthcare services and medical services are of no help, and that social services are not doing enough for those in need, opinions were divided mainly between the following four answers: 22 per cent thought that the MZ should help citizens find the right person with whom to file a complaint (e.g. school board), 28 per cent thought that the MZ should file a complaint on behalf of citizens, 27 per cent suggested that the MZs make use of all of its contacts in local authorities in order to generate the pressure needed for change, while 21 per cent thought that the MZ should intervene directly with the local service provider (e.g. visit the school).

According to the recommendations of the previously mentioned Comparative Report, "...this could mean establishing various mechanisms for receiving information from citizens regarding their expectations of certain services and feedback on service provision as well as strengthening of direct information exchange and consultation between residents and service providers (e.g. regular meetings at the premises of the MZ)."<sup>7</sup>

*EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE*

*"On that point, rubbish removal, bulb replacement and so on, some practical problems that are happening. We have organised ... We make a call to a free line and the utility company does it. Not once was the transport of some bulky rubbish rejected ... I simply managed to do it; I had to go back several times but they did it in a relatively short time, because I turned to them several times in a short period of time." (Male, Brčko)*

**Collecting funds for community action:** In cases where citizens would like to see the paediatric ward at their local hospital renovated or the hospital to provide specialist equipment, the school to establish a computer teaching cabinet or start a summer language school or the establishment of a new route for the school bus, 60 per cent of respondents thought that the MZ should agree on an action in the community and fundraise to establish new premises or services with the possibility of joint financing from the municipality and/or the non-governmental sector.

**In the focus groups respondents stressed that the MZ can coordinate fundraising from businesses for projects initiated by citizens.**

*"We did a children's playground with a minor reconstruction of some parts, where we did not go with the application to the municipality but instead we asked for a mini grant from a company... and got that money and used it for implementation." (Male, Žepče)*

**Coordination between citizens and higher levels of government:** As many as 68 per cent of respondents in the survey were of the opinion that in the case of holes in the road, rubbish piling up around containers, street lighting that is not working and trees that the wind blew down onto telephone wires the MZ should call the municipality or the utility company to solve this problem.

Although in the focus groups the view was expressed that the MZ should have greater powers in terms of the maintenance and arrangement of local infrastructure and the issuance of general approvals for urban and construction permits, the quantitative research has shown that most respondents considered this type of issue a matter that should be addressed primarily by the municipality.

<sup>7</sup> Analitika, 2016, p. 58.

These attitudes are in line with the recommendations of the Comparative Report, which states, "In order to ensure that services are provided efficiently and in accordance with the needs of residents, the MZ will not necessarily be directly involved in providing services but may mediate in providing regular coordination with service providers in terms of the scope and quality of the services required in a particular area."<sup>8</sup>

*EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE*

*"In our building, which has 64 units, residential or business, we have two containers, which are, of course, always full. What I managed to do in agreement with the management of the utility company is to drive the containers three times a week and not twice as is usually prescribed... What the local community should do, but cannot because of its status as it is, would be to insist on putting containers for recycling, paper, glass, plastics, etc." (A group of pensioners, women, Laktaši)*

**Maintaining records on socially vulnerable persons:** It can be said that socially vulnerable categories have far greater expectations of the MZ. They feel most comfortable contacting the MZ and see it as the only institution they can turn to in order to solve their problems. This group believes that the MZ should keep track of socially vulnerable people and their needs in order to be more proactive in solving their problems and more able to react when needed and before the relevant municipal institutions. Respondents raised the question of possible abuse related to the granting of assistance to socially vulnerable categories. This is why respondents proposed that the MZ should also include aid allocation in order to supervise and prevent such abuse. Respondents who suffered major damage during the flooding of 2014 expected assistance from the MZ in terms of damage recovery, but also in raising funds to cover the cost of their basic means for living.

**Keeping records on those affected by natural disasters:** In the event that the roads were blocked by snowfall during a long cold winter and heating made difficult, 49 per cent of respondents agreed that the MZ should establish a list of the most vulnerable persons and locations and provide this information to the relevant services; 45 per cent thought that the MZ should organise volunteers for clearing the snow, visit remote households and the like. Respondents expected the MZ to mediate in the provision of basic hygiene conditions in areas where the problem of waste disposal and removal occurred, namely wastewater and untreated sewage systems (e.g. reporting to inspections and notifying the competent municipal services). The MZ was also expected to organise citizen actions.

*"What should the MZ do? As it did before, public works, gathering students, these secondary school students, to go clean with those tools, rubbish, paper..." (Female, minority group, Bijeljina).*

There were positive examples of cooperation between NGOs and MZs in the event of natural disasters, such as the efficient and rapid damage recovery during and after the flooding of 2014. Based on such experiences it is possible to design solutions to institutionalise cooperation between NGOs and MZs in the event of natural disasters.

**Helping the unemployed find employment:** MZs can mediate between unemployed persons and people who have the financial capacity to engage them in labour services, provide assistance at home or in the household, cleaning actions and the like.

**Opening local registry offices in remote MZs:** 28 per cent of the survey respondents supported the idea of opening local registry offices. Respondents in the focus groups shared the view that local registry offices represent a huge burden on local authorities, especially if those

8 Analitika, 2016, p. 58.

areas that only cover a small number of residents. Therefore, some respondents in the focus groups suggested that the municipalities conduct a cost and effect analysis of the opening of local registry offices. They also suggested that consideration be given to options such as periodic visits by a registrar to remote MZs and organising the population through the MZ to access some services jointly and thereby reducing costs.

“The transfer of such tasks should be justified by an adequate assessment based on the criteria of efficiency, equality and capacity to provide services in a standardised and quality manner.”<sup>9</sup> In addition, “...any transfer of assignments should be accompanied by adequate financing and capacities. Supervision of services in this case would also include the work of the MZ.”<sup>10</sup>

*“For example, in order to save financial resources and reduce the number of staff, local registry offices were abolished and registrars have been brought to the municipalities. So you have to go twenty kilometres to get a birth certificate in the municipality... So for one birth certificate or citizenship certificate, what was once possible in the local community, it cannot be done now, while they think they made a saving.” (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši).*

The group that represented the minority population, which had very clear demands and concrete expectations, highlighted this function of the MZ as being of particular importance. Based on the views expressed through the research, it is clear that minority groups, especially women from that population, often seek services from the MZ. This relates primarily to administrative services: certification and the issuance of documents, requests for child allowance, household lists, etc. Since in some cases this applies to underprivileged vulnerable categories residing in remote areas, the MZ facilitates access to services that they would otherwise have had to travel to the municipality to obtain.

Respondents from this group thought that the MZ does not consult them sufficiently on their problems and that this could be solved through regular meetings:

*“And we should have a meeting. And then we all express our views and perhaps find a joint solution.” (Female from a minority population, Bijeljina).*

In some cases, communication can be improved through minimal changes in the functioning of the MZ and by clearly defining the working hours and location of the MZ:

*“So you do not know where it’s at or the working hours. First of all, the location should be well known as well as working hours and time for consultation.” (Female from a minority population, Bijeljina).*

**Modernisation of the services provided by MZs:** Focus group respondents stressed the need for the modernisation of services provided by the MZs, especially in administrative areas where certain technical solutions would provide easier access to these services for citizens in remote areas: 48 per cent of respondents participating in the survey believed that the MZ should provide access to user-friendly e-government, with networked computers and a person who could help those who are less skilled in working on a computer to complete the tasks they need to online (see Table 1).

**Organising volunteer teams and actions:** In the survey, 81 per cent of respondents stated that the MZs should agree mechanisms for volunteering in the community, to ensure new premises or services and to help secure the resources for their establishment. This could involve organising extracurricular assistance in learning for children from vulnerable categories or services that help the elderly and feeble to go to hospital or to social services.

9 Analitika, 2016, p. 57.

10 Ibid.

Focus group respondents suggested that the MZs should provide services for organising volunteer teams.

*“For the elderly, for children with special needs, for pensioners who may have been trained in some education and how to deal with them. When they go home to have something to talk about, young volunteers who are going to cut wood. To have it functional not only from one need to another but to have it as a work plan and to know at any time which group is located where and what it is doing and which beneficiaries are receiving assistance at that moment.”*  
(Female, Petrovo)

**Advisory and facilitation role:** For a minority population group, it is important that the MZ have the advisory function to provide specific advice and guidance or to assist in submitting requests to the municipality.

*“We cannot, the municipality or someone else can instruct you. So that you are confident in your MZ, but we are not confident in anything.”* (Female from a minority population, Bijeljina).

Citizens should be informed about how to turn to the MZ for certain services.

*“A citizen complaining about rubbish not being taken away, he can go to the MZ, to the MZ Secretary, file a request to have regular removal of waste. The MZ council considers this at its meeting and sends a letter together with the letter of the citizen and sends it to a public utility company.”* (Female, Sanski Most)

### 3.2.3 Recommendations to improve the provision of Services to Citizens

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- + **MZ as the first step:** The local community (MZ) is the first level of government where citizens can exercise their rights and solve their problems, either individual or collective.
  - **Meeting the basic functions of the MZ:** Restore the role of the MZ in terms of identifying the needs and priorities at the level that is closest to citizens.

Given the needs that citizens express to the MZ councils, there was the perception among respondents that the MZ should be the first level of governance. Yet the current legal status and the technical conditions of operation do not allow it to meet the basic functions that it once did. The legal framework is the first prerequisite for laying the foundation for a different role for MZs than is currently the case. It is therefore recommended that the formal legal status that will enable this role and provide the necessary material and human resources for implementation be defined.

- **Direct communication with citizens:** It is possible to exercise this function of the MZ through greater presence on the ground by LGU staff and improved communication with citizens/representatives of the MZ councils.

- **Population needs in rural areas:** This function is particularly evident in rural areas, where citizens address the MZ as the first level of governance and where they seek support and their rights and services. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasise the needs of the population in rural areas where this function is of utmost importance in the model of the future MZ.
- **Mediation in the provision of services:** The MZs should continue their support through mediation in providing services and, in the event of a change in the legislative framework, certain services can be provided directly by the MZ. The latter would include information and legal services, especially for MZs in rural areas (for example, having municipal officials conduct field visits once a week to issue property related and similar decisions, etc.).

Define the formal legal status that will enable this role and provide the necessary material and human capacity for implementation.

+ **Providing services:** MZs should provide services to all citizens, non-governmental organisations, legal and business entities, while the role of the MZ in developing and maintaining the existing infrastructure should be strengthened.

- **Need analysis:** MZs should analyse their own capacities and needs as well as the professional, technical and human capacities through which they can assess how and to what extent they can provide direct services to the above-mentioned stakeholders.
- **Delegated and entrusted competences:** Issues pertaining to the lives of residents within the territory of the MZ as well as issues related to local infrastructure should be addressed at the level of the MZ. The MZ should also act as a local office to provide services such as regular citizen information, assistance in the registration of agricultural households, filling out forms, assistance with requesting various services at the LGU level, mapping social categories, and assistance in implementing joint activities.

A good example of cooperation between the LGU and the MZ is the existing good practice of partial direct support in the provision of services that the MZ receives from the LGU registry offices.

- **Mediation role:** The support instrument that needs to be promoted is in the domain of mediation between the service provider and citizens.
- **Technical equipment:** A well-equipped MZ with an expert professional staff could provide services for issuing certificates and lists of households and provide citizens with information on incentives, public calls, scholarships, etc.
- **Professionalisation:** The basic requirements for providing services to citizens are a professionally trained staff, a well-equipped office, an e-link with the LGU, and occasional services provided by the LGU legal adviser.

Respondents placed significant emphasis on the need for closer direct contact between LGU representatives and the MZ wherein the individual services of a LGU employee is provided once a week in one of the MZs, depending on the need.

The role of the president of the council cannot ensure services to the extent that meets



the actual need. Hence the importance of taking these suggestions under consideration or to ensure the employment of a professional person within a range that will depend on the size and needs of the MZ and whether it is an urban or rural MZ. Volunteerism cannot ensure the necessary level of provision of basic services to citizens.

+ **Citizen orientation:** This means facilitating and simplifying the lives of citizens and meeting their requests, informing local authorities about the needs of citizens and meeting the demands of citizens in different areas of community life.

- **Enabling the flow of information:** The MZ should be the first level for information gathering on needs and the further initiation of requests. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a more efficient flow of information, collection and processing of requests to the MZ and delegation of issues to the LGU.

+ **Identifying the needs of citizens: The role of the MZ in identifying the needs of citizens is extremely important given the fact that the MZ is the closest instance to the citizens.**

- **Organised representation of citizens:** The practice of gathering citizens (assembly), forums and similar forms of organisation at the level of the MZ is a good way to collect and identify needs and to delegate citizens' issues and demands to local authorities.
- **Communication channel:** The MZ is and should be the first level for information gathering on needs and the further initiation of requests to the LGU. Provide a more efficient flow of information and the gathering and processing of requests at the MZ and in delegating issues to the LGU.
- **Development function:** Align the development priorities of the MZ with the LGU development strategies and train MZ representatives on the importance of citizen participation in development processes in order to help them to improve the quality of life at the local level.
- **Delegating issues to the LGU/mediation role:** Organised periodic gatherings of councils in an expanded composition and the delegation of relevant issues based on arguments to the LGU and/or other institutions/organisations could simplify and make the lives of citizens in the MZ easier.

+ **Limited entrusted competence:** Give greater authority to the MZ to coordinate between citizens and higher levels of government on issues such as maintenance and regulation of the local infrastructure and issuance of general approvals for urban and construction permits.

- **Participation in the decision-making process:** This function could make the role of the MZ as a catalyst for civic initiatives and citizen participation in the decision-making process more prominent at the local level. To achieve this it is necessary to make changes to the LGU statute in order to formulate such a coordination role and to introduce the requirement to consult the MZ together with a clear definition of its competences.
- **Consultative role:** MZs should be consulted when issuing environmental permits and have clearly defined competences in the process.

The MZ should be involved in coordination, especially when it comes to local infrastructure and the coordination of road maintenance and road cleaning in the winter period, etc.

Jointly with the MZ, the LGU should consider cases where the MZ could and should give consent for the issuance of permits by the municipality (e.g. environmental permits for facilities or other permits that may impact the life of the entire MZ) and to allow for such modifications to the legal framework.

- **Encouraging civic activism:** What is most important is to motivate citizens to participate in public consultations. Citizens should also be better prepared for public consultations in order to obtain the necessary arguments and reach a joint position, which are appropriate prerequisites for harmonising certain planning and urban documents.

It is necessary to overcome the current communication barriers, possible manipulation and to ensure through direct calls to citizens that their voice is heard and respected.

- **Depoliticisation:** Ensure balanced support for the development of infrastructure in the MZ instead of allowing politics to decide which MZ will and which will not receive support from the LGU.
  - **Advocating common interests:** The MZ should be a place where citizens should come forward and give their views on all matters pertaining to the MZ, such as road construction, waste disposal sites, and processing capacities which, if constructed, would contribute to the common good. The LGU and competent services must seriously consider the views of the majority.
  - **Information dissemination and communication:** Previous practice has shown limited turnouts and citizen participation in public consultations when it comes to regulatory plans. One reason for this is the lack of information. The MZ should be a place where citizens can get more information about the preparation process for public consultations in order to prepare joint positions on certain issues.
  - **Coordination:** It would be unacceptable to introduce additional administration into the existing LGU expert services or to overlap competencies that already exist within the complex administrative apparatus in BiH.
  - **Active representation of citizens' interests:** Public consultations should not just be another form of debate but a place where proposals put forward by citizens are given serious consideration and included in future plans.
- + **Coordination with public services and companies:** Establish formal coordination and cooperation between the MZ and utility companies, civil protection, police, health and education institutions, social welfare centres and other public institutions.
- **Fundraising:** MZs should be proactive in raising funds and initiating and coordinating initiatives for projects of mutual interest with business entities and through cooperation and coordination with public services.
  - **Preventive action:** Coordination is particularly important in the event of natural disasters or certain emergencies in the MZ, which is something that its representatives should coordinate directly with the competent services on behalf of citizens.
  - **Records and documenting:** MZs could conduct a standardised simple review of information and provide it to the interested parties. One example is the vaccination

process when a health centre turns to the LGU when the parents fail to respond within the mandatory period for the immunisation of children. The MZ could provide coordination in such cases.

Standardise certain records and be a place where formal coordination with institutions is ensured.

- **Formalising cooperation:** Every issue that concerns the lives of all citizens in the MZ, such as the issue of water supply, utility services, citizens' safety and other similar issues, should be formally regulated through the signing of a protocol on cooperation between the MZ and the competent public companies and institutions.

+ **Fundraising:** Coordinate and initiate fundraising initiatives with business entities for projects initiated by citizens.

- **Legitimacy and transparency:** The MZ council should be included in the fundraising process as a joint body of elected representatives of citizens.

It is recommended that greater transparency be included within the fundraising process and that the MZs should be encouraged to collect funds through projects, sponsorships, calls for support to the diaspora and similar initiatives. In order for this type of action to be possible in the long run, such initiatives and funds require the introduction of mechanisms, such as reports on how the resource was used and the outcomes of the action, to ensure transparency. This would help to avoid manipulation and increase trust between donors and the recipients of the support.

Encourage sponsorship by local entrepreneurs through the application of full transparency in terms of how resources are spent and the promotion of socially responsible companies.

In the event of fundraising actions for specific projects or humanitarian aid, the MZ should establish criteria under its statute for setting up councils to engage in such activities. Such actions and councils should include professional persons with a good reputation in the MZ to carry out such activities.

MZs should be proactive in mobilising funds and encourage business entities to co-financing or finance projects that are of common social interest, such as celebrations and charity and sporting events.

Initiatives should be launched at gatherings of citizens so that the fundraising will have full legitimacy. Any major investment involving a business should be justified by a plan and project and a MZ committee appointed to support and supervise such actions. In addition to representatives of the MZ council, the MZ committee should include relevant experts.

- **Strategic and development approach:** A key prerequisite for organised action on fundraising is the preparation and adoption of a MZ programme of work. The programme of work should be aligned with the development strategy at the local level and include various sources of funding for individual actions.

+ **Administrative services:** Provide administrative services, especially in remote and inaccessible MZs (opening of branch registry offices). Prepare a cost and effect analysis for the opening of branch registry offices at the LGU level. Introduce practices such as periodic but regular visits by the registrar to remote MZs or organise citizens for the purpose of joint visits to local registry offices in order to reduce the cost and increase access to these services at the MZ level.

- **Facilitate access to governance:** Make an agreement with the local registry offices for the provision of limited basic services and periodic visits by legal advisors from the LGU that can provide certain types of services directly to remote MZs.
- **Delegated/entrusted competences:** Delegate or entrust local registry offices to provide support to one or several remote MZs or agree that registrars will conduct occasional visits and provide support in collecting requests and issuing basic documents.

Likewise, the MZ could be the place for collecting requests and submissions and in this way support the basic processing of data. The MZ could then submit data on behalf of its citizens to the LGU for processing. The MZ in cooperation with the LGU could facilitate the provision of services on behalf of and for its residents, especially those in remote MZs.

Ensure service provision in neighbouring MZs that have registry offices.

Any transfer of competences to the MZ in terms of providing administrative services would require professionalism and technical equipment for such support.

- **Financial and legal analysis:** An additional level of administration would not imply a reduction in administration at the LGU and therefore a financial and legal analysis would be required in order to assess the implications. Develop clear criteria such as the number of inhabitants, the geographic area of the MZ and the distance, and carry out a detailed cost and effect analysis in order to justify the opening of local registry offices or alternative solutions.
- **Decentralisation of services:** Conduct an analysis of the long-term justification of the partial decentralisation of specific services (e.g. local registry offices), especially those in rural and dislocated MZs.

Limited basic services and periodic visits by legal advisors from the LGU could provide certain types of services.

In order to provide these services to citizens, better communication between the LGU and the representatives of the MZ is required. In this case, the MZ could mediate when collecting citizens' requests and the LGU could provide its services in remote MZs through occasional visits by legal advisors.

- **Informative services:** One of the support mechanisms of the MZ could be a free telephone line for legal aid and the engagement of an employee who could provide administrative services directly to the MZ.
- **Additional services:** In addition to the local registry offices, expert bodies should assess the nature of the additional administrative services that the engaged persons in the MZ

are able to provide to citizens in the MZ and offer appropriate training.

+ **Availability and Accessibility:** Improvement of basic MZ functions (working hours, location, contact with citizens, etc.).

- **Professionalisation:** The professionalisation of the position of MZ secretary would contribute significantly to an improvement in the basic information and coordination functions of the MZ.
- **Technical equipment:** One way to improve basic MZ functions is through the provision of technical equipment, internet connection and a bulletin board on the basic services and information that citizens can obtain at the MZ. An additional step toward improving the basic functions of MZs is the necessity to make amendments to the legislation, modifications to the statute and the rules of procedure of the MZ and consequently the introduction of partial professionalisation of the work of the MZ.
- **Openness and accessibility:** The option to adjust working hours in the afternoon to allow for improved contact with citizens should be defined clearly under the statute or rulebook, sites should be clearly marked and notices for citizens should be placed in all known locations such as the bulletin board and alike.
- **Activating councils:** Ensure more proactive engagement of the MZ council and that meetings are held regularly at least once every three months as well as regular communication with the LGU and feedback delivered to citizens.

+ **Training function:** Organise educational content for vulnerable categories in order to increase their chances of gaining employment or part-time work.

- **Coordination and cooperation with other institutions:** Establish cooperation with the employment offices, training centres, cooperatives, non-governmental organisations, farmers' associations and similar and support the implementation of training that contributes to increased employment opportunities or the occasional engagement of endangered categories.

The MZ can play a role in coordinating and linking potential employers or service users and providers at the MZ level.

- **Development approach:** In order to carry out training that leads to real employment opportunities, the MZ should consult and cooperate with local development agencies and/or services for economic development.
- **Information on training:** Likewise, the MZ should collect information on available training and find effective methods to inform citizens about possible training opportunities (bulletin board and the Facebook page of the MZ etc.).

Establish an info desk at the MZ on trainings that may be of interest to citizens.

- **Space for training:** Likewise, the MZ could collect information about interested citizens and mediate with the facilitators of educational content. In the event that training was made available for specific groups, the MZ could offer its own space for organising this education.

- **Mediation role:** Cooperation with employment offices and other international and national organisations that conduct training aimed at increasing the knowledge and skills that facilitate easier employment, additional income or self-employment are all activities where the MZ could act as a facilitator. The MZ could mediate through information, surveying and joint organisation of the trainings and provide space for the training at the MZ for all interested parties.

MZs should be open to cooperation with other institutions working with vulnerable categories and support training by providing space, invitations to training, etc.

- + **Preventive action:** MZs should play a role in protection against natural disasters as well as in providing assistance and in the rehabilitation of post-disaster damage.

- **Organising training:** Respondents emphasised the need to organise training in and provide the basic technical conditions for rapid response for MZs to be able to respond adequately to the requirements.

Provide material and technical resources and knowledge for first response in relation to the potential risks.

Training and occasional demonstration exercises in accordance with training programmes by relevant institutions are required. In the case of wildfires, for example, how to provide backpacks and water hydrants in areas often affected by fire. Emergency material and technical support are needed for the efficient operation of MZs during and after disasters.

Conduct training for the appointed civil protection commissioners at the MZ at least once a year and provide at least informative support to citizens for action in the event of a natural disaster through assemblies or other forms of targeted gatherings.

In cooperation with civil protection services and in compliance with the legal regulations and regulations in the area of civil protection, it is necessary to appoint a commissioner for civil protection in all MZs and provide regular joint planning and training. In cooperation with the MZ council, the commissioners should prepare a plan of action at the level of the MZ for those areas particularly susceptible to natural disasters. The civil protection staff should provide full support to the commissioners through a greater presence on the ground and support in terms of supplying equipment as well as recording all resources to be made available if required.

**Coordination with the competent services:** Strengthen the role of the MZ and cooperation with civil protection, fire brigade services and other competent entities for prevention and planning actions.

- **Cooperation and volunteerism:** Respondents considered this role extremely important and the MZ should address this issue in a more organised manner in the future. Respondents stressed the readiness of citizens to show solidarity and volunteer their engagement in the event of a natural disaster.
- **Establishing clear procedures:** The system of responsibility should be formalised with very clear procedures for action.



- **Mapping of resources:** Mapping of significant resources that the MZ and citizens have at their disposal and which could be put into function in the event of a natural disaster should be conducted.

+ **Records and documenting:** Records on socially vulnerable categories of the population should be maintained and a proactive role in solving their problems found through contact with the relevant institutions.

- **Keeping basic records:** Keeping records on and providing support for socially vulnerable categories of the population should be introduced as one of the key MZ functions, especially in remote locations.

Ensure cooperation with the social welfare centres that will establish the criteria and support the MZ in creating the relevant basic records on socially vulnerable categories.

The first step should be a mapping of the socially vulnerable categories done in coordination with the social welfare centres.

- **Cooperation with NGOs:** Cooperation with non-governmental organisations providing support to socially vulnerable groups is extremely important.

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**Coordination with professional services:** In order for the MZ to deal with these issues, it is necessary to obtain professional support from social workers in order to select who will be categorised as a socially vulnerable individual/group. Any action in this direction would require cooperation with the social welfare centre and therefore it is necessary to analyse the extent to which the MZ can be engaged in this field.

- **Volunteer action:** The MZs only require basic records for their visits to citizens in need. The purpose of the visit would be to check what type of support they require and to seek support from the relevant institutions on their behalf as well as to provide direct support through their own voluntary actions.

Ensure operational support to vulnerable categories through the organisation of volunteer groups etc.

+ **Transparency and the prevention of corruption:** Prevent abuse in the allocation of assistance, donations and project assets by introducing mechanisms for greater transparency and the prevention of corruption.

- **Transparency in the allocation of assistance:** MZs should provide greater transparency in their work through a report on the activities conducted by the MZ when included in the granting of assistance. In the event that the donor, legal or natural person distributes aid individually then the MZ could only be involved in determining the criteria for granting assistance, such as providing access to its own records on socially vulnerable populations and their needs.

The statute and the rulebook should clearly define the criteria for the prevention of abuse with control over consumption done by the competent LGU departments.

- **Transparency in capital projects:** All infrastructure projects implemented by the LGU in the MZ should have transparent overviews on the investment.

The statute and other acts establish the criteria for monitoring and reporting on all significant activities carried out in the MZ.

- **Introducing mechanisms of oversight:** Introduce compulsory bookkeeping, annual work reports and financial reports, clearly identify who is responsible for monitoring the report under acts and involve a larger number of people in the decision-making structure for all projects, activities and humanitarian aid provided through the MZ. Wherever there is a possibility for the MZ to participate directly in the granting of assistance, establish clear criteria for this type of assistance.
- **Reporting:** Public procurement comes under the competence of the LGU and ensures transparency and this should remain so for all purchases toward the MZ. The MZ itself needs to introduce the regular practice of reporting on its work.

The MZ statute defines these issues and commits the MZ to regular reporting on its activities. The MZ is required to present the report to the assembly of citizens once a year and to submit reports to the competent LGU service.

+ **Mediation role:** Ensure basic hygiene and healthy living conditions through cooperation with utility companies.

- **Cooperation with utility companies:** Ensure regular communication and coordination with the utility companies.

Introduce the obligation to manage all local water supply systems through an authorised company in order to ensure good hygiene and health monitoring.

Ensure direct cooperation with the LGU and the utility company as well as the Public Health Institute in order to ensure regular quality control of water and the removal of illegal waste disposal sites in the area of the MZ.

Establish formal cooperation with the utility police and launch initiatives to introduce a sanction mechanism for those who do not respect the utility rules.

Together with environmental organisations and public institutions for the protection of the health of citizens, carry out actions to raise awareness among and educate citizens on the importance of hygiene and health conditions for the quality of life of all in the MZ.

Cooperation agreements with veterinary stations and agricultural and municipal inspections should regulate this issue and task the MZ council with responding in a timely manner when required.

Comments and suggestions of the population should be addressed adequately and on time.

Municipal decrees should regulate this issue in detail under a utility order and further in the statute, including sanctions in the event of a violation.

+ **Promote civic activism:** Organise civic actions, coordination and communication.

- **Framework for action:** Actions in the MZ are important and should be implemented

in accordance with initiatives on needs identified by citizens, groups of citizens and the MZ council.

Support the introduction of a forum of citizens to act as an example of civic organisation and to initiate the activities of volunteer groups, especially young people.

- **Promotion, organisation and coordination:** Promote civic activism and those who contribute to the common good through their initiatives.

Direct decision-making by citizens through the assembly of citizens should be the basis for establishing joint initiatives and the coordination of actions through the MZ council.

The MZ councils should be responsible for coordinating actions such as collecting humanitarian aid, joint initiatives on regulating playgrounds, the communal areas of villages, organising religious and other events, etc.

- + **Informative role:** Provide regular and detailed information to citizens on the ways services are provided in the MZ (highlight the working hours, telephone numbers, names of employees and the lists of services provided by the MZ, which are clearly visible in the MZ statute, etc.).

- **Information tools and channels:** Use the MZ bulletin board, website and Facebook page as well as other appropriate notification sites to disseminate information.

Hold regularly informative meetings and assemblies of citizens and draw as many people as possible in order to increase legitimacy.

The LGU website should contain basic information about the MZ (telephone numbers, contact persons, working hours, etc.).

In order to ensure that information on the MZ services is available to all citizens various information channels need to be utilised.

Place information posters in visible places in front of school, district outpatient clinics and religious facilities, use radio announcements, info desks, local newspaper adverts and door-to-door information through youth volunteer groups, etc.

- + **Modernise services in the MZ:** This applies in particular to administrative areas where certain technical solutions could make access to these services easier for citizens in remote areas.

- **E-services:** The LGU should strive to establish e-services as well as to provide support in using these services in the MZ.

Provide full IT support to MZ offices and appropriate electronic connectivity with the LGU. Provide e-administration in the LGU and networking with the MZ with training of the MZ representatives.

- **Social networks:** Wherever possible, launch websites or a MZ Facebook page and provide regular information relevant to the citizens of the MZ via local radio and other media such as web portals. Where possible, link electronic services to the LGU and thus facilitate access to administrative services for citizens. In remote areas where there is the possibility of modernisation, provide a courier service in the meantime.

- **Staff capacities:** Engage a person with a suitable level of knowledge, including IT skills, to provide basic services to citizens. Provide the necessary technical equipment to ensure communication between the LGU and the municipalities and other institutions. Develop and update a citizen database containing basic information such as the address, e-mail and contact telephone number.

+ **Volunteer action:** Support the organisation of volunteer teams (for example, to help the elderly and feeble).

- **Good practice:** Cooperate with citizens' associations on the necessary training of volunteer groups.

Utilise the invaluable experience of NGOs and volunteer support programmes, support the social welfare centres in carrying out appropriate training and initiate the formation of local volunteer teams that could work continuously in the MZ.

- **Cooperation with associations:** The MZ can support the establishment of volunteer teams and, in cooperation with youth associations and women's associations, provide its premises for gatherings.

The Red Cross can support actions to promote volunteerism among citizens, especially young people, through the existing programmes.

- **Drafting regulations:** If necessary, the framework of the rules of procedure of the MZ can regulate the establishment and management of the work of volunteer teams.
- **Promote volunteerism:** Young people should be encouraged to set up volunteer groups at the MZ level and to promote volunteerism as a way of sharing positive action for the benefit of the entire community or a particular marginalised group.

## 3.3 MZs AS A SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HUB IN THE COMMUNITY

### VISION OF THE MZ AS A COMMUNITY HUB



### 3.3.1 MZs as a Social and Cultural Hub in the Community

The role of MZs as a social and cultural hub in the community boils down to initiatives by individuals and their activism, cooperation with the non-governmental sector and the use of MZ premises for these purposes. According to the Comparative Report, "...apart from the physical space, the MZs should develop programmes and have competent personnel or volunteers to implement these in addition to initiatives of individuals."<sup>11</sup>

It was stressed in the focus groups that such activities could also be implemented through close cooperation between the MZ and schools and utility companies, wherein the MZ would act as the coordinator or mediator in facilitating this cooperation. However, there was also the opinion that there can be no quality cooperation without systematic regulation of such relations. According to the Comparative Report, "...existing laws in BiH do not exclude the possibility for the MZs to become community hubs."<sup>12</sup> However, it is necessary to resolve the legal status of the MZ, "The legal status of the MZs is important for them to function as real community hubs."<sup>13</sup>

One of the opinions expressed in the focus groups was that any type of social activity is difficult

11 Analitika, 2016, p. 60.

12 Analitika, 2016, p. 57.

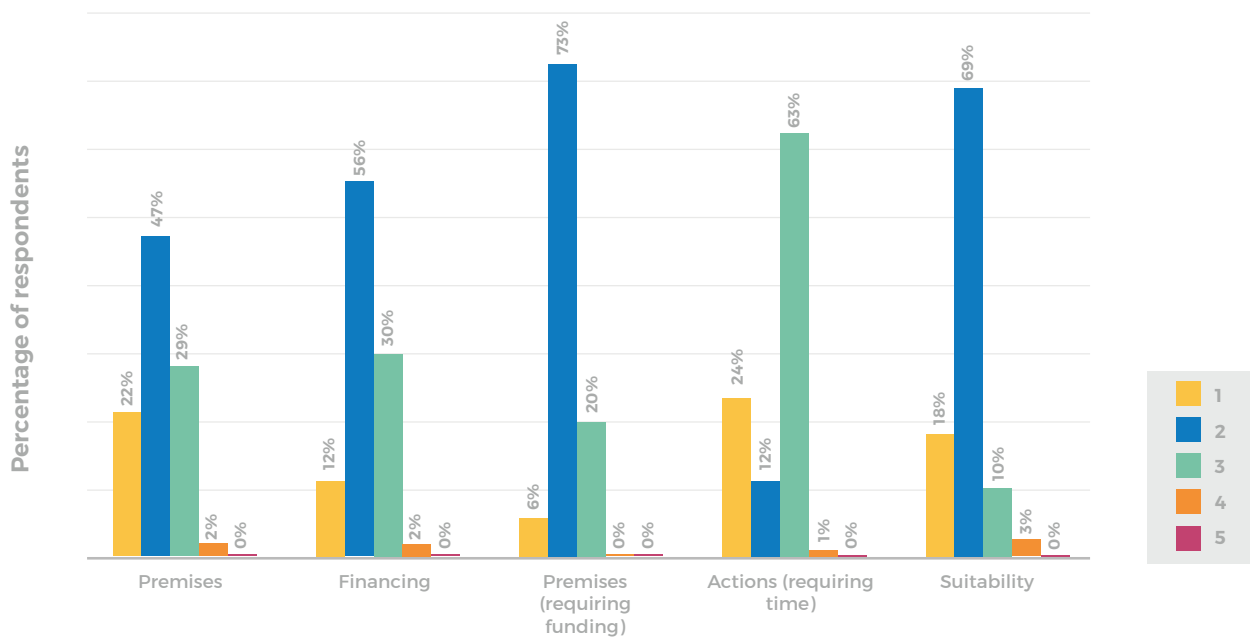
13 Ibid.

to implement without the funds allocated to the MZ budget for these types of activities. Of the survey respondents, 30 per cent considered it necessary to provide a grant for these purposes through the funds of the MZ, while 66 per cent of respondents supported the view that the MZ should assist citizens in addressing non-governmental organisations or municipalities to provide the necessary funds. These findings are in line with the recommendations of the Comparative Report, which recognises the importance of creating the financial preconditions for achieving this role of the MZ.

In the event that, for example, citizens turn to the MZ with a request to set up a library, theatre or for the construction of a sports field, 73 per cent of respondents thought that the MZ should lobby the municipality, non-governmental organisations and the like to fund the establishment of the new facility and 20 per cent proposed providing funds for the new facility.

Most of the young people in one rural MZ had left for urban areas and there were very few children of school age, which led to the school closing. The majority of the remaining population were pensioners. In this example, the social content needs to be adapted to the specifics of the population structure.

### Social events, culture and sport



Graph 4. Social events, culture and sport



Question	Local community groups are looking for space for a fitness centre/ folklore / scouts / morning coffee and social gatherings. Should the MZ:	These groups turn to the MZ with requests for modest financial resources to support their activities. Should the MZ:	Citizens turn to the MZ with requests that the community needs a library / theatre / sports ground. Should the MZ:	Citizens turn to the MZ with requests that the community needs a group for folklore / scouts / basketball or a football club / place for playing dominos. Should the MZ:	A local group turns to the MZ with a request for modest financing / and the use of the MZ premises to hold meetings of a particular religious group or for training / or for activities focused on a particular ethnic group. Should the MZ:
1	22% – Help groups negotiate when using premises of a school / kindergarten / non-governmental organisation.	12% – Advise them to approach the non-governmental sector or the municipality.	6% – Inform citizens that it does not have the money for these needs and advise them to turn to the municipality or a non-governmental organisation.	24% – Inform citizens that it does not have the money for these needs and advise them to turn to the municipality or a non-governmental organisation.	6% – Allow the use of MZ resources and premises alike for all citizens, regardless of their religious or ethnic background.
2	47% – Make its premises available.	66% – Assist them in addressing non-governmental organisations or the municipality.	73% – Lobby the municipality, non-governmental organisations and the like to establish a new facility.	12% – Turn to a non-governmental organisation and ask for an initiative to be established.	18% – Prohibit the use of the MZ resources for activities of a religious or ethnic nature.
3	29% – Support the local cultural centre to secure the premises.	30% – Provide a grant through MZ funds.	20% – Start collecting funds to finance the new facility.	63% – Establish and lead the initiative, including donating and collecting the necessary funds.	69% – Make own rules and instructions regarding the use of resources and the MZ premises.
4	2% – Other.	2% – Other.	0% – Other.	1% – Other.	10% – Decide on each request individually.
5					3% – Other.

Table 4. Social events, culture and sport

### 3.3.2 Modalities of the role of MZs as a Social and Cultural Hub in the Community

**Cooperation with the NGO sector:** This function, according to the Comparative Report, can primarily be exercised, "...in cooperation with informal groups or local NGOs, including those active in the fields of culture, education, social protection and recreation."<sup>14</sup>

The research carried out in the focus groups shows that reporting on MZ work with the NGO sector is extremely weak in most of the media. This can be attributed to various factors, including the undefined legal status of MZs, the lack of funding for joint projects and a lack of interest. Generally, the representatives of MZs have a very bad opinion of NGOs, which is a factor that requires particular attention in the future. NGOs are in some instances accused of misusing the MZ and its functions, while in many cases there is little substantial cooperation and the level of MZ participation in projects is restricted to the distribution of grants. Given that MZs and NGOs in some municipalities compete for the same funds from the municipal budget, a certain form of

14 Analitika, 2016, p. 60.

rivalry has also emerged. On the other hand, when it comes to citizen participation in the work of the MZ, especially the involvement of women, pensioners and young people, representatives of the MZ most often suggest that these groups be encouraged by associations that collectively assemble and represent their particular interests.

If there were to be an expression of interest in establishing a cultural or sports association, 63 per cent of respondents thought that the MZ should launch and lead an initiative that includes donating and collecting the necessary funds. Only 12 per cent thought that the MZ should turn to a non-governmental organisation and ask that it launch the initiative. Although there is certain space for cooperation, the modalities need to address the specifics defined by the topics and content that are of interest to both sides.

The view was also expressed that NGOs should not only be seen as an opportunity for some material gain but as an opportunity for further training.

*"I did not have any financial compensation for all the seminars I went to but I learned something new, which plays an important part for me in all that. Our locals and our volunteers mostly seek only financial benefit... they will apply to non-governmental organisations for their grants only if it involves money. And that's the biggest problem in all of this. Our locals... do not have any awareness of some things and this awareness would mean even better cooperation." (Female, Sanski Most)*

It can therefore be concluded that one of the prerequisites for better cooperation between NGOs and MZs is a change in awareness concerning the role of NGOs and the elimination of certain prejudices.

Some representatives of the MZs believed that NGOs have greater experience and knowledge of drafting project proposals, applying for funding and in project implementation. This led to the recommendation to establish cooperation on the exchange of such knowledge and experience and to initiate joint applications for projects on a partnership basis. Similar forms of cooperation could be established in agriculture or entrepreneurship. This was the case in Sanski Most, "Our NGO is working on organising milk buy-offs in all MZs and does a fine job with seventy-five milk collection points."

Cooperation between NGOs and MZs in general requires better coordination and communication, especially when it comes to their activities.

*"The MZ Council should invite representatives of all these associations and sections at the local community level and jointly make a plan to present and introduce it to their citizens. To make an appropriate programme, as we do when a diaspora arrives, and so that it attracts as many young people as possible to their activities." (Female, Sanski Most)*

**The use of MZ premises:** The use of common premises can increase cooperation between MZs and NGOs in cases where the MZ has or is entitled to use its own space. This was the opinion of 47 per cent of the survey participants, referring in particular to cultural and sports associations that do not have their own space. When it came to the use of the MZ premises in general, 69 per cent of the survey respondents thought that the MZ should make its own rules and instructions regarding the use of the premises, 6 per cent thought that it is necessary to allow the use of resources and the MZ premises for all citizens irrespective of their religious or ethnic background, while 18 per cent thought that it is necessary to prohibit the use of the MZ resources for religious or ethnic focused activities. However, in some cases, there was no legal basis for the MZ to allow others to use their premises and this should be taken into account

in future regulatory modifications. A further 29 per cent of respondents thought that the MZs should support a local cultural centre that would provide premises for its purposes.

### 3.3.3 Recommendations to advance the function of MZ's as a Social Hub

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+ **Support individual engagement:** Identify and support activism, initiatives and the engagement of individuals in MZs acting as centres for social events within a community.

- **Engagement modalities:** Direct election of the MZ representatives, participation in the work of commissions, and field visits and constructive discussions can support initiatives and the engagement of individuals.

Citizens should be informed about the criteria and models for participation.

When applying projects, it is necessary to introduce tables for recording and scoring the quality of the initiative.

Individuals who propose an idea or project to improve life in the MZ or its functioning should have access to the MZ council.

- **Thematic approach:** Within the MZ, it is possible to form thematic commissions for gathering interested individuals looking to launch certain initiatives or projects.
- **Clear procedures:** It is necessary to prescribe a clear procedure on how to launch an initiative by an individual, to prescribe forms and facilitate the submission of such initiatives (on the MZ premises or via a website, etc.).

The MZ council should be familiar with the situation throughout the entire municipality and be involved in monitoring the implementation of projects in the area of the MZ and the LGU.

Gatherings (assemblies) of citizens should remain one of the possibilities to launch an initiative.

Members of the MZ council, selected territorially, can provide support for an initiative by an individual. Based on the suggestions of councillors, the MZ council can thus consider and decide on the individual's initiative.

An individual can propose an initiative; however, a larger number of citizens should agree upon greater actions on his/her proposal through the assembly of citizens.

Any individual interested in helping a local community should have the opportunity to submit a written proposal. This way, the trace of his engagement remains. The MZ should procedurally define the way of addressing and processing proposals and possibly forwarding them to other instances according to the required level of competence.

Activism requires recognition and support. The directness of the process needs to

be maintained in order to avoid activists losing interest or becoming burdened by bureaucracy. Administrative procedures burden individuals and can have a significant negative impact on activism. It is therefore sufficient for the MZ to have contact persons for activists, while all written procedures are reduced to a minimum.

It is necessary to provide feedback to activists on the outcome of their initiative. It would be desirable for MZs to encourage discussion of the individual's initiative in order to envisage the reality and feasibility of the idea as well as the possibilities for possible self-contribution and ultimately the opportunity to convene an assembly of citizens.

- **Fundraising:** Financial support is required in order for the MZ to reward an individual adequately and to launch an initiative on his/her proposal, since it is rarely possible to act based on an individual's proposal without funding.

#### + **Legally regulate the use of MZ premises when used as a social and culture/sports hub.**

- **Clear procedures:** If necessary, regulate this through a decision of the council/assembly or through instructions on the use of the MZ space.

The use of the MZ premises as a social and cultural hub needs to be specifically formalised through procedures and criteria prior to it being made available to all interested parties.

It is necessary to regulate the possible use of the premises of the MZ in procedural and simple terms through a formal request to be filled out by the potential user.

It is necessary to draft and adopt a rulebook for the use of the MZ premises as a social hub; however, citizens, namely all persons in the MZ, should decide upon its content. Such a rulebook should include the procedure for using the premises and the level of maintenance costs.

It is recommended that the space be provided free of charge but with a clearly defined disposal procedure in place (when, who and for which purposes the space is used) for educational purposes. Anyone using the space for any purposes must leave it in its original state after use.

Pass house rules on the use of the MZ space based on the instruction manual. The house rules should provide detailed instruction on the permissible use of the premises, the purpose and usage. A rulebook on the use of the premises that determines the process for granting use should also be issued.

#### + **Engagement of volunteers:** Legally regulate the engagement of volunteers in social, sport and cultural affairs.

- **Clear procedures:** Formalise relations with NGOs and enable the enrichment of content on topics of volunteerism and socially beneficial activism.

Consistent application of the Law on Volunteerism and the whole process should follow the promotion of volunteer work and activism. This requires the MZ to be authorised, just like other public institutions.

Volunteer engagement should be promoted in such a way that each volunteer working

in the MZ is registered and his/her work monitored in the form of a report to the MZ council. In this case, the president of the MZ council may give the volunteer permission to work in the community as well as a recommendation for further potential engagement. The president of the MZ council should regularly report on the work of volunteers to the MZ council.

- **Recording and documentation:** Every MZ should have its own database on volunteers.
- **Promotion of volunteerism:** MZs should be more active in inviting volunteers to engage in their areas of responsibility. In this sense, MZs need to be informed about the existing laws on volunteerism and the possibilities for its application.
- **Cooperation with NGOs:** Volunteers can be engaged through cooperation with civil society organisations.

#### + Define a framework for cooperation with non-governmental organisations.

- **Partnership relations:** The framework for cooperation with non-governmental organisations needs to be regulated through LGU partnerships with NGOs and citizens.

Consider the possibility of signing a cooperation agreement on the implementation of joint projects between the MZ and NGOs.

Adopt rules or codes for cooperation between NGOs and MZs.

- **Calendar of activities:** The MZ should also produce and publicly announce the calendar of activities so that all interested parties, including CSOs, would know how to engage and cooperate in the work of the MZ.
- **Project cooperation:** It is necessary to define the framework for cooperation and the means of presenting the vision of project cooperation as well as the procedure for approving project cooperation with a non-governmental organisation. It is necessary to establish criteria for cooperation in order to prevent individuals from acting in an arbitrary manner.

MZs need to introduce a project approach to address community problems and act proactively by inviting CSOs to cooperate.

#### + Systematically organise cooperation with schools, cultural and sports associations and clubs.

- **Calendar of activities:** MZs need to have their own calendar of planned events throughout the year and proactively work toward establishing cooperation with schools, cultural and sports associations and clubs.
- **Cooperation with parents' councils:** Enable and realise cooperation between the MZ and parents' councils. The MZ council should maintain communication with parents' councils in schools and inform them about the activities of the MZ and the opportunities and possibilities for cooperation.
- **Use of the premises and property of MZs:** The MZs should coordinate cooperation

with schools and other institutions by signing a contract on the use of their premises and areas. One example would be the use of sports grounds within a school for organising tournaments during school breaks and such like.

+ **Cooperation with civic associations:** Animate young people, women, pensioners, disabled persons and marginalised groups through associations that bring them together and represent their particular interests. Use the premises of the MZ for cooperation in accordance with specially designed modes of cooperation that define the topics and content that are of interest to both sides.

- **Motivating the target populations:** Motivate young people, women, pensioners, persons with disabilities and marginalised groups through cooperation with associations. Listen to their needs and, where possible, accept their suggestions and direct them to existing associations. Where possible, launch an initiative to establish new associations.

Strengthen coordination between LGUs, CSOs and MZs.

Encourage civic initiatives and informal forms of association and the development of support plans for the aforementioned categories.

- **Proactive approach:** The MZ councils should be proactive in establishing cooperation with associations that represent the interests of marginalised groups and should strive to animate citizens together and to form joint actions with them. Social networks could be used to follow these activities, while the issue of financial support should be addressed in unison to donors.
- **Good practice:** Cooperation between MZs and NGOs should be strengthened and enhanced and in cases where MZs have not yet established cooperation with NGOs measures should be taken to allow for an exchange of experiences. Such cooperation would enable the creation and implementation of projects with targeted support for groups of citizens.

The MZs need to find ways to promote good practice, joint meetings and events aimed at encouraging young people, women, pensioners and other marginalised groups in society to become interested in the work of the MZs and see them as a forum for cooperation.

+ **Strengthen awareness on the role of NGOs and opportunities for cooperation with MZs:** Cooperation with NGOs through education programmes, preparation of project proposals and their implementation, exchange of knowledge and experience, establishment of partnerships and the use of MZ premises through joint activities should be publicised.

- Cooperation with NGOs should be regulated through legal acts and through vertical and horizontal communication between municipalities, MZs and NGOs for mutual benefit.
- Formalise cooperation between the MZ and CSOs so that together they act positively on prevention and proactively in the area of the MZ.
- The MZ should define its own procedures for forming teams/subgroups that will continually cooperate and work with NGOs.



## 3.4 THE ROLE OF THE MZ AS A FORUM FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION

### VISION OF THE MZ AS A FORUM FOR CIVIC PARTICIPATION



The Comparative Report emphasises that, “The MZ in BiH has already been formally recognised as a mechanism for direct citizen participation in local issues. However, given the findings of empirical research, it is questionable whether and to what extent they really serve as a point of access to local decision-making processes.”<sup>15</sup>

The research conducted through the focus groups shows that the **prevailing opinion is that citizen participation depends mostly on how and to what extent they can reach a particular interest through the MZ. Namely, to what extent the MZ meets their expectations.**

*“I think that, regardless of the fact that it is volunteer work, perhaps if there was some assurance that some of the minor problems could be resolved successfully through the MZ then there would be engagement too.” (Male, Petrovo).*

**Informing citizens and providing opportunities for decision-making:** MZ representatives can motivate citizens by having a good knowledge of the situation and their needs. Citizens can be further motivated and encouraged through the possibility to influence local authorities through the MZ as well as the ability to prioritise the areas where they live. The basic precondition for more active citizen participation is that they have a good knowledge of the work of the MZ and of the problems in the areas where they live. On the other hand, the representatives of the MZ should

15 Analitika, 2016, p. 61.

have a good understanding of the needs of citizens/residents through regular communication and consultation; this would help motivate citizens to become more involved in its work.

Along these lines, the Comparative Report by Analitika recommends setting up, "...clear procedures by which citizens can initiate participatory processes through the MZ on issues that local authorities are responsible for in their area."<sup>16</sup>

**Encouraging volunteerism and activism:** According to some respondents, the problem is due to a lack of interest to engage in volunteering and activism at the MZ level. The latter would be an important link in reviving the MZ as a place for more active citizen participation.

*"Activism is very important. So you need to wake up and try instead of shifting problems constantly to higher and more instances, but instead get activated a bit within the local community and try to find a solution to the problem. A playground for example, why not? I don't know, get some funds through projects to arrange a playground or through contributions from citizens or maybe some businesses to give a donation and have works done." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš).*

One of the reasons is that citizens are not familiar with the potential results and the impact that their engagement could have. They do they see the need for their personal engagement,

*"Why would I do it, someone else will take care of it!" (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

*"We are just waiting for someone else to do it: either the president of the MZ council, the MZ Council itself, municipal mayor and so on. If we do not engage in this kind of activism, I do not think we will achieve much. There will be something, but that's not enough." (A group of pensioners, women, Laktaši)*

**Strengthening citizen trust in the MZ:** Citizens lack motivation because of the limited competences of the MZ and have lost confidence in its ability to represent their interests and to address the problems of their community. In cases where the competence of the MZ is wider, there is the problem of a lack of information among citizens as well as a lack of awareness on the possibilities offered by the MZ. The pervasive negative perception of politicians is also reflected in the MZ and there were examples where certain individuals close to the political circles have used the MZ as a means for meeting their own needs. It was stated in one example that citizens can be mobilised if they believe that they can actually contribute to a certain change by strengthening the MZ. In any event, the focus should be on changing the awareness of citizens, which is time consuming but an important factor in the process of mobilising citizens.

**Enabling the use of MZs premises:** One of the factors attributed to the weak involvement of citizens is the lack of space for gatherings. The existence of an adequate and preferably well-equipped space is a key factor in attracting a greater number of citizens to the MZ. In the absence of space, the municipality should facilitate the simplified use of schools or, where possible, the premises of other public institutions. In some municipalities, the MZ must seek the approval of the school board each time it needs to use the school premises.

This is both impractical and requires a lot of time as well as long-term planning. Therefore, it is recommended that the municipalities (or the cantons whose jurisdiction they are under) facilitate access for MZs to school premises for their activities. It is also recommended that the MZ, through joint action, address the municipal, cantonal and entity governments with a request

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16      Ibid

to resolve the issue of its accommodation.

There were also positive examples of cooperation with schools,

*"We have a playground built jointly for children, the MZ and the primary school. So they gave us the right to use the land and we gave them the right to use the playground." (Male, Ključ)*

The proposal was made that each municipality should make a website where citizens could submit project proposals, which to an extent would stimulate citizens to become more actively involved.

#### EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTISE

*"The MZ Stari Majdan has a community hub. I do not think there is a bigger hall in Sanski Most than the one in Stari Majdan. That's where all activities take place, women's associations, hunting section, football club, tournaments are held, all are active and meet regularly. We have a traditional Hashlama Cherries Week and everyone from the MZ is involved. Both young people and all citizens working together." (Female, Sanski Most)*

### 3.4.1 Modalities of the MZ role as a Forum for Citizen Participation

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**The MZ exercises its basic function as a forum for citizen participation by engaging citizens in the decision-making process.**

*"To move the level of decision-making to the lowest level and thus we would make better decisions. Because one cannot know from the municipality what it is needed for the MZ, given that local authorities do not pay so much attention to local communities. I believe that this is the key: to bring the decision-making level down to the local community." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš).*

This chapter provides an overview of the various options and activities that enable citizen participation in the work of the MZ through four target groups: women, young people, pensioners, and persons with disabilities.

#### 3.4.1.1 Participation of Women in the Work of MZs

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**Change of awareness:** As far as the engagement of women is concerned, some participants felt that the situation is improving. However, they also saw it as a lasting process that requires patience and a change of awareness.

*"We did have a bit of awareness raising, a little bit more courage. We resolved some family things and we are now available to the country and of course to all of us." (A group of pensioners, women, Laktaši)*

**One of the ways for women to be more involved in the decision-making processes is through gender budgeting.**

**Activities targeting women:** Certain experiences show that women are more involved if activities are intended exclusively for them.

*“One of the conclusions from the last forum held in my local community that has a problem to activate women to work is to try to organise something similar to a forum, but only with women. Because I come from a rural community where women almost tend to think that this is not for them.” (Male, Ključ)*

However, there were other opinions.

*“The MZ must be in some way made into a social place, like a community hub, rather than emphasising these inclusions. Because no one wants to feel like a socially excluded category that is now to be restored to society. They are all members of society and have families and some are mothers and sisters.” (Female, Stari Grad in Sarajevo)*

#### EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

*“I’m trying, I haven’t succeeded yet but I’m trying to link up with a women’s association. We do not have a women’s association. There are women who work somewhere, but are not related to our local community, to form their own associations that we would help and to actively go through workshops. Since my professional background is in healthcare, I will provide them with the opportunity to have each and every month one or two lectures related to health prevention, in fact health promotion, disease prevention and so on.”*

**Participation of women in rural areas:** Women in some rural areas had fewer opportunities to be active in the work of the MZ compared to women in urban areas. This can be attributed to various factors, such as patriarchal upbringing, their financial dependence on men, and a general disregard for their opinion. The exception was women who were already active through women’s associations, where they gained experience in activism. However, it was also emphasised that education is not an essential factor of the increased involvement of women in activism and that there is a fundamental lack of motivation and self-confidence among women.

*“What is needed is to let them know that their opinion matters very much. Someone needs to come and tell us ‘we want you to have a say’, ‘why were you not asked’, ‘you can do it, so tell us.’” (A group of young people, women, Gradačac)*

There was also the belief that women need only be given the opportunity and possibility to engage in the work of the MZs.

*“...opportunity to engage in decision-making and if they see that the results are good, why not. Next time there will be more women interested... Show them that they simply can, if they want to change something, if they are interested in helping in any case, in any way.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

However, there were positive examples in rural environments where women had decided on their own initiative to become active in contributing to the quality of life in their MZ.

*“The ability to absorb certain funds that will be directly implemented in our local community.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

**Establishing women’s association in MZs:** Women’s associations could design activities that women could benefit from financially.

*“What interests the locals in my MZ is whether there will be light in front of my house or I will be returning home in the dark, whether my child will have a playground or not, whether there*

*will be pavement or gravel road that is what motivates us. To change, to improve the living conditions.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

*“The objective is for us to hold an event exhibiting traditional handicrafts and thus to revive and preserve the tradition. In the coming period, it would grow into setting up a local women’s association. Of course, women would have a direct benefit by earning money. We’ve already found a partner to promote it and it will be sold online, so I think it’s a great way ahead for our local community.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

**Involving women in the work of the bodies of the MZ:** Although such an example appeared only in a few cases, it is interesting to see the opinion that women are more active in the MZs where the president of the MZ is a woman.

*“The President of our MZ is a woman and in our local community mostly women are the active ones. All decisions that are made are made by women. Any initiative here is made by women.” (Female, Sanski Most)*

Based on these examples, several focus groups came up with the proposal to introduce quotas for women’s representation in the bodies of the MZ. They emphasised that the promotion of successful women in leadership roles in the MZ would act as a model and help motivate other women, especially younger ones. Of the respondents, 42 per cent thought it necessary to set quotas for the inclusion of women and/or minorities and 13 per cent thought that special posts need to be established in the MZ (for example, an officer for women’s issues), while 43 per cent thought that there should be no interventions as to who can run or be elected.

The involvement of young people and women was greater in those MZs that had their own space,

*“So far, engagement of women and pensioners and young people was far better in those local communities where there are premises. Meaning, where there are places to gather. (Male, Ključ)*

### 3.4.1.2 Participation of Youth in the Work of MZs

**Informing young people about the work and the role of MZs:** Young people in some communities do not understand sufficiently the function and purpose of local communities, some even assume that local communities are mostly located in rural environments. Some of the successful projects, but also problems, were attributed incorrectly to the local community, even when it involved issues under the competence of the municipality or even higher levels of authority.

On the other hand, most young people had very creative ideas about the type of projects they would like to initiate through the local community. Yet they did not know how to start such initiatives, because they were not involved in the work of the MZ. This in itself underlines the need for greater involvement of young people. Yet to achieve this more information and education on the work and role of local communities should be provided in order for them to recognise it as a mechanism for meeting the interests of youth.

*“But this is especially a good opportunity for us young people who participated in trainings... project cycle management training completed. I mean, we’ve really learned a lot and in our local community there are already stories that young people are doing something... Nobody ever looked at us as some factor contributing to anything. And now, look at those girls... those are the girls who will bring sidewalks.” (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

*"First you need to go from one person to another, inform them, tell them what the MZ is, why we need the MZ, which are the main goals of the MZ, what should be the focus, to be good for everyone in a local community, and not just individuals, as it happens." (A group of young people, male, Gradačac)*

**Offer content intended for young people:** The examples presented by young people related to the construction of tourist facilities in local communities that have such potential. Examples included building a pool, providing lighting in certain parts of the settlement where young people could gather, construction of children's playgrounds as well as facilities where young people could gather and be less vulnerable to negative influences.

**Use of modern technologies:** Many respondents believed that young people are better versed in technology, especially contemporary communication, and that if these young people were more actively involved they could make a major contribution to the work of the local communities (MZ). It was also pointed out that young people could contribute through creativity and giving ideas for projects. The young people themselves felt that their opinion is not sufficiently appreciated especially the attitudes and opinions of young women. Those who had attempted to influence the work of the MZs often faced resistance.

**Cooperation between youth associations and MZs:** One of the ways to engage more young people is through the associations that already gather them,

*"I started a school of painting through the youth club, in another one a music teacher. We will also try a bit of foreign languages. So, to attract the youth through the youth club in the MZ." (Male, Brčko)*

**Organising volunteer action:** Cleaning and arranging parks or green areas and environmental protection are areas where young people can be engaged through minimal investment. In this way, they can contribute to a better quality of life in their community. It is most important to awaken the activist spirit in young people. Yet this spirit needs to be retained through similar activities, especially if the young people themselves recognise the benefit and feel the satisfaction of contributing to the MZ in this way. There is room for greater cooperation between schools and MZs aimed at raising awareness among pupils about the need for environmental protection.

*"So, environmental activities with children. We are working on raising the awareness of children to preserve nature and the environment. And in this way, also the parents of these children are there. Joint activities to improve some space or otherwise the entire local community." (Female, Sanski Most)*

*"Our local community did not initiate youth involvement activities. So, the young people themselves came in and they started some of their activities on their own. They have refurbished parts of the area in our local community, cleared the terrain in the area of our local community, organised tournaments and organised themselves. They did not wait for anything from the MZ. The MZ here does not understand the value of the youth and neglects them. They think their opinion does not contribute to anything significant and important decisions." (Female, Sanski Most)*

**Promotion of amateur sport through MZs:** Organise leagues at this level and develop a competitive spirit. The predominant opinion among respondents was that compared to professional or semi-professional sport amateur sport is neglected. They saw sport as a means of strengthening the role of the MZ in advancing the lives of young people as well as other categories. Amateur sport can also be one of the mechanisms for combating juvenile delinquency, peer violence, vandalism, etc.



#### EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE

*"Here, I found the way in a purely amateur sports club... We found and we pay for a coach and a guard, which we have to pay. All players have dinner after the game, they have organised transportation, we have organised everything... So, we are the ones who want to teach him to play football. If he has the talent, he will go further. If there is no talent, let him stay with us."  
(Male, Brčko)*

**Introduce a quota for youth representation in MZ bodies:** The suggestion was made to introduce a quota for the involvement of young people in the decision-making process at the MZ level.

**Making MZ premises available for youth activities:** A commonly held view was that the most important factor in attracting young people to become involved in social engagement is the provision of adequate space.

*"I am confident that we can do a lot for the youth, especially since there is no content for the youth in rural areas. The only thing you have is a café, one or two if you're lucky, and that is it. That's why we have to put the emphasis on young people and provide them with as many conditions as young people in the city."  
(A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

### 3.4.1.3 Participation of Pensioners in the Work of MZs

**Formalising cooperation between MZs and associations of pensioners:** In addition to regular forms of communication and in spite of not have its own resources to fund assistance projects for pensioners, the MZ can contribute to improving their status by collecting data on those pensioners whose livelihoods are at risk and informing local authorities accordingly.

**The Inclusion of professionally trained elderly persons:** There were many examples where the work of the MZ predominantly involved pensioners,

*"My MZ is mostly run by pensioners. I am a pensioner myself... In my MZ, on the executive board, there are nine of us, all pensioners."  
(Respondent, Brčko)*

One explanation for this is the level of interest among certain persons of that age to continue to contribute to their community through their own engagement in the MZ. Their contribution was considered useful, especially if they had experience in certain areas in which the MZ operates and if they had a desire to engage actively in the work of the MZ.

**Maintaining regular contact with pensioners and disabled persons within a MZ:** Frequent communication and contact with these population groups makes it possible to represent their interests. It also makes it possible to plan the allocation of funds for projects intended primarily for these groups through the budget of the MZ. It was also proposed that the MZ should provide support to the elderly, feeble and disabled persons in terms of assistance in receiving healthcare.

*"By organising nursing services, but not purely medical care services, more about visiting the elderly. There are such examples in villages in Vojvodina... paying a visit to the elderly, maybe every third day, to buy medicines, supplies."  
(Female, Petrovo)*

### 3.4.1.4 Participation of Persons with Disabilities in the Work of MZs

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**Proactive approach to persons with disabilities:** The dominant opinion was that MZ staff should adopt a proactive approach to disabled people and pensioners and endeavour to make them more involved in their work and enable them to exercise their rights. Yet it was not seen as advisable to allocate special activities for the disabled or pensioners. Instead, the respondents thought that these persons should be integrated into existing activities and provided with equal access to all of the services that are available to other citizens.

*EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE*

*"Parents in my MZ have a girl with special needs and it happened at one point that transport was cancelled. So it no longer comes to the house and their house is some 300 to 400 metres away from the main road. They are asking the parents to take their child every morning to the main road. Parents spoke to me about it, we reacted immediately and we solved the problem."  
(Male, Brčko)*

Ensure the existence of access ramps as well as other necessary aids and access to buildings where MZs are located. Disabled people perceive a lack of adequate access routes and aids as a message that they are not welcome in the MZ premises. Apart from solutions to the physical barriers, this population group greatly values education and social activity. The MZ can play a key role and be of great assistance in this respect.

*"I myself am a woman with disability... lack of understanding is a big problem for us. We do not have a lot of activities to be included, like some workshops, some volunteering, to offer, for example, some kind of animation, gathering these members. There may be some kind of sports activities. Here we have darts and we have archery, as a woman with a disability. But we have very few involved, because we have no space where they could gather or where they could train... to gather as much as possible, especially women with disabilities, because they are very much discriminated against in employment and social protection. For example, education... as far as retraining is concerned, the assistance of the local community in retraining because many women with disabilities do not go further than primary school."*

**Creating opportunities for employment for persons with disabilities:** MZs can initiate activities to provide employment for persons with disabilities.

*"Simply put, let them benefit from their work if possible. Because we all know how difficult it is to find work for healthy people, let alone those with disabilities." (A group of women from rural areas, Kotor Varoš)*

Likewise, persons with disabilities can make a significant contribution to the work of the MZ.

*"We need to find out what they can do and where they will feel useful. I had the opportunity to meet a few of them who are very good in many things... I think we need to look them a bit like someone we need to include, not to exclude them... they want to work. They would love to work. You just need to adapt some things to them and their needs where they could give a result."  
(Female, Stari Grad in Sarajevo)*

## 3.4.2 Recommendations to advance the role of MZs as a Forum for Citizen Participation

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+ **Meeting the interests of citizens:** Raise awareness on the role MZs play in securing the interests of citizens and the advocacy role MZs play in solving their problems.

- **Communication:** The MZ can use modern means of communicating with citizens (Facebook) and report on its activities. This could also be a channel to invite them to public consultations, because the way they have been informed so far provides poor results. In addition to social networks, the MZ could apply traditional means of informing and notifying citizens by using promotional material and brochures, bulletin boards, etc.
- **Participation in the decision-making processes:** The work of the MZ should be strengthened through its active participation in the decision-making processes (e.g. budget, landfills, capital investment, etc.), which would show the strength and credibility of the MZ. Within this process, the MZ must be transparent and open and be an example to the citizens whose interests it represents; however, the legal force behind the proposal must be visible.

Citizens' assemblies/gatherings represent one of the possibilities for solving the problems of citizens. Their role should be within a framework of realistically conducive initiatives that is consistent with the strategic development of the community.

Strengthen the leadership skills of the MZ management staff so that they become better active listeners and better communicators within the community.

+ **Promote civic activism and initiate activities that motivate citizens to participate more in the work of MZs:** This could include gaining a better insight into the situation in the MZ and the needs of citizens (through surveys, gatherings, meetings and more regular contact), giving citizens the opportunity to influence the defining of priorities (through public consultations, participation in working groups at the LGU level and through surveys, forums and public statements), establishing better communication and providing more information to citizens (through local radio stations, websites, social networks, bulletin boards, text messages and mobile phones or through direct door-to-door contact).

- **Transparency of work:** The MZ should provide regular public calls and information on the implementation of initiatives.
- **Promote the values of civic activism:** Promote the value of citizen participation in local development.

Improved citizen motivation to participate more in the work of the MZ can be achieved by inviting citizens to meetings. This can be done in several ways, such as through social networks and the distribution of leaflets. The MZ should also publish promotional reports on its work on the internet.

- **Communication:** Inform citizens about the role of the MZ through local media, the MZ council and via its website where reports on its activities are published. Associations of citizens working on that site can assist the MZ and the reports should present the MZ

as a means of achieving civic interests.

The MZ must support the implementation of activities proposed by citizens and regularly notify them about their implementation and results, while citizens should provide feedback on the results of the activities conducted by the MZ.

A good basis for raising awareness on the role of the MZ is public consultation, where citizens have the opportunity to propose initiatives.

+ **Define the forms of citizen participation:** Create a legal framework and procedures for citizen involvement in the decision-making process (citizen support required for proposing initiatives, launching projects, submitting applications, complaints, initiatives, petitions, proposals, meeting various interests, etc.).

- **Clear procedures:** It is necessary to define a written procedure for proposing and involving citizens in the decision-making process. At the same time, it is necessary to meet occasionally in order to form interest groups for joint project ideas and to apply to donors and financiers.

Given that there is no prescribed method on how the MZ should communicate with citizens, it is necessary to establish a legal form that individuals can use to make a suggestion to the MZ leadership.

It is recommended that the MZ encourages citizens to self-organise and to appear as a group in their initiatives. Proposals of groups of citizens should be submitted to the MZ which would then initiate the further procedure. In this case, the MZ must be visible within the context of its role and influence.

- **Training:** In order for citizens to be aware of opportunities for engagement, it is advisable to envisage trainers who could organise occasional workshops for citizens on the possibility and importance of their involvement in the decision-making process.

+ **Define the role of the citizens' assemblies:** Whether of a formal or informal character, advisory role or legally binding, rules must be developed for citizen representation in the assemblies. Develop rules for the establishment, organisation and functioning of citizen assemblies and further define the issues that are to be discussed by citizens' assemblies.

- Given their traditional role and the fact that citizens are accustomed to presenting their views on issues that concern the whole community at citizens' assemblies they should be maintained.
- The assembly of the MZ is indispensable when it comes to major projects and it should exist as an option for decision-making on strategic projects. It is desirable that citizens' assemblies are convened at least once a year (preferably more often) and to set it up as an institutional decision-making mechanism through which all citizens with the right to vote can participate.
- It is necessary to enable the management of the MZ to organise and convene citizens' assemblies as a means of restoring confidence in this form of organisation among citizens.

- The strategic development plan should guide the definition of the topics for discussion of the citizens' assembly.
- The statute of the MZ should further regulate the roles of citizens' assemblies.

**+ Depoliticisation of decision-making and increased transparency in the work of the MZs would encourage greater citizen participation:**

- Conduct democratic elections as prescribed by the statute of the MZ.
- Citizens should elect the MZ leadership through direct elections.
- Citizens should be informed and the MZ staff professionalised through the introduction of permanent staff.
- **Role of Citizens' assemblies:** Citizens' assemblies should be convened for the purpose of electing councillors to the MZ council, in accordance with the territorial principle. Procedures for the direct election of members already apply in some MZs (political parties are unable to meddle with the election process).
- **The role of the media:** Objective media coverage and social networks should present the work of the MZ, while reports on its work should be published on the MZ website.
- **The role of the MZ council:** Ensure that the MZ council is objective, transparent, professional and independent from political influence. Depoliticisation can be successfully completed by developing and adopting long-term balanced development strategies to reduce the role and impact of the individual to the minimum extent possible (as a measure of preventing abuse of position).
- **Objectivity:** Citizens should vote publicly for candidates and the leadership should be elected regardless of political affiliation. Associations can propose the leadership and it should also be possible to have independent candidates. In this way, the leadership would be chosen according to values rather than political affiliation.

Leadership via councillors should influence the decision-making process without dependence on political affiliation. Depoliticisation ensures that all citizens have equal treatment in development.

**+ Promote volunteerism and civic activism.**

- **Training:** Promotion can be carried out through organised training on volunteering and evaluation of volunteer work as well as by promoting the results of civic activism.
- Legal regulation is not necessary if voluntary work on MZ activities is involves (in line with earlier similar recommendations).
- It is recommended that the MZ relies on civic associations active in the field and promotes volunteerism jointly.
- Promote volunteerism in cooperation with NGOs and through practical results and the promotion of volunteer activities.

+ **Provide space for gatherings of citizens and the activities of their associations.**

- The MZ acts proactively and contracts the use of public spaces to hold activities of general interest, with schools and other similar institutions.
- If the MZ has its own space available then it can certainly offer it to citizens and associations for their work or for the implementation of joint activities. If this is not the case, MZs can use school premises in cooperation with the relevant ministry of education.

+ **Increase the participation of women in the work of MZs:** Introduce the principles of gender budgeting and women representation quotas into the bodies of the MZ. Organise activities intended exclusively for women. Strengthen awareness on the role of women at the local level and the level of the MZ. Ensure close cooperation with women's associations and provide MZ premises for women's activities.

- **Clear procedures:** Apply the Gender Equality Law consistently, make changes to the MZ statute and ensure adequate representation of women in the MZ structures by defining selection criteria.

Increasing the level of participation of women in the work of the MZ can be achieved through improving the MZ statute by introducing the appropriate criteria for elections.

Apply the guidelines for election to the MZ council consistently. In addition, instigate a training programme for women on participation on the council.

Where it is possible to specify quotas, modification to the Law on the MZ can increase women's participation in the leadership of the MZ.

- **Motivate women to become more involved in MZs:** In order to motivate women to participate in the work of the MZ it is necessary to introduce additional activities through fieldwork, offer opportunities for their greater involvement and organise content that is of interest to this group of citizens.
- **Cooperation with associations:** Strengthen cooperation with women's associations at the local level and encourage their participation.

Organising attractive content that will attract this groups of citizens.

- **Create the conditions for work and activism:** Create the conditions for associating and working. Women who want to support the work of the MZ will engage if there is interest and something that brings them together.

+ **Increase the participation of young people in the work of MZs:** Create awareness among young people on the role and importance of MZs and the ways in which the MZ can contribute to the attainment of their rights.

- **Clear procedures:** Ensure the consistent application of the Youth Law, especially through the MZ statute and by enabling adequate representation of youth in the structures of the MZ.

Introduce a quota for youth representation in the bodies of the MZ. Provide content

(and infrastructure) for youth activities (sports, cultural, activism and volunteering).

- **Training:** Improve teaching content to promote social responsibility and the importance of youth engagement in community development and organise sports associations that can attract young people.
- **Create the necessary conditions:** Increased youth participation in the work of the MZ can be achieved by making the MZ premises available, which means giving the management of the MZ premises to the MZ council.
- **Cooperation with other organisations:** Improve cooperation with schools on, for example, environmental protection activities. Introduce measures to combat juvenile delinquency.

Increase the involvement of youth through cooperation with NGOs.

The MZ should encourage and incite the organisation of sports events that will attract young people.

#### + Improve the living conditions of pensioners and disabled persons in MZs.

- **Modalities of engagement:** Formalise cooperation between MZs and pensioners' associations and associations of disabled persons and maintain regular communication.

Introduce different modalities for the inclusion of these groups into the work of the MZ and make it possible for them to contribute to the activities of the MZ.

Thematic workshops can help increase the level of participation of pensioners and persons with disability in the work of the MZ.

Organise actions to assist the socially vulnerable population, including senior citizens and disabled persons in need of assistance.

Construct access ramps in MZ premises and facilities.

- **Cooperation with other organisations:** Encourage the formation and functioning of pensioners' associations as well as the development of intergenerational projects that will enable interaction between pensioners and persons with disabilities and young people.
- **Advisory group:** The MZ should try to form an informal advisory groups of pensioners, youth and women through which they can participate in community development. Such an organisation could lead to some form of semi-directed decision-making system (when it comes to specific problems).

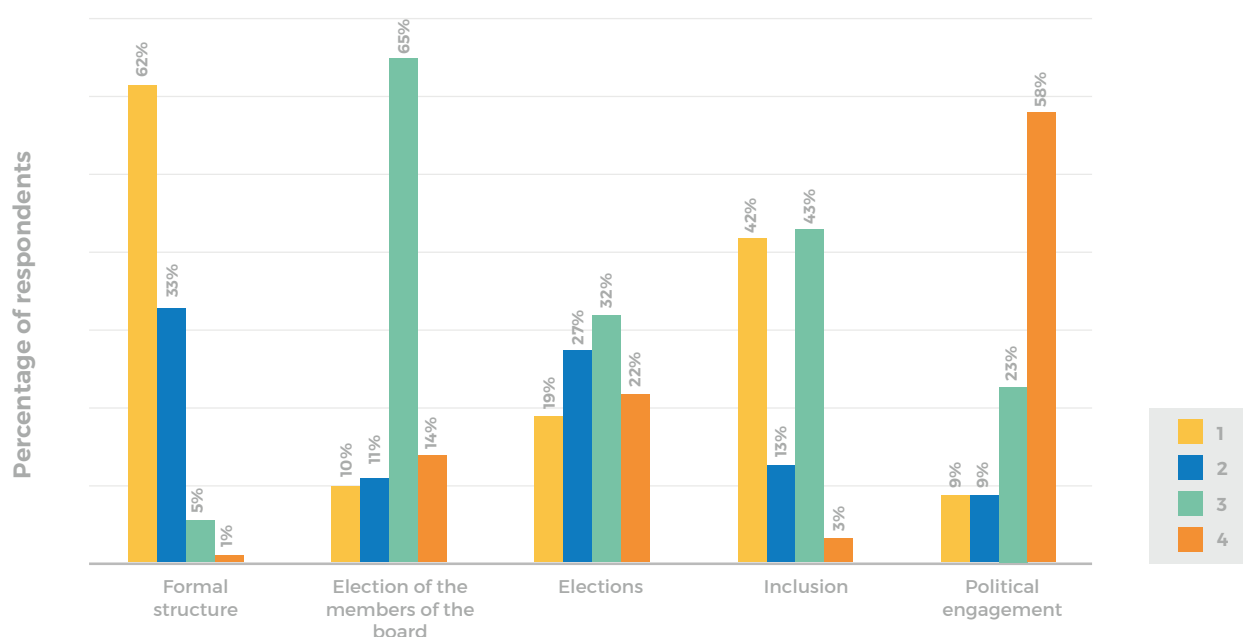




# 4 STRUCTURE, STATUS AND FINANCING OF MZs

- 4.1.1** Financing of MZs
- 4.1.2** Territorial Organisation of MZs
- 4.1.3** Dissemination of Information and Communication
- 4.1.4** Legal Status and Organisation of MZs
- 4.1.5** Recommendations to improve the Structure, Status and Financing of MZs
  - 4.1.5.1** Election of the Bodies of the MZ
  - 4.1.5.2** Supervision of the Work of the MZ
  - 4.1.5.3** Status and Resources of the MZ
  - 4.1.5.4** Communication
  - 4.1.5.5** Territorial Organisation of MZs

## Structure and citizen participation



Graph 5. Structure and citizen participation

Question	Should the MZ:	Should members of the MZ board be:	In case of election, should these be:	Should the MZ:	Should candidates and officials of the MZ be:
1	<b>62%</b> – A part of the local government structure.	<b>10%</b> – Appointed by local authorities.	<b>19%</b> – Formal public elections held simultaneously with the elections for local self-government units.	<b>42%</b> – Determine quotas for the inclusion of women and/or minorities in the work of the board.	<b>9%</b> – Encouraged to group and run the campaign on partisan grounds.
2	<b>33%</b> – Independent legal entities.	<b>11%</b> – Appointed by political parties in proportion to the number of votes won.	<b>27%</b> – Formal public elections held separately.	<b>13%</b> – Establish posts (for example, officer for women's issues) that will attract certain groups.	<b>9%</b> – Encouraged to group and run the campaign on partisan grounds.
3	<b>5%</b> – Not need to be legal entities.	<b>65%</b> – Directly elected.	<b>32%</b> – Secret ballot held during the MZ meeting.	<b>43%</b> – Do not try to influence who can run or be elected.	<b>23%</b> – Forbidden to group and run the campaign on partisan grounds.
4	<b>1%</b> – Some other structure.	<b>14%</b> – Selected in another way.	<b>22%</b> – Secret ballot held during the MZ meeting.	<b>3%</b> – Other.	<b>58%</b> – They should neither be encouraged nor deterred from grouping and running campaigns on partisan grounds.

Table 5. Structure and citizen participation

**Legal status and subjectivity of MZs:** Participants in all of the focus groups strongly expressed the opinion that the legal status and subjectivity of the MZ should be resolved:

*“Until the status of the MZ is resolved all issues will be tackled based on one’s good will.” (A group of pensioners, Women, Laktaši)*

This was particularly true of MZs in Republika Srpska where many of the above-mentioned functions are not possible because of the current legal status.

*“In any case, I think that the status of the MZ must be defined as the basic form of organising citizens on one side and on the other as part of some changes, the MZ must have its legal status. Otherwise we will continue to swim as we do.” (A group of pensioners, women, Laktaši)*

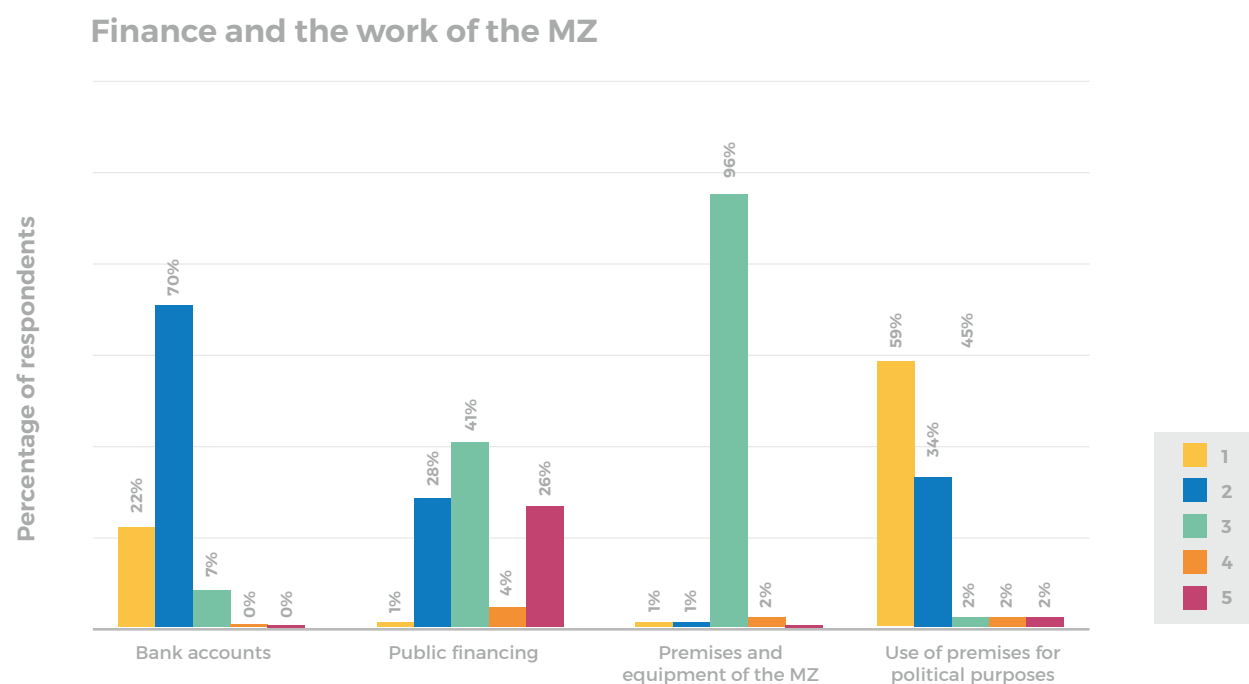
In the survey, 62 per cent of respondents thought that MZs should be part of the local government structure whereas 33 per cent thought that MZs should be independent legal entities.

**Strategic planning:** Respondents stressed the need for better planning of priorities and the adoption of a strategic approach to planning along with the need for MZs to have transparent annual work plans adopted several months in advance.

**Reduce the influence of political parties through the election of the MZ councillors and change the decision-making system in the MZ councils to eliminate parties over voting.**

**Change the manner of election of the MZ council:** Determine the criteria to be met by councillors, provide financial remuneration for the work of the MZ council, define the rights and obligations of the MZ council and identify and set sanctions for failure to meet such obligations. Of the respondents, 65 per cent were supportive of the view that members of the MZ council should be elected directly whereas only 11 per cent thought that they should be appointed according to the number of votes cast by political parties.

## 4.1.1 Financing of MZs



Graph 6. Financing and the work of the MZ

Question	Should MZs:	Should MZs:	Should MZs:	Should the MZ premises be available for political party rallies?
1	<b>22%</b> – Have a separate sub-account as part of the local government account.	<b>1%</b> – Not have significant funding from the municipality.	<b>1%</b> – Not need to have their own premises (that is, use rooms from other organisations for administration, meetings and the accompanying activities).	<b>59%</b> – Yes.
2	<b>70%</b> – Have their own bank account.	<b>28%</b> – Have basic funds for office maintenance and the employment of one person.	<b>1%</b> – Only have an office.	<b>34%</b> – No.
3	<b>7%</b> – Not have a bank account.	<b>41%</b> – Have sufficient funds to implement more serious community activities.	<b>96%</b> – Have larger premises where meetings and accompanying activities could be held.	<b>6-7%</b> – Other.
4		<b>4%</b> – Grant funds to allocate to local non-governmental organisations and alike.	<b>2%</b> – Other.	
5		<b>26%</b> – Have operating funds for the provision of services provided by municipalities or other public administration bodies.		

Table 6. Financing and the work of the MZ

**The MZ should have steady and systemic funding from the LGU budget:** 28 per cent of survey respondents agreed that funding should be made available to the MZs for basic means, maintenance of the office and the recruitment of at least one person. They also agreed that the majority of problems in the functioning of the MZs relates to a lack of finance and the vague and ad hoc manner of financing MZs. Respondents cited municipal budget grants (provided for projects and the provision of salaries of MZ employees) obligatory or voluntary contributions of citizens, donor funds and the involvement of businesses in projects (especially infrastructure projects) as the basic sources of funding for MZs. In relation to funding, 41 per cent thought that the MZ should have enough resources to implement larger community activities and 4 per cent that the MZ should rely on grant funds available for local NGOs and similar funding sources, while 26 per cent thought that the MZ should count on operating funds delegated to it by the municipality or other bodies of public administration in order to provide services; 70 per cent of respondents thought that the MZ should have its own bank account.

## 4.1.2 Territorial Organisation of MZs

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When it came to the territorial organisation of MZs, the general conclusion was that **there is no need to disturb the current** situation because given the specificities of certain areas it would be almost impossible to establish uniform criteria. Where the borders of an MZ require clearer definition, it was suggested that these municipalities conduct an analysis of the territorial organisation of the MZ and where necessary propose criteria according to the needs of the population.

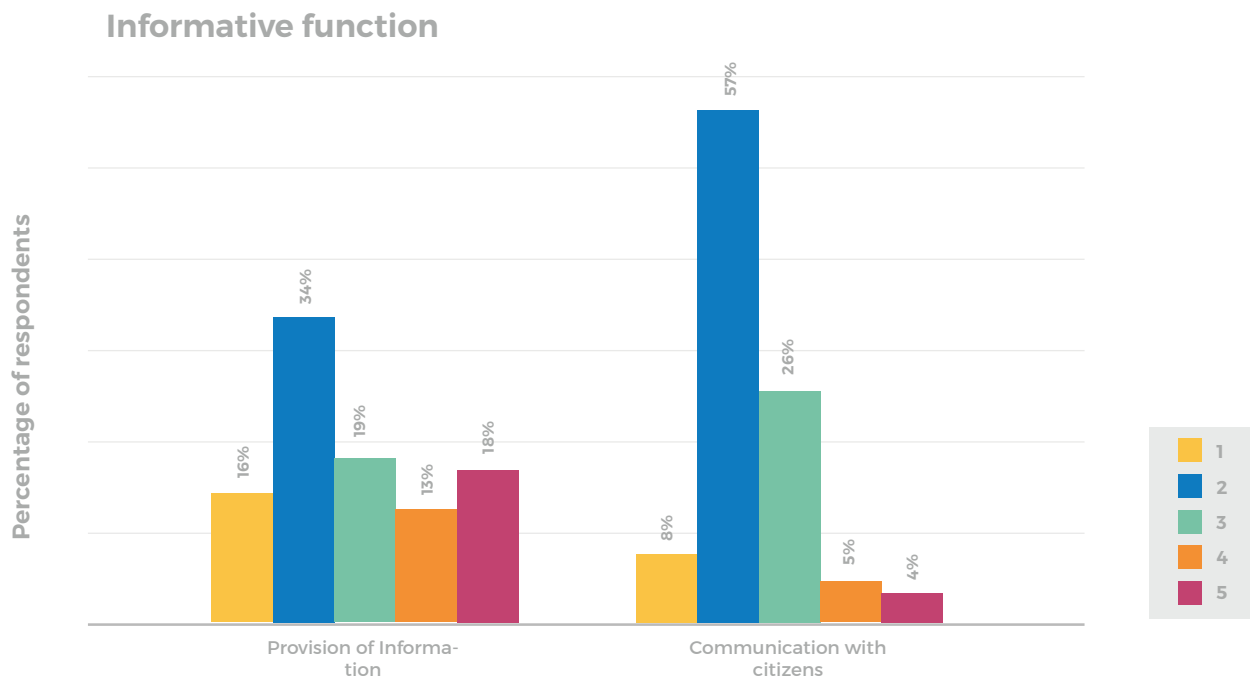
The number of inhabitants is not considered a valid criterion for determining the size of a MZ. This is because there are significant deviations in the number of inhabitants in municipalities, in the population structure according to the MZ and in the needs of the population. There are major differences between the larger and smaller cities in terms of the proportion of the population and in particular the population density in urban and rural areas.

*“One village on the right bank of the Vrbas River and another on the other bank, means that they are territorially separate. The MZ is an overbooked, overburdened, oversized local community and separated both territorially and by population figures. I think the quality of work could improve in case of reorganising.” (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši)*

The criteria that need to be considered are that the territory of the MZ forms a single geographic unit and, if possible, a whole infrastructure, and that the MZ services are accessible to every resident within that territory.

The MZ can be comprised of several settlements, as is the case in many urban and rural areas. In such cases, it is necessary to ensure the representation of all parts of the MZ in the decision-making bodies (primarily in the council) as well as equal access to the MZ services for all citizens within its territory.

## 4.1.3 Dissemination of Information and Communication



Graph 7. Informative functions

Question	Which of the following informational functions should be performed by the MZ in regard to access to governance, infrastructure and services?	In what way should MZs inform citizens about various events: from spatial planning and service provision to various community events?
1	<b>16%</b> – Proactively inform citizens about planned interruptions to the provision of public services (e.g. by setting up notifications and/or sending text messages or e-mails).	<b>8%</b> – Via the MZ newsletter.
2	<b>34%</b> – Inform citizens about the plans of the municipality and public service providers that could affect them.	<b>57%</b> – Through bulletin boards in visible locations.
3	<b>19%</b> – Advise citizens when problems or issues are identified and about the planned response and deadline.	<b>26%</b> – Via the MZ website.
4	<b>13%</b> – Maintain a list of contact persons so that citizens can reach the right person to solve their problems.	<b>5%</b> – Via SMS/Twitter/e-mail.
5	<b>18%</b> – Maintain a list of vulnerable people and problematic sites so that public services can be more effective.	<b>4%</b> – Other.

Table 7. Informative functions

**Systematise information about MZ activities:** Regarding the frequency of information and communication, there were different opinions. Some focus group respondents thought that the MZ should inform citizens periodically at certain times, while others felt that this should be done as required or as often as the MZ needs in order to inform and involve citizens about current activities. When it came to planned interruptions to the provision of public services, 16 per cent of survey respondents thought that the MZ should inform citizens proactively (for example, by putting up notifications and/or by sending text messages or emails), 34 per cent thought that it is necessary to inform citizens about the plans of the municipality and service providers that could affect them, 19 per cent that the MZ should advise citizens when they encounter a problem or issue, including the planned response and deadline, while 13 per cent thought that the MZ should maintain a list of contact persons so that citizens can turn to the right people to solve their problems.

**Bulletin boards:** Many focus group respondents (as well as 57% of survey participants) pointed out that bulletin boards are still an important means of informing citizens, besides mobile phones and text messaging. They also highlighted direct communication with citizens or the so-called door-to-door campaign.

Communication should be two-way, not only from the MZ to citizens but also from citizens toward the MZ.

*“Us in the MZ, we are constantly in the field. But we can’t know all the problems, if the citizens do not talk to us and tell us about some specific problems we need to go and see and consider, to start the process of addressing it and so on.” (A group of pensioners, male, Laktaši)*

**Other means of information dissemination:** Experience with organising citizens’ forums has shown that the most successful methods of informing citizens about maintaining the forum were personal contact, social networks and sending written invitations to home addresses, while the least effective were bulletin boards and telephone calls. If citizens are to be informed through media outlets then this will also depend on the financial resources. One of the suggestions is that the municipality concludes a contract with radio stations listened to in that area, which would allow the MZ to inform the population about their actions, projects and calls for citizens. Radio shows could also be used to address topics related to the MZ and to promote certain good practices or examples of successful cooperation.

**Online communication:** Communication via e-mail and social networks should be used to address the younger population and women. One of the suggestions commonly voiced in discussions was that each MZ should have its own website or Facebook profile with basic information and information for citizens, but also with a forum where the public can easily express their opinion. This aspect of information dissemination was supported by 26 per cent of respondents. This would require basic preconditions in terms of the technical equipment, including computers, internet access and web hosting resources. If this raised interest in young people, they might become involved by helping to maintain and manage the website.

**EXAMPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE**

*The MZ Dubrave in Brčko District has set up a website in order to provide better information to former residents residing outside of BiH but with a great interest in the events in their MZ. This is a way to motivated citizens who have property in this MZ to become to engaged in its work even though they live outside of BiH.*



*“For example, in our MZ our Facebook profile proved to be a good tool. However, I also think the lack of bulletin boards is a problem. Not everyone has access to internet, especially the elderly, groups of elderly citizens, and people who are not versed in technology.” (Female, Sanski Most)*

**Use of computer equipment at the MZ:** Respondents also suggested that in areas where citizens do not have access to the Internet or computers the MZ should provide equipment that local residents could use as needed and in a way that would be specifically regulated.

**Training in the dissemination of information:** Regardless of the mode of communication, it is very important how the call is formulated and whether it motivates the targeted groups to respond. Therefore, there is a need for special training for the representatives of MZs on how to employ the appropriate communication technique and how to formulate the message in a way that mobilises as many citizens as possible.

#### 4.1.4 Legal Status and Organisation of MZs

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**Subjectivity of MZs:** The prevailing opinion among respondents was that the MZ should have the status of legal person with a statute, account and stamp, while the municipalities and MZ council would have oversight over its work through a clearly defined legal framework. In order to do so, the competences and responsibilities of the MZ council require precise definition and regulation through legal acts. There is a need for greater authority and participation in decision-making on all issues at the LGU level, including the disposal of joint assets at the MZ level (hubs, clubs, land, etc.) and greater investment in development and maintenance of the MZ (infrastructure, etc.).

**Professionalising the status of staff in MZs:** Throughout the entire research, the prevailing opinion was that it is necessary to professionalise the organisation of the MZ by having a certain number of employees (depending on the size of the MZ) employed permanently and paid for their work. Having the MZ staff perform these duties as a side activity was considered impractical, because such an approach does not allow for enough attention to the work of the MZ. It is also unrealistic to expect active engagement in responsible positions without any financial interest involved, as evidenced by a number of examples in practice. One of the proposals was to hire unemployed young people, as trainees or as volunteers, for a period of one year through agreement with the employment offices.

*“I would love to see an employee other than the MZ secretary, a manager, a director... To have it as a permanent post. The MZ council might need a larger number of members because not all MZs are the same. We have MZs with fewer population, some local communities are ten times bigger. To be able to choose according to the number of inhabitants, because they might be more flexible in their performance...” (Female, Stari Grad in Sarajevo)*

A proposal was made through the focus groups to **professionalise the post of the president of the MZ council**. This post would therefore require that of a director be elected through a public vacancy and for the period of a prescribed mandate. Apart from the director, each MZ would have a secretary (who would not be replaced). It was suggested that the president of the MZ council be granted greater authority to make decisions for the benefit of citizens of the MZ without having to convene the council.

In some focus groups, the strong view that it is necessary to abolish the assemblies of the MZ but to keep the council was voiced. There were also suggestions that every street or hamlet should have their own commissioner who would be in contact with the MZ and raise problems on behalf of the citizens he/she represented.

**Elections of the MZ:** When it came to elections, there were different opinions: 19 per cent thought that public elections for the MZ should be held at the same time as elections for local self-government units, 27 per cent thought that public elections for the MZ should to be held separately, 32 per cent that elections should be by secret balloting during a MZ meeting, while 22 per cent thought that voting should be done publicly during the MZ meeting (see Table 5).

**Depoliticisation of the bodies of the MZ:** Strong emphasis was given to the need to depoliticise the MZ through, among other things, the election of the MZ council and management. It was suggested that members of the councils are permanently employed to be able to commit more of their time to the work of the MZ.

## 4.1.5 Recommendations to improve the Structure, Status and Financing of MZs

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### 4.1.5.1 Election of the Bodies of the MZ

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- **Depoliticise the election of the MZ bodies:** MZs to be politically neutral.
  - Enable the election of independent candidates.
  - Redefine the role of political parties in the election of the bodies of the MZ. It is recommended that elections for the MZ council should prohibit candidacy through political parties.
  - There are some difficulties concerning the full 'depoliticisation' of these elections as the interests of political parties in the work of the MZ can be of benefit to citizens, assuming such influence is not abused.
- **Define the manner of election and the procedure for the recall of the president and members of the MZ council:**
  - Precisely define the method of dissolving the MZ council.
  - The president of the MZ council to be elected through majority vote of MZ council members.
  - Recall of the president of the MZ council should be done by the MZ council in the event that the president does not adhere to the activities plan and the finance plan, does not convene regular meetings and does not report to the council and assembly on the activities carried out. Namely, he/she fails to perform the duties and obligations foreseen for this post.

- **Define the rights and obligations of the MZ council:** The rights and duties of the council are to be defined through a decision of the municipal council.
- Introduce sanctions for non-compliance with these duties.
- Define procedures to dissolve inactive councils.
- **Introduce guarantees for gender equality (quota).**
  - Although the majority of respondents supported this proposal, some indicated that the introduction of quotas alone would not lead to the higher participation of women unless other measures to motivate women to engage in the work of MZ were also introduced.
- **Ensure representativeness through electoral rules.**
- **Define the method for selecting the MZ bodies: Secret or public ballot.**
  - The option of holding a secret ballot was supported unanimously.

#### 4.1.5.2 Supervision of the Work of the MZ

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- **MZs must be accountable to citizens and LGUs:**
  - MZs should be accountable to the bodies of the LGU for the expertise and legality of the work of the MZ, the use of financial resources and implementation of the entrusted tasks.
  - MZs are responsible to the population of the MZ for implementation of the activities plan.
- **Define the level of supervision by citizens and/or by LGU over the work of the MZ.**

#### 4.1.5.3 Status and Resources of the MZ

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- **Resolve the issue of legal subjectivity of MZs and assign them the status of a legal entity.**
  - Four different responses emerged from the discussion:
    1. Granting MZs legal status would establish them as another level of government, which is contrary to efforts to reduce public spending.
    2. Grant them the status of legal entity, but limit it through certain regulations in order to define the extent to which MZs are independent in their work.
    3. Grant MZs the status of legal personality but as legal persons they must be accountable through legal responsibility.
    4. MZs must have the status of legal person, but in such a way that they are granted

the status of citizens' associations of special interest to local self-government and are therefore registered as an association in the register of MZs.

- **Professionalise the organisation of the MZ:** MZs must have a certain number of employees (depending on the size of the MZ) employed permanently and paid for their work.
  - MZ staff performing these duties as a side activity was not considered a practical solution, because such an approach does not allow for sufficient attention to the work of the MZ. It is also unrealistic to expect active engagement in responsible positions without any financial interest involved.
  - Four models of professionalisation emerged from the discussion:
    1. This is only possible if a reform of the MZ system is made and the number of MZs reduced. Otherwise, volunteering will remain a necessary rule for the functioning of MZs.
    2. There is a need to professionalise some of the representatives of the MZ, depending on the structure and specificity of the MZ (namely, the president of the MZ council and the MZ secretary).
    3. Regulate that municipalities and cities must each have a professional associate at the disposal of MZs, because it is unjustifiable to engage MZ staff professionally.
    4. Engage MZ employees/staff through service contracts.
- **The LGUs should provide the means for MZs to cover their operating costs, especially for the staff.**
  - It is certainly advisable to provide funds to cover the operating costs of MZs, but it is also necessary to provide additional funds and this would require that MZs be granted the status of legal entity (in order to be able to open a bank account).
  - **Each MZ to have its own bank account:** Two proposals emerged from the discussion:
    1. If there were a tendency to switch to the treasury system then the opening of a bank account for each MZ would be impossible.
    2. If the MZ were a legal entity then they themselves would have the right to open a bank account. Each MZ has different needs and costs and therefore each MZ should dispose of its funds in accordance with its needs.
  - **Where possible, LGUs and higher levels of authority should provide premises for the work of MZs:** Preferably, the wider community would engage in solving the problem of premises for MZs (citizens, NGOs, business entities, etc.).
  - Two different proposals emerged from the discussion:
    1. It is necessary for MZs to have their own premises.
    2. The LGU should ensure space and define the seat of the MZ.
  - **Redefine the position of the president of the MZ council in terms of professionalisation:** In the discussion, three different suggestions for defining the role of the president of the MZ council emerged:

1. Define the method for the election of the president of the MZ council as either through elections or through a public call for a set term of office.
2. The president of the MZ council should be on an exclusively voluntary basis.
3. The president of the MZ council should be elected directly through elections for a set term of office (mandate), but at the proposal of citizens rather than political parties.

- **Define volunteerism at the level of the MZ:** Define the activities and actions of citizens.
  - Try to define this within the activities of NGOs that cooperate with the MZ. Difficulties may arise due to the current mode of functioning of MZs.
  - It is necessary to define the option for recognised volunteerism within the MZ.
  - Where necessary and possible, engage unemployed young people (as trainees or volunteers) through agreement with the employment services.
- **Where necessary and possible, introduce commissioners for individual settlements or hamlets:**
  - Respondents thought that in principle there is no need to introduce commissioners, other than under extraordinary circumstances such as death or resignation.
  - This issue should only be regulated when there is insufficient population; however, in this case it would be better for the LGU mayor to appoint the commissioner directly.
  - If the MZ functions well and the representatives of all settlements and hamlets are present then there is no need for commissioners.
  - If MZs are divided into sectors and each sector is represented on the council then there is no need for commissioners.
- **Clearly define the responsibilities of the president and the secretary of MZs through the statute.**
  - Responsibilities of the president of the MZ council:
    1. to convene the council,
    2. represent the MZ,
    3. sign acts.
  - Responsibilities of the Secretary:
    1. material and technical work,
    2. administrative issues,
    3. technical affairs,
    4. co-signing MZ acts.
- **Clearly define all financing modalities of the MZ** (grants from the municipality, self-contributions by citizens, donations, contributions by business entities, and own revenue). Separate operating costs from costs for the activities and services of the MZ.

- Financing should be addressed through the general fund of the administrative bodies and the municipal council.
  - Most respondents thought that operating costs should remain separate from costs for activities financed through grants from the municipality.
  - Other forms of financing (self-contributions, donations, and own revenue) to be addressed in accordance with the strategic development plan of the community.
- **Introduce strategic planning and other measures to improve the planning process and identification of priorities.**
    - This should be done through joint actions with municipalities.
    - It is recommended that the miPRO methodology (UNDP)<sup>17</sup> be applied where possible; this methodology has proven to give certain results.
    - Many participants stressed that the MZs should develop action plans and that these plans should fit and become an integral part of the municipal development strategy.

#### 4.1.5.4 Communication

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- Keep bulletin boards as an important means for information dissemination to citizens.
- Introduce mechanisms for two-way communication, not only from the MZ toward citizens but also from citizens towards the MZ. For example, introduce interactive websites and online forums to gather citizens' opinions.
- Introduce direct communication with citizens through so-called door-to-door campaigns.
  - Use possibilities offered by tenants associations in urban areas.
- Introduce e-initiatives.

Ensure online platforms for the exchange of information and services.

- Establish online communication, especially communication via e-mail and social networks. This is particularly useful for addressing the younger population and women. Wherever possible, create a MZ website or a profile on social networks (primarily Facebook).
- Establish cooperation with radio stations with listenership in the area that could help the MZ inform the population about its actions, projects and calls for citizens.
- Enable training in the field of communication, communication techniques and message formulation in order for the MZ to be able to mobilise as many citizens as possible.

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17 UNDP BiH, Methodology for Integrated Local Development Planning in BiH – miPRO

Available from:

[http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia\\_and\\_herzegovina/bs/home/library/poverty/methodology-for-integrated-local-development-planning-in-bosnia-.html](http://www.ba.undp.org/content/bosnia_and_herzegovina/bs/home/library/poverty/methodology-for-integrated-local-development-planning-in-bosnia-.html)

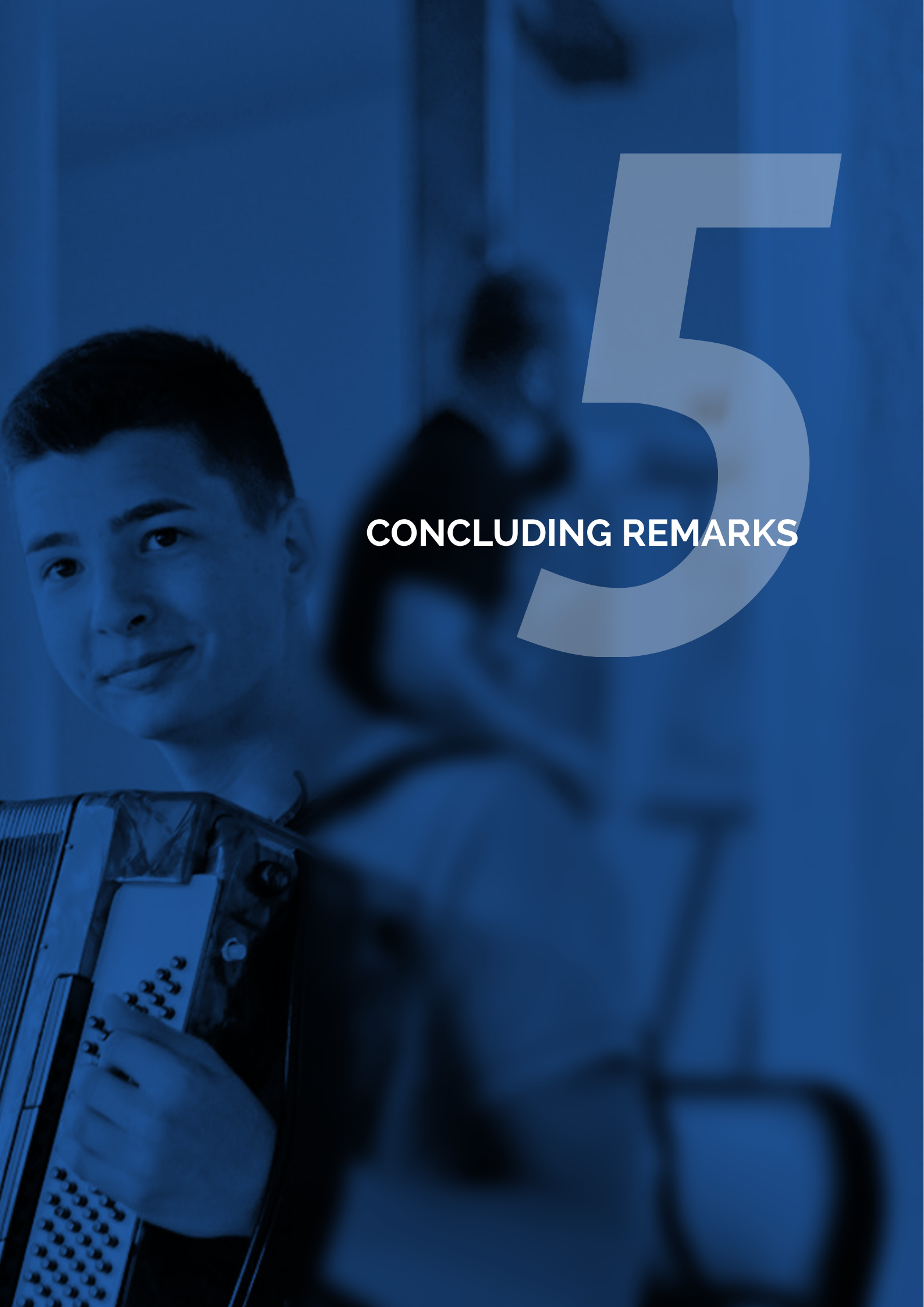
- In environments where citizens do not have internet access or computers in their households, provide equipment at the MZ that locals can use as needed and in a way that is specifically defined.

#### 4.1.5.5 Territorial Organisation of MZs

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- The current situation satisfies the needs of the population to the largest extent.
- It is impossible to determine uniform rules and criteria for the territorial organisation of MZs because of the specific nature of different areas.
- Where there is interest within the community concerning the territorial reorganisation of MZs, conduct an analysis at the LGU level and propose criteria in accordance with the needs of the population.
  - Proposed criteria:
    - territorial principle,
    - principle of distance from the seat of the MZ,
    - compactness of the territory (defined under the municipal statute),
    - rationality (to be defined by each municipal council),
    - specific conditions in terms of population figures/number of MZs.





# 5

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

- ▶ Based on a number of examples presented in this study, it is possible to conclude that each MZ has certain specifics for which the future appearance and role of the MZ should be adapted. MZs need to take into account the particular needs of the population and the situation in the area in order to adapt its content and services accordingly.
- ▶ MZs are important because they facilitate direct communication between citizens and the local authorities acting on their behalf. The MZ is described as the first step and instance as well as the basis for improving the lives of citizens and developing democratic relations within society through the greater involvement of citizens.
- ▶ In general, the prevailing view was that the MZs should have greater authority and play a more significant role in urban and rural areas. Many respondents thought that citizens are best able to recognise the needs in their most immediate environment, but that the MZ, as their closest instance, does not have sufficient authority to launch initiatives or projects.
- ▶ The MZ in BiH has a dual function: as an 'extended arm of government' and as a mechanism for citizen participation. Each of these two functions depends, more or less, on the area and the needs of citizens.
- ▶ The role of the MZ as a service provider for citizens prevails in the future vision of MZs in BiH as being focused on solving the everyday problems of citizens and improving the conditions and quality of life of citizens in the areas where they live through implementing funding for infrastructure projects with improved management at the local level. For citizens living in remote areas, the MZ plays an important role in providing access to services provided by local self-government units through the MZ.
- ▶ Citizens often lack the structure to channel specific initiatives and the MZ should provide and enable this on their behalf. Results are most visible and tangible at the MZ level, because they involve the problems that most commonly affect citizens. The MZ should encourage citizens to seek their rights in this respect.
- ▶ MZs can also take on the role of mediator and act as a mechanism for articulating citizens' interests and a structure that enables local government to gain a better understanding of the need to solve problems in the community.
- ▶ MZs should have a good insight into the 'situation on the ground' because they are closest to the source of the problem, understand the obstacles and difficulties at the community level and are therefore best placed to suggest a potential solution.
- ▶ MZs should facilitate representativeness at the local level by involving different groups, articulating their interests and representing these groups at higher levels of government.
- ▶ It is believed that facilitated access to decision-making structures itself promotes activism and MZs can play a key role in this respect. The advantage of MZs is that they are considered the closest form of organisation and are well known among citizens. Citizens have a certain amount of confidence in their MZ and consider them as representatives of their interests. This powerful potential can be used to help strengthen the role of the MZs in BiH.
- ▶ Respondents highlighted the role of individuals who are managing to launch initiatives and projects at the local level through their personal engagement and own activism in the work of the MZs. Individual initiatives are a potential that needs to be embraced and the conditions for

its strengthening created as a basis for strengthening the role of the MZ.

- ▶ In terms of citizen participation, the general problem of disinterest, apathy and lack of motivation among citizens to engage in the work of the MZs remains. This is reflected to a certain extent in the level of resistance to the decision-making process and politics in general.
- ▶ As the first step toward their greater activism and involvement, MZs have an important role to play in connecting citizens to the decision-making process. Linking MZs at the municipal level would assist in this process.
- ▶ The MZ can play a role in keeping young people in their communities, especially in rural areas.
- ▶ Respondents stressed the importance of involving the MZs in bringing society closer to the standards and values of the EU.
- ▶ When it came to economic development, respondents saw the MZs as best placed to assist in the design and implementation of projects applying an integrated approach. This was based on its knowledge and familiarity with specific environmental interests, such as environmental protection, agriculture development and unemployment, within their areas of responsibility.

# 6

## ELEMENTS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MZ MODEL IN BIH

6.1 Principles of the future vision of the MZ in BiH



# 6.1 PRINCIPLES OF THE FUTURE VISION OF THE MZ IN BIH

The Principles of the Future Vision of MZs in BiH identified in the course of this Research:

- **Representativeness:** The election process for the bodies of the MZ should involve as many residents as possible, especially those from vulnerable and minority population groups. It should also ensure their equal or proportional representation within the bodies of the MZ as well as in the activities and initiatives of the MZ.
- **Accountability:** In addition to being accountable to its citizens and representing their interests, the MZ should also be accountable to local authorities. The same principle should apply to citizens wherein they behave responsibly toward the property of the MZ, respond to the actions organised by the MZ and contribute to the development of the MZ.
- **Inclusiveness:** Various groups and all citizens should be included in the work and activities of the MZ, especially women, youth and socially excluded groups.
- **Coordination between all of the bodies of the MZ:** This should involve the speakers of the assemblies and councils, the municipal administrative bodies and the coordinators responsible for local communities. In addition to coordination, good communication and cooperation are also important within the MZ itself.
- **Transparency and hierarchy:** Limit opportunities for misuse and ensure the legality and accountability of the work of the MZ along with openness to the public and access to information.
- **Professionalisation and the capacities of employees:** Enable MZs to employ permanent staff and ensure training.
- **Focus on concrete priorities for citizens.**
- **Independence:** The MZ should function as a representative of the community and citizens and represent their interest independent of the local authorities in decision-making. The functioning of the MZ can be improved through a greater degree of financial autonomy.
- **Depoliticisation:** The work and activities of the MZ, especially of its bodies, and the decision-making processes should be free of political influence.





## MODEL OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES (MZs)

- 7.1** Thematic model of MZs
- 7.2** Functional models of local communities (MZs)
  - 7.2.1** Role of Local Communities MZs
- 7.3** Organisational model of MZs

## PRINCIPLES OF MZs

- Independence
- Representativeness/representation
- Inclusion and Integration
- Accountability
- Coordination and communication
- Professionalisation and education
- Depoliticisation
- Transparency and publicity

## VISION OF MZs

- Citizen-oriented
- Based on citizens' trust
- Contribute to the development of the community and society
- Link between citizens and LGUs
- Help citizens to connect
- Space for the activities of citizens and associations
- Expert, depoliticised and professional
- Insight into the problems of the community and citizens
- Bring society closer to EU standards

## MODELS OF MZs

- Thematic model
- Organisational model
  - Structure, operation and financing of MZs
- Functional model
  - Advocacy function
  - Provision of services to citizens
  - MZ as a social and cultural hub
  - MZ as a forum for civic participation



# 7.1 THEMATIC MODEL OF MZs

## ADVOCACY AND ACCESS TO GOVERNANCE

- Introduce mechanisms to monitor implementation of laws in the part related to MZs.
- Institutionalise communication and coordination between MZs and local authorities.
- Regular and timely information dissemination to MZs by the LSGU.
- Strengthen the role of MZs as a facilitator between the population and LSGU and providers of public services.
- Clearly defining the criteria for issues addressed through MZs to LSGU and service providers, defining the procedures and deadlines for sending feedback for all the listed services, introducing the obligation to respond to MZs request.
- Institutionalise all forms cooperation, communication and coordination between MZs and LSGU.
- Training of MZ representatives on the various aspects of their work.
- Give greater authority to MZs and help them be more open to citizens.
- Introduce the obligation to conduct public consultations through MZs when adopting key documents at LSGU level, with extended participation of MZ representatives.
- Regular consultation of citizens at the level of MZs through surveys and assemblies of citizens.
- Building greater confidence in MZs and LSGU through transparency and publicity of their work, and depoliticising the decision making process and structures at the level of MZs.
- Networking of MZs for more effective and efficient advocacy. Establishing the MZ council at the level of the municipality.
- Awaken the interest of citizens through the public promotion of advocacy activities.
- Include MZs into working groups at the municipal level.
- The presence of the representatives of the MZ in sessions of the Municipal Council, with the submission of the agenda of the Municipal Council to all MZs.
- Maintain regular weekly meetings between representatives of MZs and the MZ coordinator in the municipality.
- Establish a permanent coordinating body comprising secretaries of MZs, and appoint a coordinator for MZs in all municipalities.

## PROVISION OF SERVICES

- Local community as the first level of government where citizens can exercise their rights and solve problems.
- Provision of services to all citizens, NGOs, legal and business entities.
- Facilitating and simplifying the lives of citizens and the meeting of citizens demands.
- Greater powers of coordination between citizens and higher levels of government in terms of maintenance and regulation of local infrastructure, and issuance of principal approvals for urbanistic and construction permits.
- Ensuring a permanent and systematic financing from municipal budgets and other revenues, and greater authority through the Law on Local Self-Governance.
- Establish formal coordination and cooperation between MZs and utility companies, and other public institutions.
- Provision of administrative services, in particular in remote and inaccessible MZs (opening of branch registry offices). Preparation of cost-effective analysis of opening of branch registry offices at LSGU level.
- Improvement of basic MZ functions (working hours, location, contacts with citizens, etc.)
- Organizing educational events for underprivileged categories.
- A role in protection from natural disasters, as well as assistance and rehabilitating post-disasters.
- Maintaining records of socially vulnerable categories of population and proactive role in solving their problems.
- Introducing mechanisms for greater transparency and corruption prevention.
- Ensuring basic hygienic and health living conditions through cooperation with utility companies.
- Organising civic actions, coordination and communication.
- Regular and detailed information dissemination to citizens about the ways of service provision in MZs.
- Modernization of services in MZs, especially administrative.
- Provision of services of organising volunteer teams.

## SOCIAL AND CULTURAL HUB

- Identify and support initiatives, engagement and activism of individuals in MZs as the center of social events in the community.
- Legally regulate the use of MZ premises as a social and cultural/ sports hub.
- Legally regulate the engagement of volunteers in social, sports and cultural affairs.
- Define a framework for cooperation with schools, cultural and sports organisations.
- Systematically organise cooperation with schools, cultural and sports associations and clubs.
- Earmark funds for cultural, sports and social events.
- Animate young people, women, pensioners, disabled persons, and marginalised groups through associations that bring them together and represent their particular interests.
- Strengthen the awareness of the role of NGOs and opportunities for cooperation with MZs. Cooperation with NGOs through education programmes, preparation of project proposals and their implementation, exchange of knowledge and experience, establishment of partnerships, use of MZ premises through joint activities.
- Institutionalisation of cooperation with NGOs, e.g. in providing assistance and remedying damage in case of natural disasters.
- Establishing better communication and coordination NGOs and MZs.

## CIVIC PARTICIPATION FORUM

- Raising awareness in the role of MZs in meeting the interests of citizens and advocating for solving their problems. Initiate activities that can motivate citizens to participate more in the work of MZs: Better insight into situation in the community and citizens' needs, giving citizens the opportunity to influence priorities defining, establish better communication and information dissemination to citizens.
- Define forms of citizen participation and create a legal framework for appropriate procedures.
- Define the role of citizens' assemblies, develop appropriate rules, and define the issues that citizens' assemblies are to take a position on.
- Depoliticisation of decision-making for the purpose of greater citizen participation. Greater transparency in the work of MZs.
- Promotion of volunteerism and civic activism.
- Providing space for gathering of citizens and activities of their associations.
- Increase the participation of women in MZs. Introduce the principles of gender budgeting and women representation quote in bodies of MZ. Organise activities intended exclusively for women.
- Strengthen awareness of the role of women at the local and the level of MZ.
- Close cooperation with women's associations. Providing MZ premises for women activities.
- Increase the participation of young people in the work of MZs, and in ways in which the MZ can contribute to the attainment of their rights.
- Introduce quote for youth representation in MZ bodies. Ensuring opportunities for youth activities.
- Improve cooperation with schools.
- Introducing measures to combat juvenile delinquency.
- Improve the living conditions of pensioners and disabled persons in MZs.
- Formalising cooperation between MZs and pensioners' associations and associations of disabled persons, and their regular communication.
- Organize actions to assist the socially vulnerable population, including seniors and disabled persons in need of assistance.
- Construction of access ramps in MZ premises and facilities.

## 7.2 FUNCTIONAL MODELS OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES (MZs)

# ADVOCACY AND ACCESS TO GOVERNANCE

Monitoring implementation of legislation

Training

Consultation

Institutionalisation

Inclusiveness

Coordination and communication

Participation

First step toward administration

Providing feedback

Partnerships

Articulating proposals

Maintaining records and documenting

Establishing networks and relationships

Community leadership

Exchange of good practice

Participation in decision-making processes

Strategic and integrated approach

Advisory role

Reporting and planning

Predictability, publicity and transparency

Open communication

Mediation role

Facilitating access to governance

Delegation of powers

e-services

Decentralised public consultations

Public opinion surveys

Depoliticising processes and structures

Restoring trust in MZs

Transparent electoral processes

Transparency in decision-making

Representation of general and local interests

Reducing the influence of political parties

Balanced territorial representation

# SERVICE PROVISION

Direct communication with citizens

---

Meeting population needs in rural areas

---

Analysis of population needs and capacities

---

Delegation of competences

---

Professionalisation of staff and management

---

Information flow

---

Communication channel with citizens

---

Development function

---

Fundraising

---

Ensuring the legitimacy of demands

---

Administrative services

---

Facilitating access to public departments and services

---

Implementation of entrusted tasks

---

Decentralisation of services

---

Space for training

---

Maintaining records on training needs

---

Preventive action

---

Coordination with the competent public services

---

Resource mapping

# CIVIC PARTICIPATION FORUM

# COMMUNITY HUB

Support for initiatives by individuals

---

Solidarity and volunteer action

---

Cooperation with NGOs

---

Insights into the situation in the local community

---

Procedures for and the use of MZ premises

---

Cooperation with cultural, education and sports organisations/institutions

---

Calendar of activities

---

Project-based approach

---

Project cooperation

Motivate civic activism

---

Promote civil activism

---

Organised participation of citizens

---

Organised representation of citizens

---

Organised volunteer action

---

Operational support to civic actions

---

Transparency and the prevention of corruption

---

Framework for civil action

---

Regular informing of citizens

---

Representing the interests of minority populations

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Representing the interests of marginalised groups

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Protect the rights of women, youth, pensioners and ensure their involvement

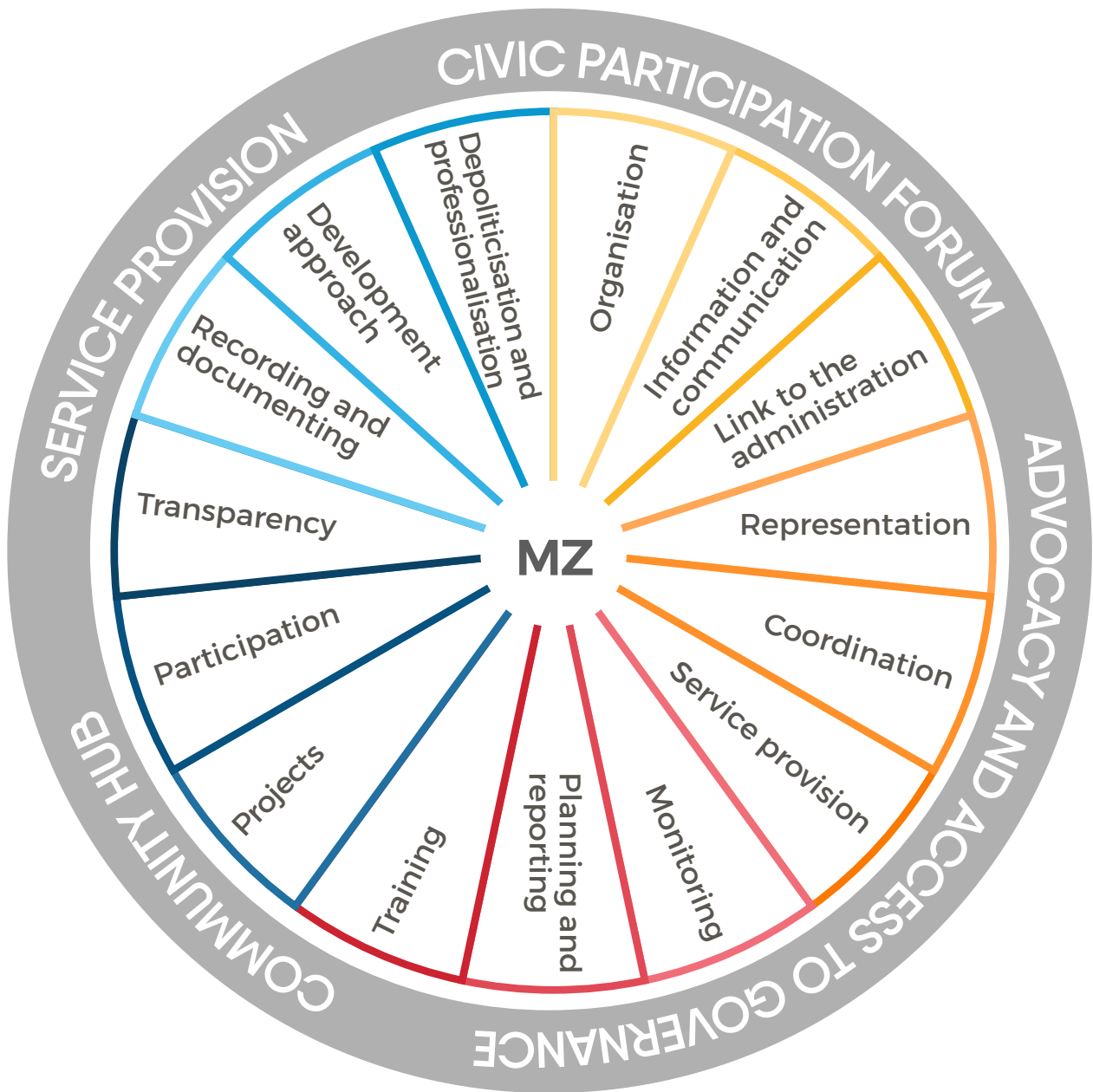
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Promote social responsibility

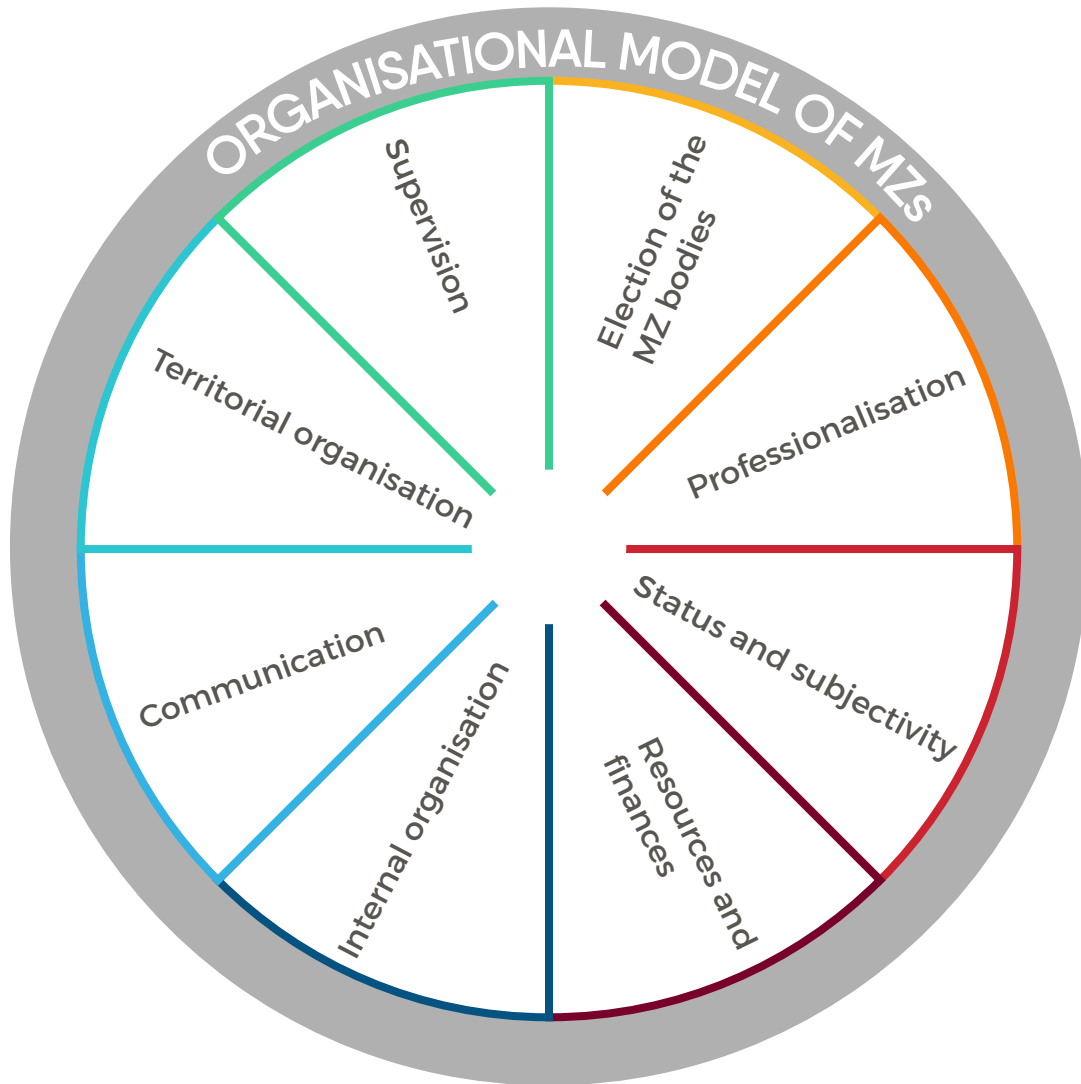
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Inclusion

## 7.2.1 Role of Local Communities MZs



## 7.3 ORGANISATIONAL MODEL OF MZs



# ELECTION OF BODIES OF THE MZ

Depoliticise the election of bodies of the MZ

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MZs as politically neutral

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Enabling the election of independent candidates

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Abolishing the election of the MZ councils by political parties

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Abolishing political lists for MZ councils

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Define the manner of election and means to recall the president and members of the MZ council

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Recall of the president of the MZ council should be done by the MZ council in case where the president does not adhere to the activities plan and the finance plan, does not convene regular meetings and does not report to the council and assembly on the activities carried out

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Define the method for dissolving the MZ council

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Election of the president of the MZ council through a majority vote of members of the council

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Define the rights and obligations of the MZ council

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Introduce sanctions for non-compliance with these duties

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Introduce guarantees for gender equality

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In accordance with the Gender Equality Law, insist on reaching a quota of 40% of women on the MZ council to be achieved over several years.

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Ensuring representativeness through electoral rules

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Define the method for selecting the MZ bodies through secret ballot



# SUBJECTIVITY AND PROFESSIONALISATION OF MZS

Resolve the issue of the legal subjectivity of MZs and assign them the status of legal entity.

Define a new level of authority in BiH by granting the status of legal person to MZs.

Grant the status of legal person, but with legal restrictions.

MZs must have the status of legal person, but with the accompanying legal responsibility.

It is imperative to assign the status of legal person or the status of an association of citizens of special interest to local self-government.

Professionalise the organisation of the MZ by having a certain number of employees (depending on the size of the MZ) employed permanently and paid for their work.

The MZ staff cannot perform these duties as a side activity, since such an approach does not allow for enough attention to the work of the MZ. It is also unrealistic to expect active engagement in responsible positions without any financial interest involved.

This is only possible if the MZ system is reformed and the number of MZs reduced; otherwise, volunteering is a necessary rule for the functioning of MZs.

Professionalisation is needed, but for a smaller number of members of the MZ. This should be subject to analysis, but depend largely on the structure and specificity of the local community and MZ (president and secretary).

The engagement of staff professionally at the MZ is unjustified. Instead, municipalities and cities must have a professional associate at the disposal of the MZ. Yet for now, having a municipal department for MZs with a recognised coordinator for several MZs has proven to be a good practice.

Service contracts for employees/staff of MZs.

# RESOURCES AND FINANCES

LGUs to provide the means for covering the operating costs of the MZ, especially for the staff.

Provide funds for running costs, which would require MZs to have the status of legal person.

Each MZ to have its own bank account.

Not possible if there is a shift to the treasury system in finance.

If MZs are legal persons then they must also have a bank account.

Every MZ should dispose of its funds in accordance with its needs.

Where possible, LGUs and higher levels of authority should provide premises for the work of MZs.

Preferably, the wider community would engage in solving the problem of premises for MZs (citizens, NGOs, business entities, etc.).

Clearly define all financing models for MZs: grants from municipalities, self-financing by citizens, donations, contributions from business entities, and own revenue.

Separate operating costs from costs for activities and services of the MZ.

Financing should be addressed through the general fund of the administrative bodies and the municipal council.

Other forms of financing (self- contributions, donations, own revenue) to be addressed in accordance with the strategic development plan of the community.

Introduce strategic planning and other measures to improve the planning process and the identification of priorities.

It is difficult for a MZ to do this without synchronised action with the municipality.

Many MZs use the MiPRO methodology (UNDP), which, in their opinion, has provided certain results.

The MZ should develop their action plans to fit and become an integral part of the municipal development strategy.

# INTERNAL ORGANISATION AND STAFFING

<p>Three options were offered concerning the redefinition of the post of president of the MZ council:</p>	<p>Professionalise the post of the MZ council president</p> <hr/> <p>The appointment of the president of the MZ council to be either through elections or through a public call with a set term of office.</p> <hr/> <p>If the president of the MZ council is appointed through elections then he/she should be elected directly for a set term of office (mandate), but at the proposal of citizens rather than political parties</p>
<p>Where necessary and possible, introduce commissioners for individual settlements or hamlets</p>	<p>This issue should be regulated only when there is insufficient population, but it would be advantageous if the LGU mayor appoints the commissioner directly.</p> <hr/> <p>However, if the MZ works well and if there are representatives of all settlements and hamlets present then there is no need for this.</p> <hr/> <p>Yet many respondents are against this proposal because they believe that it would open up the possibility of further politicisation, given the possibility to have more commissioners than representatives of the MZ council</p>
<p>Clearly define the responsibilities of the president and the secretary of the MZ.</p>	
<p>To be resolved under the statute only.</p>	
<p>Competence of the MZ president</p>	<p>Convenes the council</p> <hr/> <p>Represents the MZ</p> <hr/> <p>Signs acts</p>
<p>Competence of the MZ secretary</p>	<p>Material and technical work</p> <hr/> <p>Administrative issues</p> <hr/> <p>Technical affairs</p> <hr/> <p>Co-signs acts of the MZ</p>

# INFORMATION DISSEMINATION AND COMMUNICATION

Keep bulletin boards, because they are an important means for the dissemination of information to citizens.

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Introduce mechanisms for two-way communication, not only from the MZ toward citizens but also from citizens toward the MZ.

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Introduce interactive websites and online forums to gather citizens' opinions.

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Use e-petitions.

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Introduce direct communication with citizens through so-called door-to-door campaigns.

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Make use of tenants associations and models for homeowners in order to engage the population.

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Members of the MZ council should engage in visits to the population.

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Introduce e-initiatives.

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Online platforms for the exchange of information and services.

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Establish online communication, especially communication via e-mail and social networks, to addressing the younger population and women in particular.

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Wherever possible, create a MZ website or a profile on social networks (primarily Facebook).

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Establish cooperation with radio stations with listenership in the area that could help the MZ inform the population about their actions, projects and calls to citizens.

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Enable training in the field of communication, communication techniques and message formulation in order for the MZ to mobilise as many citizens as possible.

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In environments where citizens do not have access to the Internet or computers in their households, provide equipment at the MZ that locals can use as needed and in a way that is specifically

# TERRITORIAL ORGANISATION AND SUPERVISION

Territorial organisation	The current situation satisfies the needs of the population to the largest extent.	
	This is not well organised currently in some parts of BiH because of different population figures, while the budget remains the same.	
	In the future, some MZs should consider merging because of the small number of residents. It is also necessary to consider critically certain changes in some segments.	
In those cases where there is an interest of the community for the territorial reorganisation of MZs, conduct an analysis at the LGU level and propose criteria in accordance with the needs of the population.		
Possible criteria	Territorial principle	
	The principle of distance from the seat	
	Compactness of the territory (defined under the municipal statute)	
	Rationality (to be defined by each municipal council)	
	Specify relations: population figures/number of MZs	
Supervision		
A certain number of respondents believed that the MZ is subordinate to the municipality and therefore considered it necessary to regulate a commissioner for the MZ. The the municipal council would propose the commissioner. In this way, responsibility would be distributed as follows:	The MZ should be accountable to the Mayor for professionalism,	
	and to citizens of the MZ for implementation of the plan.	
While other respondents saw the MZ as a separate organisation and thought that supervision must be dual. Namely, that the MZ must be accountable.	To the Municipality for:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>spending of assigned financial resources,</li> <li>the execution of entrusted/delegated</li> </ul>
	To citizens:	for all activities planned and adopted by the MZ council.

#MjesneZajednice



PROJEKTA

Upravljanje kvalitetom života BiH građana  
kroz osnaživanje lokalnog razvoja, usluga  
i infrastrukture na lokalnom nivou, te jačanje  
demokratske odgovornosti i saradnje u zajednici



Podrška i saradnja sa građanima i lokalnim  
vlastima u cilju osnaživanja lokalnih zajednica  
i odgovornosti u zajednici



Organizacija projekata i inicijativa  
koje doprinose lokalnom  
razvoju i poboljšanju usluga



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