

RESEARCH

**CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS OF CITIZENS
AT USING THE SERVICES
OF THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

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INTRODUCTION

The quality of a public administration reflects in the immediate contact with citizens, that is, services offered to them. At this moment the state provides about 150 categories of public services for the citizens. According to the Ombudsman Report for 2016¹, “second in line by number are petitions concerning the work of the institution competent for registration of citizens – Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, especially the department covering the City of Skopje and its municipalities”. This reveals the fact that citizens encounter problems with the services offered by institutions issuing birth certificates and other documents. Therefore, this research deals with services in general, with focus on the services of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths. Its goal is to provide basis for the announced reform of the public administration, especially the public services, detecting problems and challenges and finding solutions for the same.

II. Methodology and Structure of the Document

The methodology of this research is designed to be “question driven”. In other words, it is composed of various methodology tools selected based on the necessity of covering various aspects of the research questions.

We strive to answer the following four questions in this research:

- Which is the time period in which citizens receive certificates and other documents from competent institutions?
- How many officials are included in processing the citizens’ applications, in between the submission date and the date of issuance of the document?
- How long is the necessary period for making entries or changes of personal details in the registry office?
- What kind of approach and possibilities are offered by the existing system; inclusiveness of the procedure and cooperation between the officials and the citizens?

In order to answer the above questions we divided the analysis into two parts. The first part is an attempt to answer the question “Which is the time period in which citizens receive certificates and other documents from competent institutions?”

We reached answers to this question through two quantitative methods. First, we conducted a telephone survey of a nationally representative sample. Second, we conducted an on-spot survey with 118 users of services of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, the Employment Agency and the Inter-communal Social Services Center in Gazi Baba, institutions indicated by the customer as relevant for the research.

¹ <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/Godisni%20izvestai/GI-2016/GI-2016.pdf> (Annual Report 2016, 32)

The telephone survey is a part of the Eurometer survey research that we conducted on the piggy-backing principle to the existing survey questionnaire. Alternatively, the idea of the on-spot survey was to directly interview citizens using a specified service by filling in a questionnaire previously prepared. The questionnaire was designed to provide answers to the following aspects: how long it took for the users to complete the service; what obstacles they came across, and how they evaluated the quality of the service. Using this tool we managed to provide information about the most difficult problems that citizens are facing when using this type of services.

In the second part of the research we are trying to answer the other three questions by qualitative methodology approach. We started by a desk analysis of the current legal frame, and practice of using services stemming from the process of managing births, marriages and deaths; we scanned the organization of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, the legal frame and the challenges they face. We continued the analysis by using the tool “free access to public information” and by asking the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths three questions. In order to obtain clearer picture of the formal rules and informal practice of these institutions as well as the problems their employees face we carried out semi-structured interviews with six employees of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths and the Social Services Centers. We completed the analysis by interviewing four citizens belonging to vulnerable categories, about their negative experience as direct users of the services offered by these institutions, and paradigm cases of weaknesses of the system. We generated several short case studies based on their personal experience.

III. Answer to the Question “What is the Time Period in which Citizens Receive Certificates and Other Documents from Competent Institutions?”

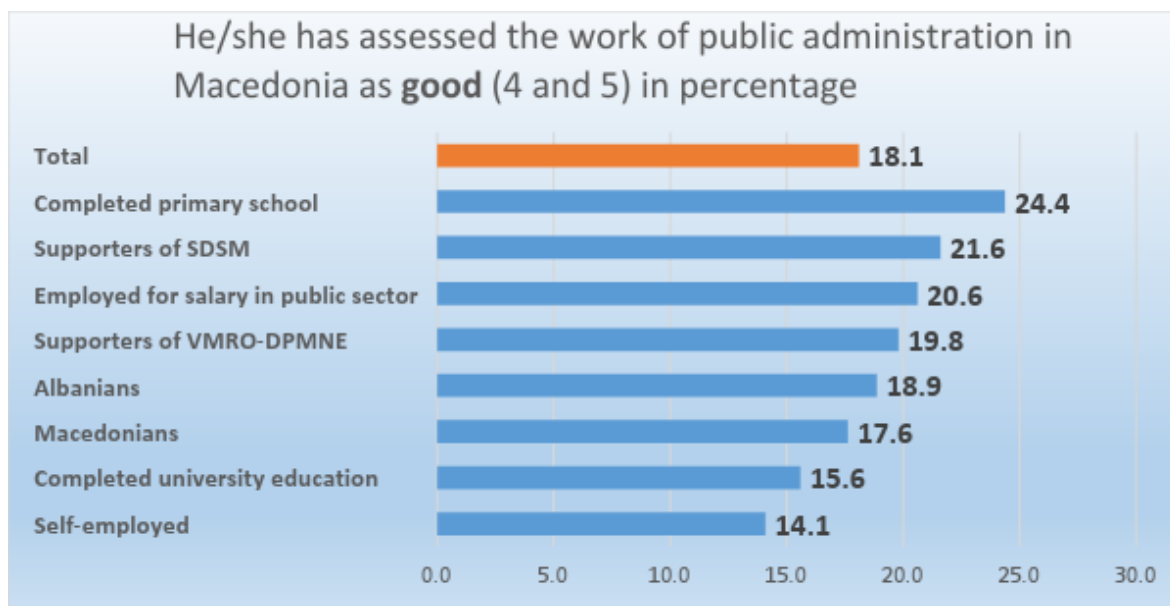
In the first part of this chapter (3.1) we provide a summary of the survey information of Eurometer 2017 concerning the general assessment of the work of the Public Administration and assessment of the promptness and the quality of the services. Then, a summary follows of the survey information concerning the assessment of specific institutions of interest for the customer. We also provide a summary of the problems identified by citizens along with their recommendations. During this part of the analysis we turn our attention to information cross-reference providing remarkable facts and further generating relevant conclusions and recommendations to be the focus of the future reforms.

In the second part (3.2) we analyze information obtained from citizens by the on-spot survey carried out in front of the institutions providing services to the citizens, indicated by the customer (Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, Social Services Center and the Employment Agency).

The third part (3.3) includes three case studies based on profound interviews with users of services belonging to various vulnerable categories of citizens, who have faced difficulties in exercising their rights.

3.1. Information from Eurometer Public Opinion Research

Graphic 1 bellow presents the outcome of the question², which was a part of the survey questionnaire the goal of which was to capture general perceptions of the citizens on the work of the public administration in Macedonia. Obviously, only 18,1 % of the subjects assessed the work of the public administration as good. At the same time, there are differences among demographic groups. Most generous in assessing the work of the public administration were the subjects with primary school level of education (almost quarter of the total number – 24,4%), while the category of self-employed were most critical – only 14. 1% have positively assessed the work of the public administration.



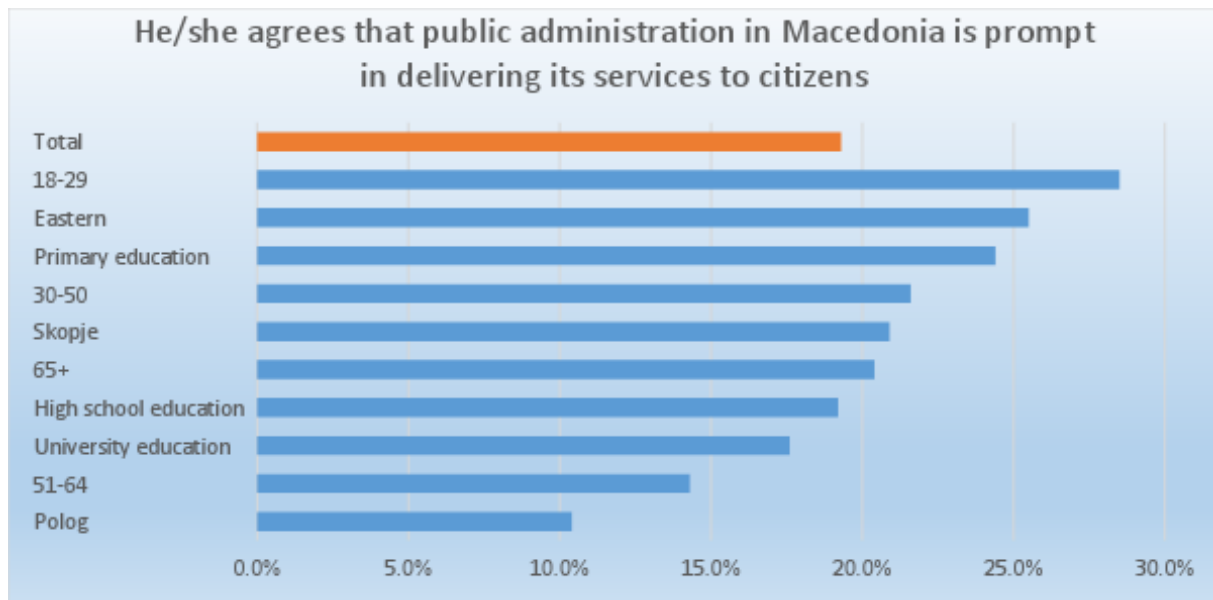
Graphic 1: General assessment of the work of the public administration

Graphics 2 and 3 bellow present the answers of two questions related to assessing the promptness of the public administration and the quality of its services.³ Namely, only 19.3 % of the subjects agreed with the statement “the public administration in Macedonia is prompt in delivering its services to the citizens”, while 21.2% are of the opinion that the public administration delivers quality services. Cross-section of information concerning these questions indicates significant differences between various regions of the country.

² The complete question was: „ We have few questions about the public administration in Macedonia, i.e. services that the state offers to citizens. I would like to ask you, on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means bad work, and 5 means excellent work, what your general assessment is of the work of the public administration in Macedonia.“ Graphic 1 presents the sum of marks 4 and 5, translated into category „positive mark“.

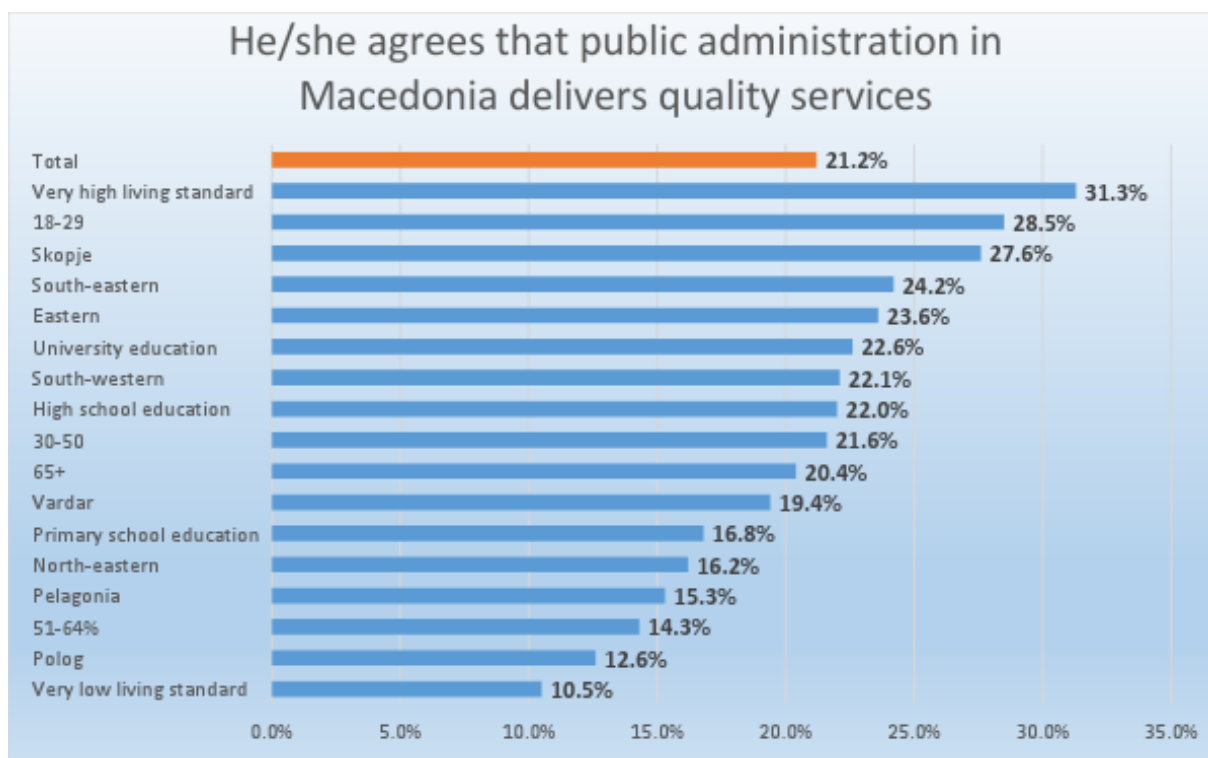
³ The question about promptness was, „I am going to read few statements about the public administration, so, please tell me to which extent you agree with each of them. Again we have a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 means that you do not

As further analysis shows, citizens from the Polog region tend to be less satisfied with the operation, quality and the promptness of the public administration compared with those in regions such as Skopje and the eastern region. Similarly, the youngest population (aged between 18 and 29) is generally more satisfied compared with adult citizens.



Graphic 2: Assessment of promptness of the public administration

agree at all, and 5 means that you completely agree with the statement. Public administration in Macedonia is prompt in delivering its services to citizens“, quality of services of the public administration was measured by agreement with the following statement: „ The public administration in Macedonia delivers quality services.“



Graphic 3: Assessment of the quality of services of the public administration

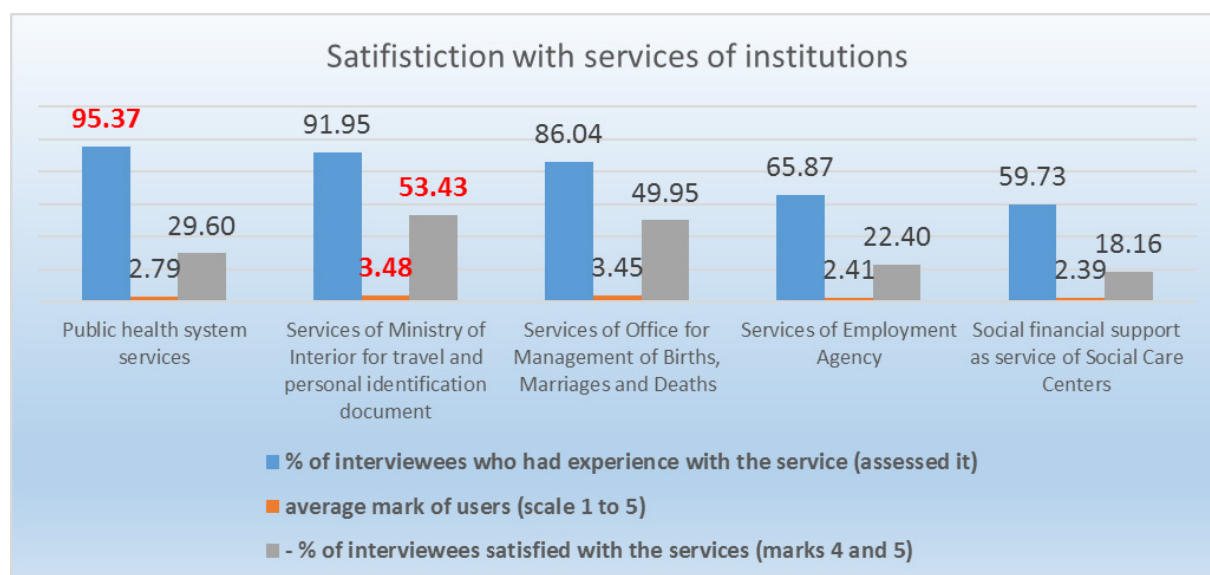
Graphic 4 presents the results of the question⁴ as to which extent citizens use the services of the institutions, and what their experience is or of their family and friends. This was indicated by the customer as relevant for the focus of the research. Services of the Ministry of Interior as well as health system services have been also included as “controlling variables”.

Health system services are the most frequently used services by even 95.37% of the total number of the subjects of the survey, while the least of them (59.73%) have experience with the Social Services Centers. Citizens are most satisfied with the services of the Ministry of Interior, that is, 53.43% of the total number of the subjects gave the average mark 3.48 out of 5 (marked by 4 or 5). On the other hand, the least satisfaction was expressed with the services of the Social Services Centers (average mark 2.39, that is, only 18.16% gave positive mark).

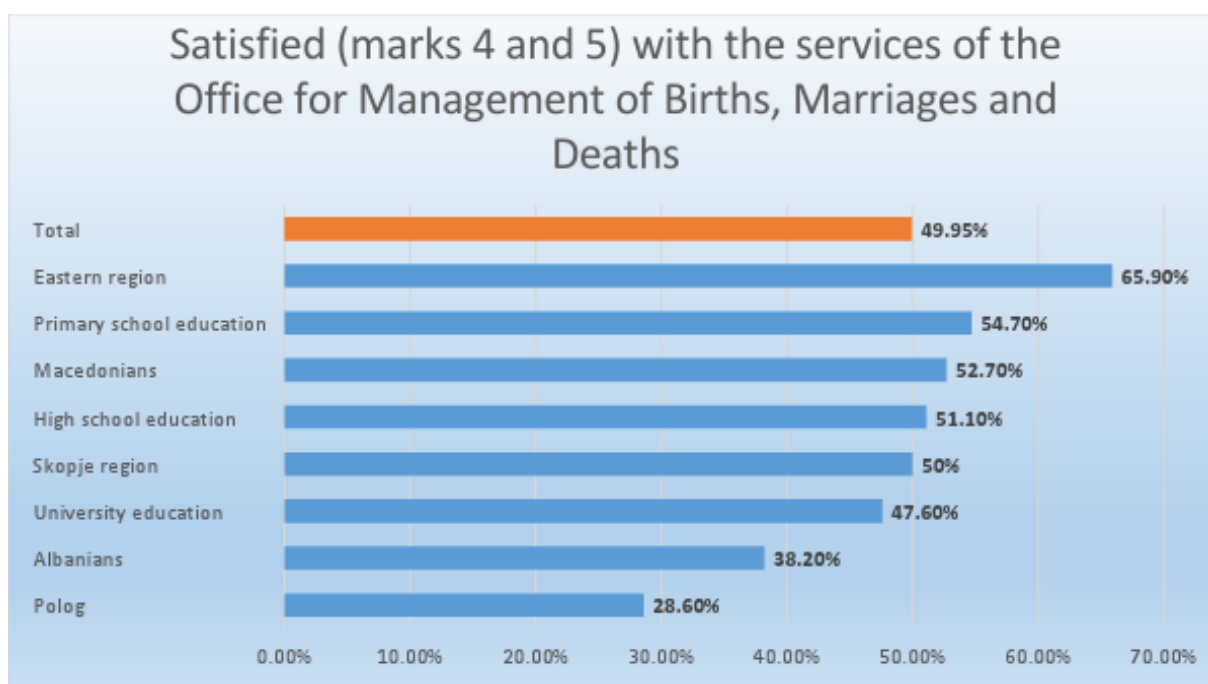
⁴ “In conclusion, let’s talk about particular services of the institutions and your experience and the experience of your family and friends, if you have any. For each service I mention, you will first tell me if you have used it, and if the answer is yes, give me a mark of the degree of your satisfaction with it. Again, we have a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means total dissatisfaction, and 5 means total satisfaction.”

This data indicates that the marks given by citizens for particular services tend to be more positive than their general assessments of the work, promptness and the quality of the public administration. This knowledge is confirmed in the further text by analysis of the information from the on-site survey of users of particular services. In other words, barely one fifth have positively assessed the work of the public administration, its promptness and quality; on the other hand, the institutions which are generally assessed as the worst (Social Services Centers) received better marks.

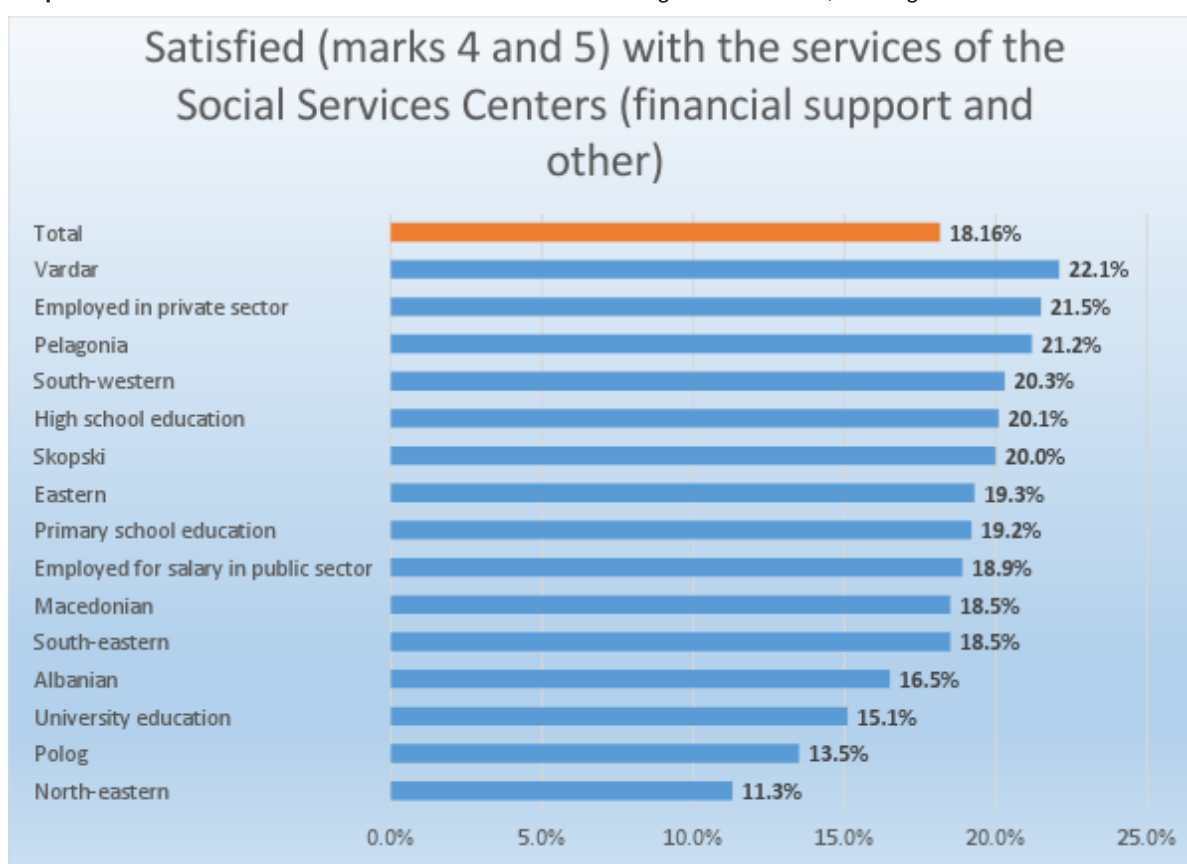
Cross-reference (see graphics 5-9 below) indicates enormous regional differences in satisfaction with particular services, which is pattern coming forward when researching any of the institutions and their services individually. Namely, 73.7% of the subjects in the eastern region have positively assessed the services of the Ministry of Interior, while only 32.1% in the Polog region share this opinion. Similar is the situation when it comes to the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths (65.9% positive assessment in the eastern region vs. 28.16% in the Polog region) and the health services system (41.6% positive assessment in the east and only 19% in the Polog region). There are ethnic-based differences as well; however, those are not as obvious as the region-based ones. Macedonians are generally more satisfied with the services than ethnical Albanians. This knowledge should be taken as basis for more profound research that will explain the reasons for such differences in more details. Furthermore, it should be the basis for future interventions to be carried out within the public administration reforms. The fact that the common services offered by the Ministry of Interior have been most positively assessed by the citizens clearly indicates that the model applied by this institution is to be taken as a good example as to how other institutions can improve their promptness and the quality of their services.



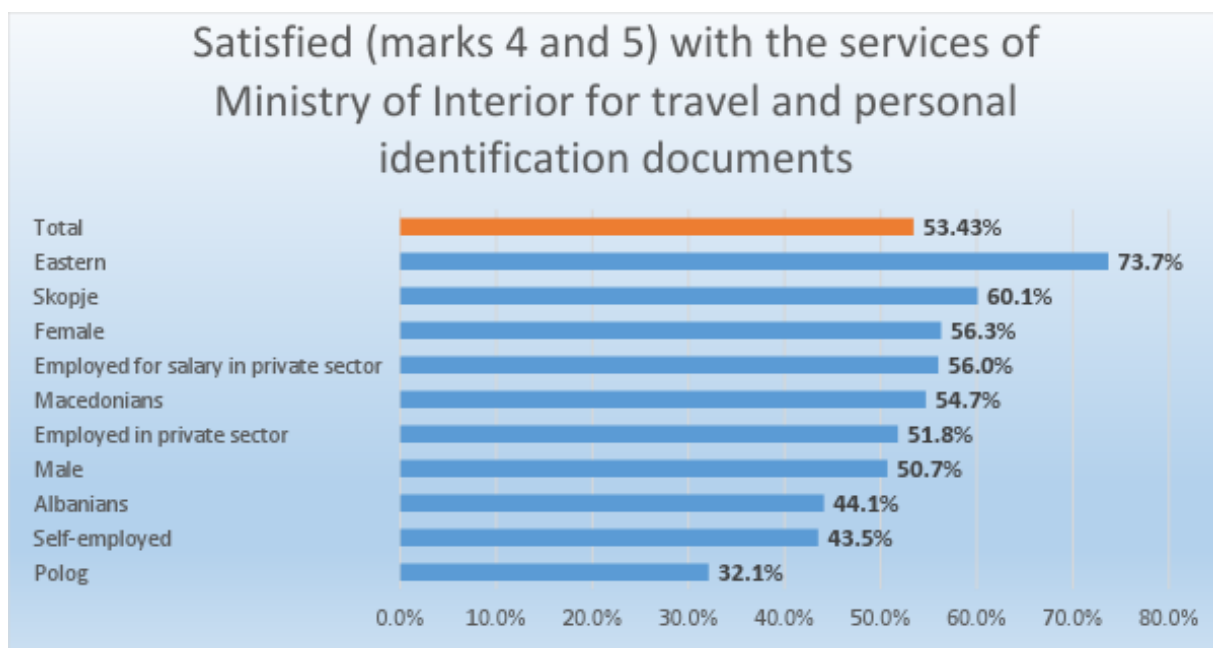
Graphic 4: Satisfaction with the services of the institutions



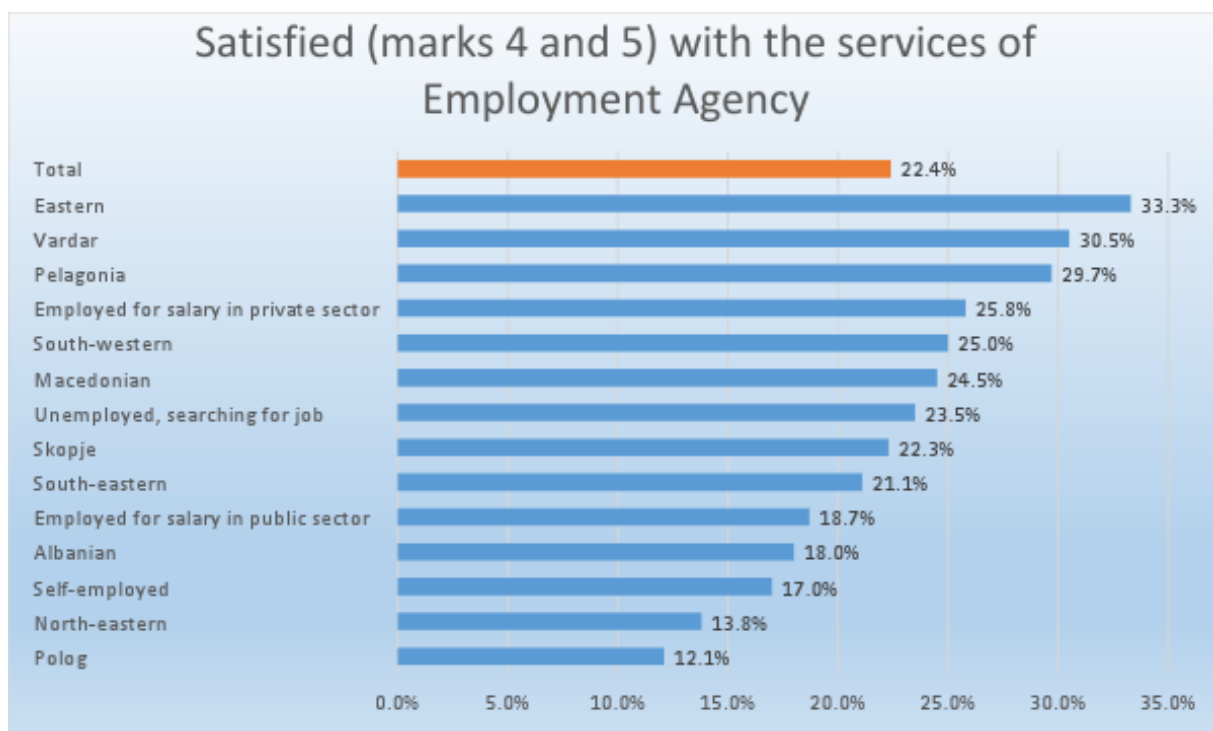
Graphic 5: Satisfaction with the services of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths



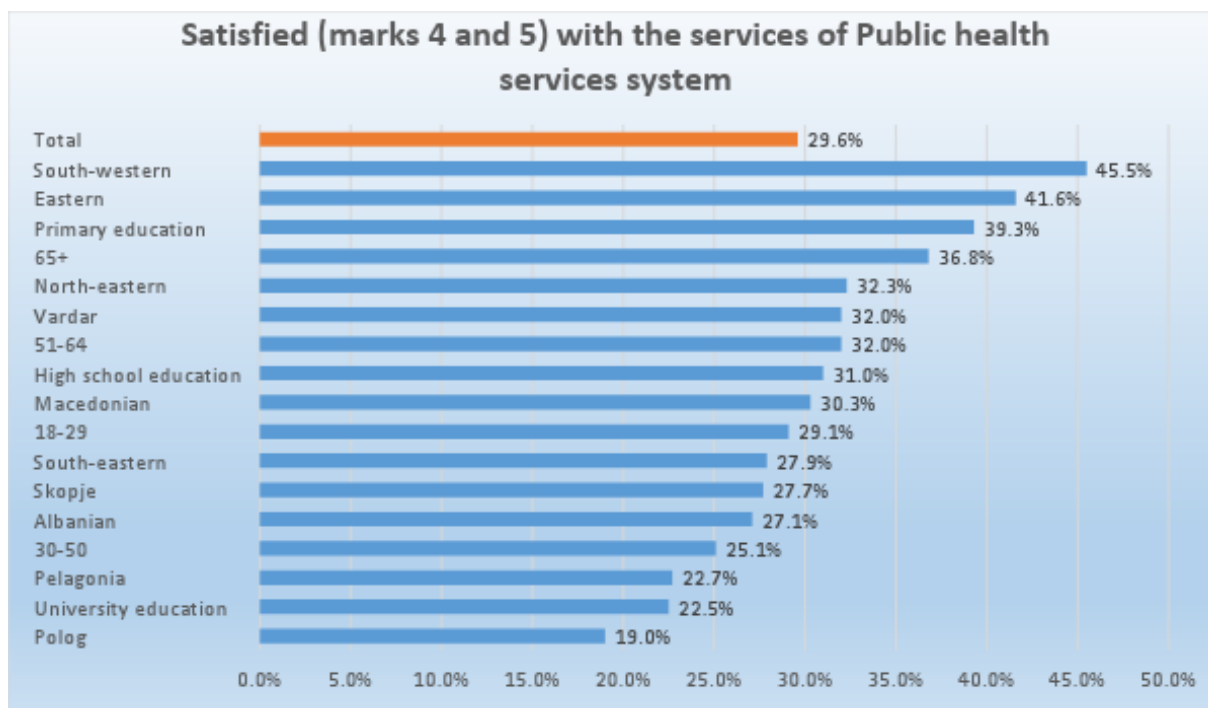
Graphics 6: Satisfaction with the services of the Social Services Centers (such as financial support and other)



Graphics 7: Satisfaction with the services of the Ministry of Interior concerning travel and personal identification documents

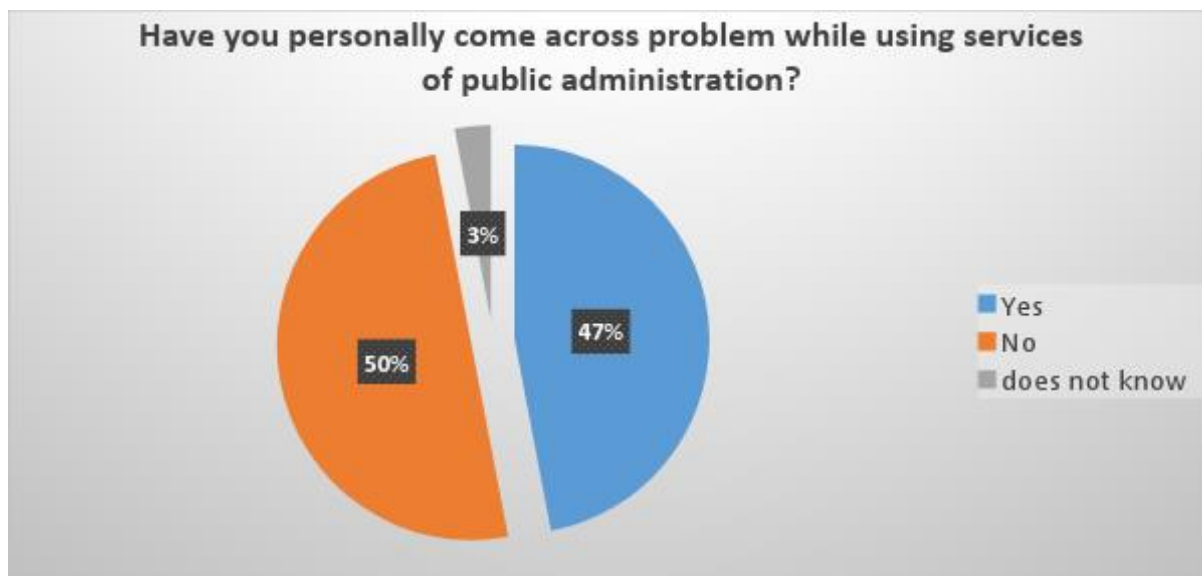


Graphic 8: Satisfaction with the services of the Employment Agency



Graphic 9: Satisfaction with the services of the public health system

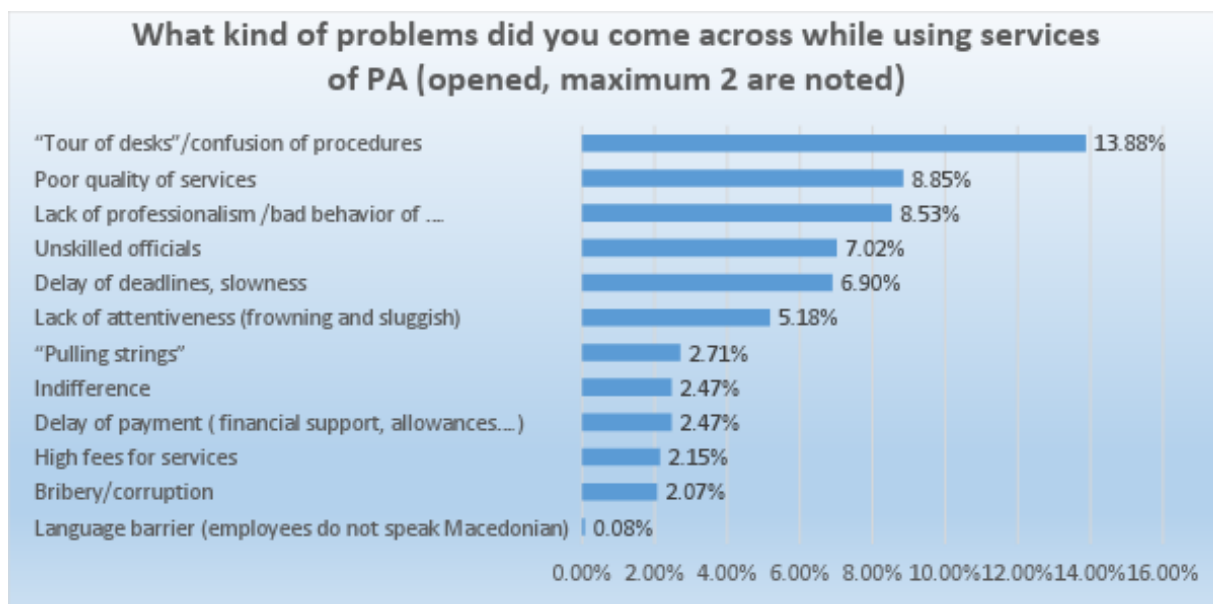
We interviewed the subjects on particular problems that they came across when using public administration services as well as their recommendations and suggestions for improvement of the operation of the public administration. Details are presented in graphic 10, 11 and 12 below. Almost half of the subjects (47%) answered affirmatively to the question whether they had ever come across a problem with any public administration service. When asked to name a particular problem⁵, the subjects offered various answers presented in Graphic 11. Some 13.88% of the subjects mentioned poor clarity of procedures (the popular Tour of Desks); 8.85% is for the poor quality of services and 8.53% for unprofessional behavior of employees. It is interesting that only 0.88% or one subject indicated the language barrier as a problem; this knowledge may be used at drafting the Law on Languages and anticipating its implications on the quality of public administration services. When asked to offer recommendations⁶ for improvement of the situation with the public administration, the citizens made interesting proposals. There were suggestions of the ways to increase the efficiency (20.65% of the total number of subjects); reduce corruption (13.65%); make reorganization (11.72%); and eradicate the need for “pulling strings” (11.56%). It is interesting that, regardless of the perception that there is a negative atmosphere concerning the so called “Framework employment”, only 1.52% indicated those as the main problem in the work of the public administration. Another interesting fact is that only 6.7% would increase the salaries of public administration employees.



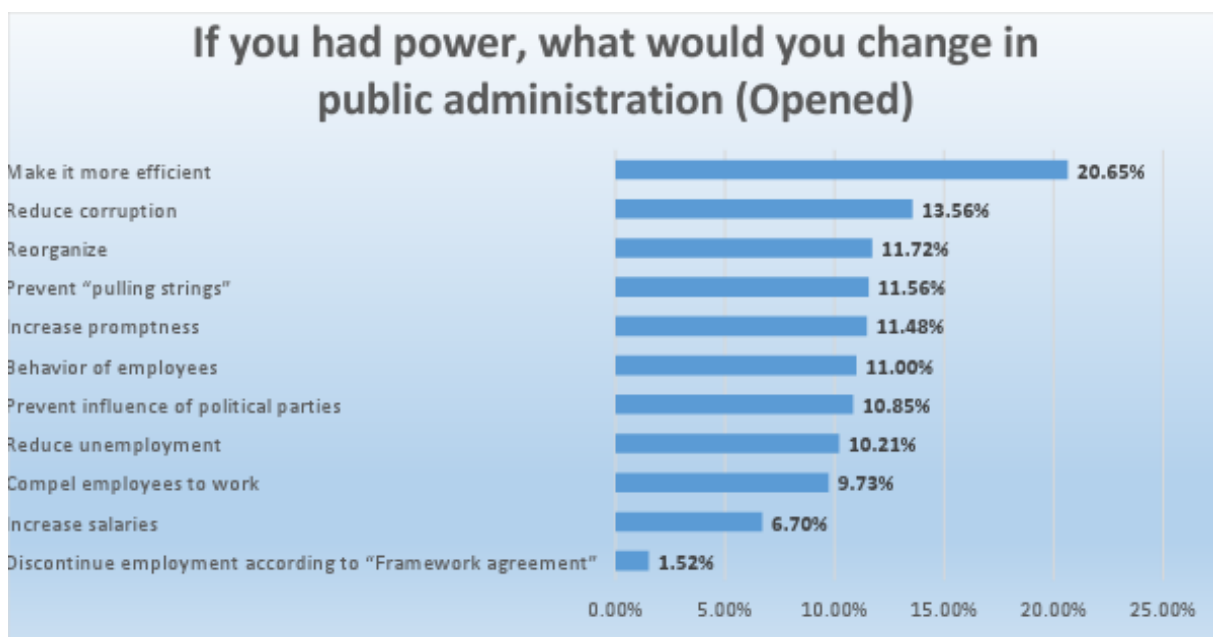
Graphic 10: Have you ever come across a problem?

⁵ The complete question was: „If „yes“, what type of problem, if it is not a secret?“. The question was open and interviewers were instructed to note maximum 2 of the list of possible answers offered to them.

⁶ In order to put the question in a manner understandable for an average citizen, we decided to go with a colloquial question: „If you had power, what would you change in the public administration“. The question was open, without options offered, whereas the interviewers were given possible options, according to which they translate interviewees' answers afterwards.



Graphic 11: Kind of a problem encountered



Graphic 12: Recommendations for changes

3.2 RESULTS OF THE ON-SPOT SURVEY OF SERVICE USERS

The on-spot survey included 118 subjects in the period between 5 November and 12 November 2017, in front of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, the Employment Agency and the Inter-community Social Services Center of Gazi Baba. Out of 118 subjects, 27 were users of the services of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, 50 of the Employment Agency and 41 were users of the services of the Inter-community Social Services Center of Gazi Baba.

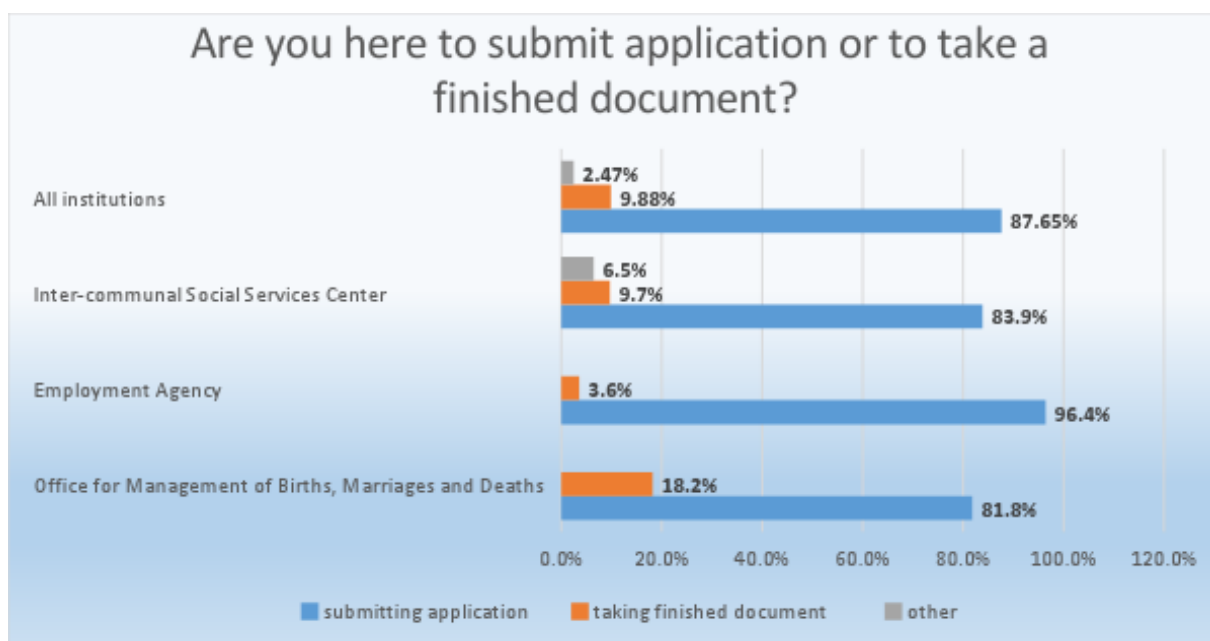
As to the reason for their visit to these institutions, 87.7% of the subjects were there to submit an application and 10% to collect a document. The rest visited in order to get information about a particular procedure (cross-reference by institutions shown on Graphic 13).

As shown on Graphic 14 bellow, almost two thirds of the total number of subjects completed the submission procedure in less than five minutes, which indicates large “flow” at the desks/contact points of these institutions, whereas the largest “flow” was noticed at the Employment Agency and the smallest at the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths. There, 36% of the subjects had to wait less than five minutes to submit an application.

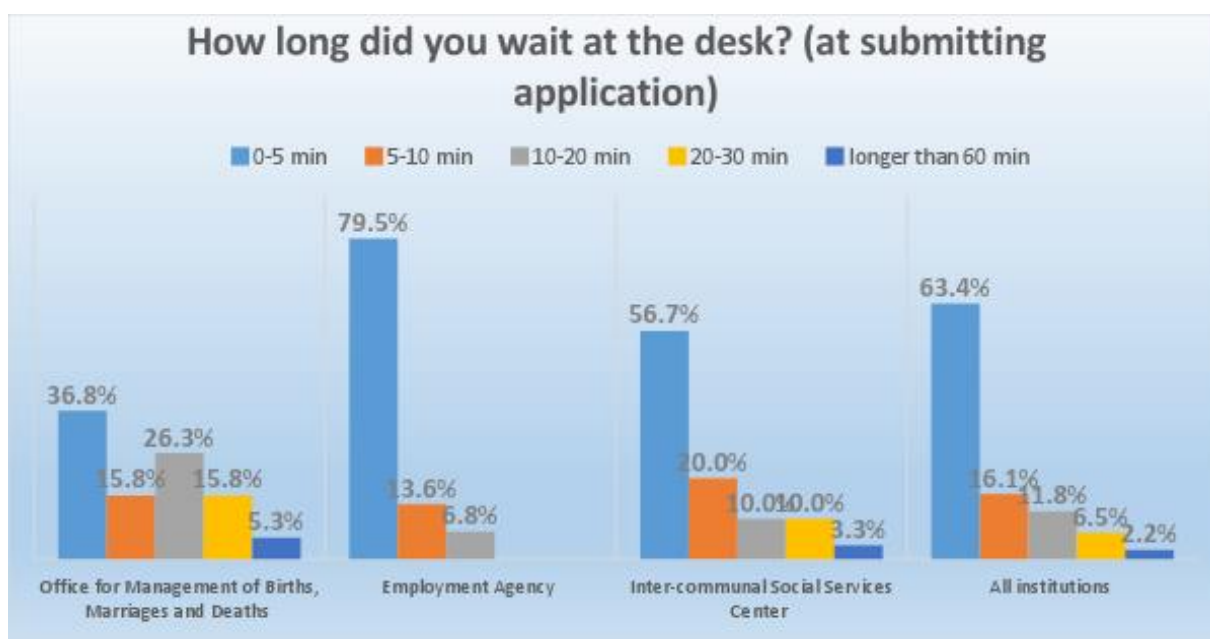
Out of the total number of subjects 81.6% did not encounter any difficulties while submitting an application. 93% of the users of the Employment Agency services stated the same, and only 71.4% of the users of the services of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths (see Graphic 15).

With respect to the behavior of officials, 70.2% of the total number of subjects was satisfied, where the most satisfied (79.6%) were the users of services of the Employment Agency. The least satisfied (58.3%) were the users of services of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths (see Graphic 16).

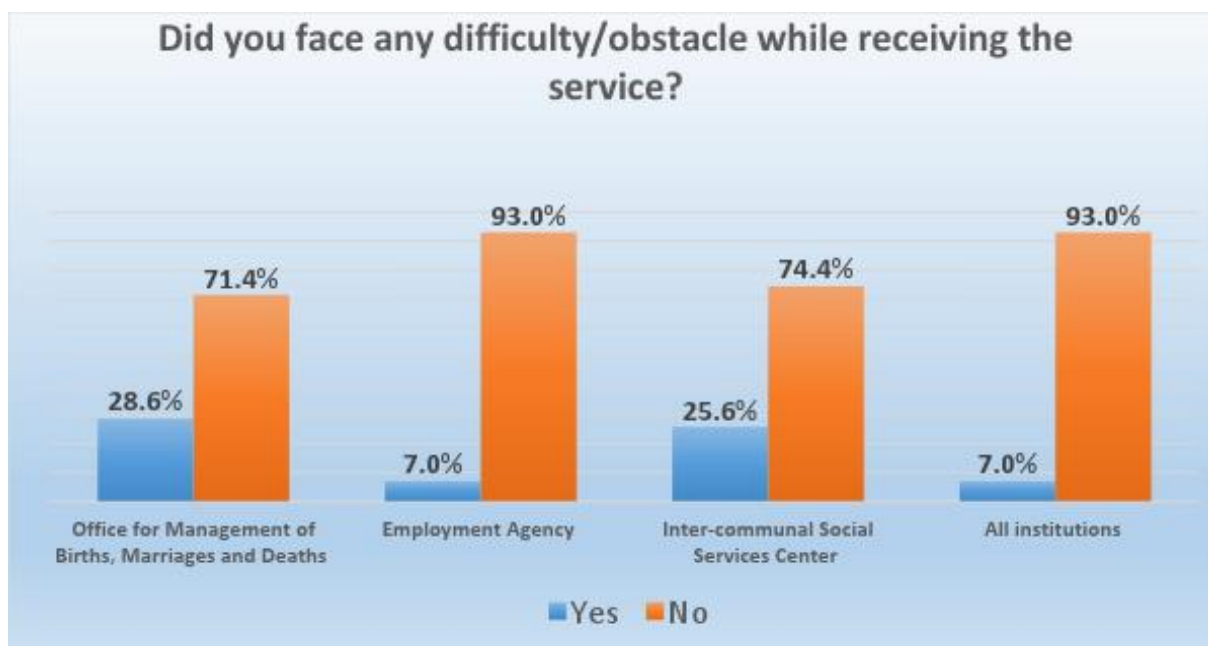
When it comes to the general assessment of services, more than two thirds (67%) of the total number of subjects gave 4 or 5. There are also differences between institutions. Again, the Employment Agency was assessed as the best (73.5% positive assessment), while the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths received positive assessment from 58.3% the subjects. This is shown on Graphic 17 bellow.



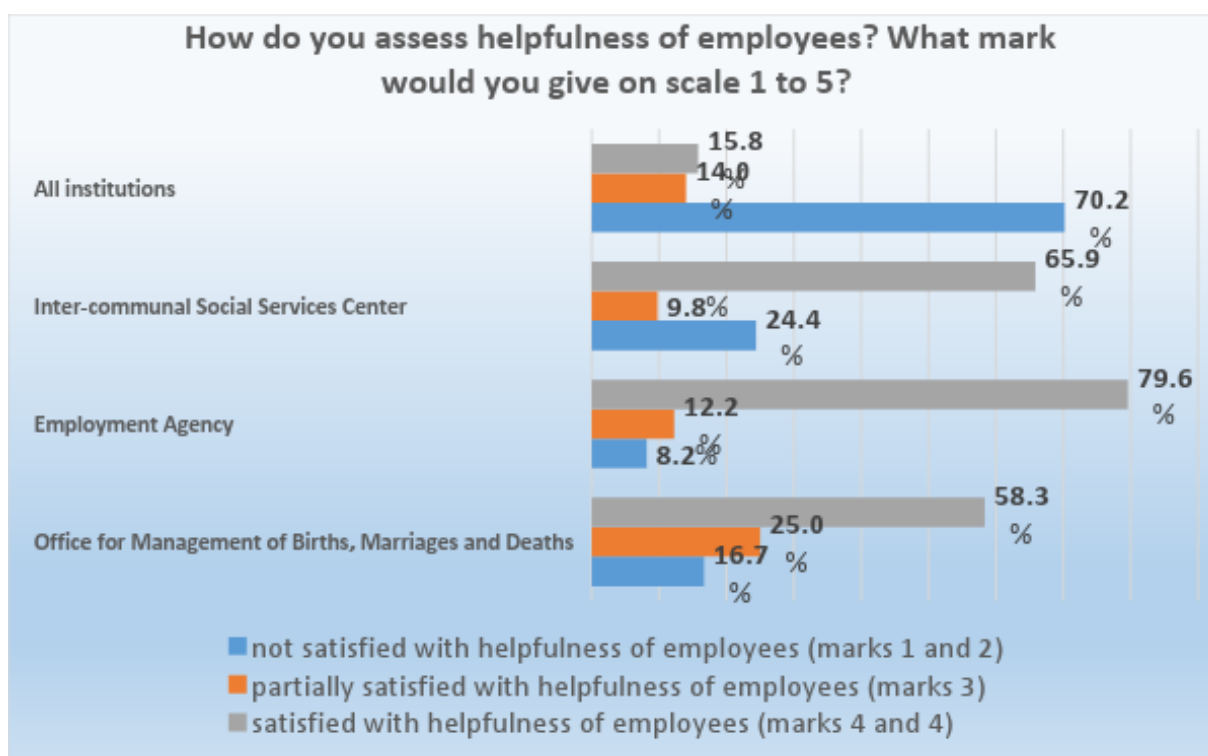
Graphic 13: Reason for visit



Graphic 14: Waiting while submitting an application



Graphic 15: Difficulties at receiving service



Graphic 16: Assessment of helpfulness of the employees

3.3. Extracts from case studies

After finishing the analysis of data obtained by quantitative methods we came to the general conclusion that citizens are satisfied with the services offered by the state administration. Yet, when it comes to requests and needs of the citizens that are “out of the box” of the daily routine and practice of the institutions, their statements brought to surface the weaknesses of the system that we identified and analyzed previously.

The common issue for all analyzed cases is the fact that a problem occurs when additional effort from officials is required to meet the needs of the citizens, that is, when absence of written standardized procedure for a particular situation disable the citizens to exercise their rights.

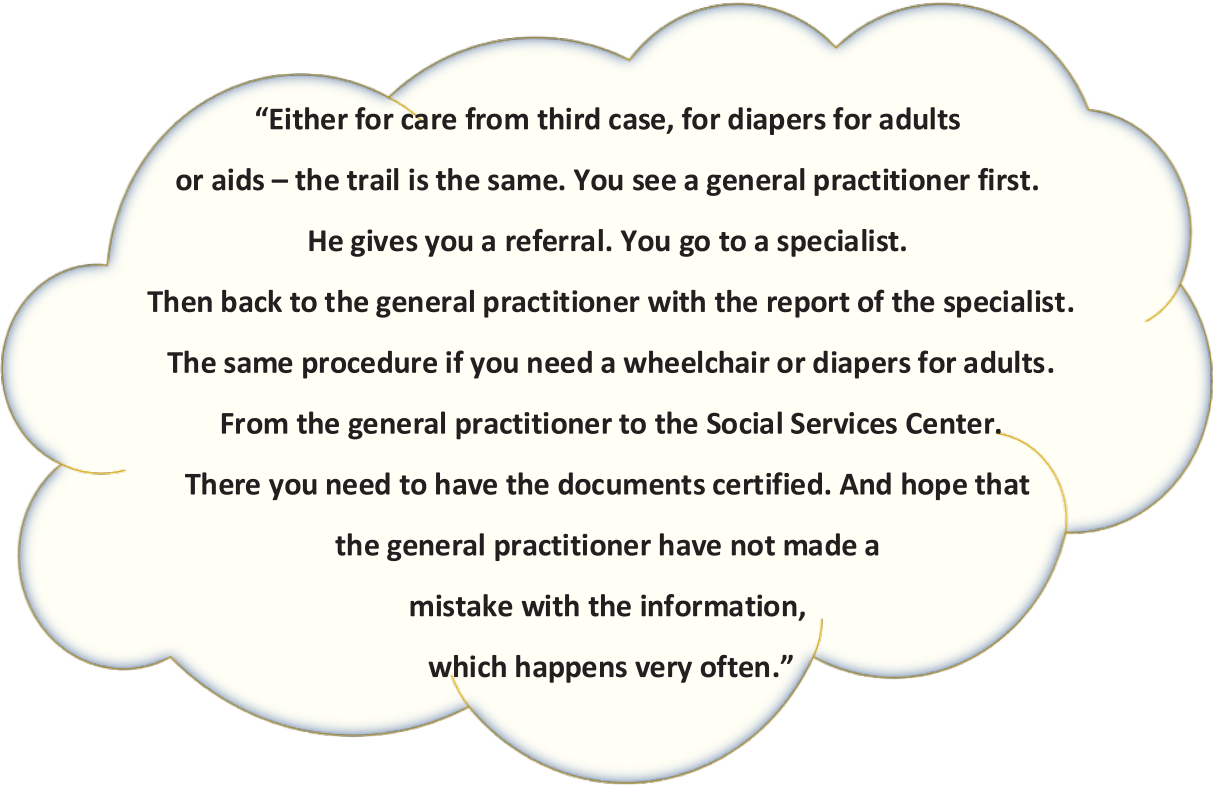
Further we present statements of interviewed citizens mostly belonging to vulnerable categories, showing higher probability for them to face problems at using public services and exercising their rights, which further leads to their lower satisfaction with the public administration. They share concrete problems, such as moving through administrative labyrinths, colloquially “tour of desks”; absence of clear procedures, changing rules “ad hoc” without prior informing of the users etc.

Each of the presented case studies is complex, that is, it presents a paradigm for many of the abovementioned problems. At the same time, each of the three case studies is specific by its nature.

3.3.1 STORY 1

Problem: One –stop-shop system – from one desk to another

The case with Victoria, the owner of the nursing home, indicates the complexity of the procedures for obtaining aids for seniors and financial support for care from third person. Only with optimism and BORBENOST Victoria manages to overcome the absurd obstacles made by the system.



“Either for care from third case, for diapers for adults or aids – the trail is the same. You see a general practitioner first.

He gives you a referral. You go to a specialist.

Then back to the general practitioner with the report of the specialist.

The same procedure if you need a wheelchair or diapers for adults.

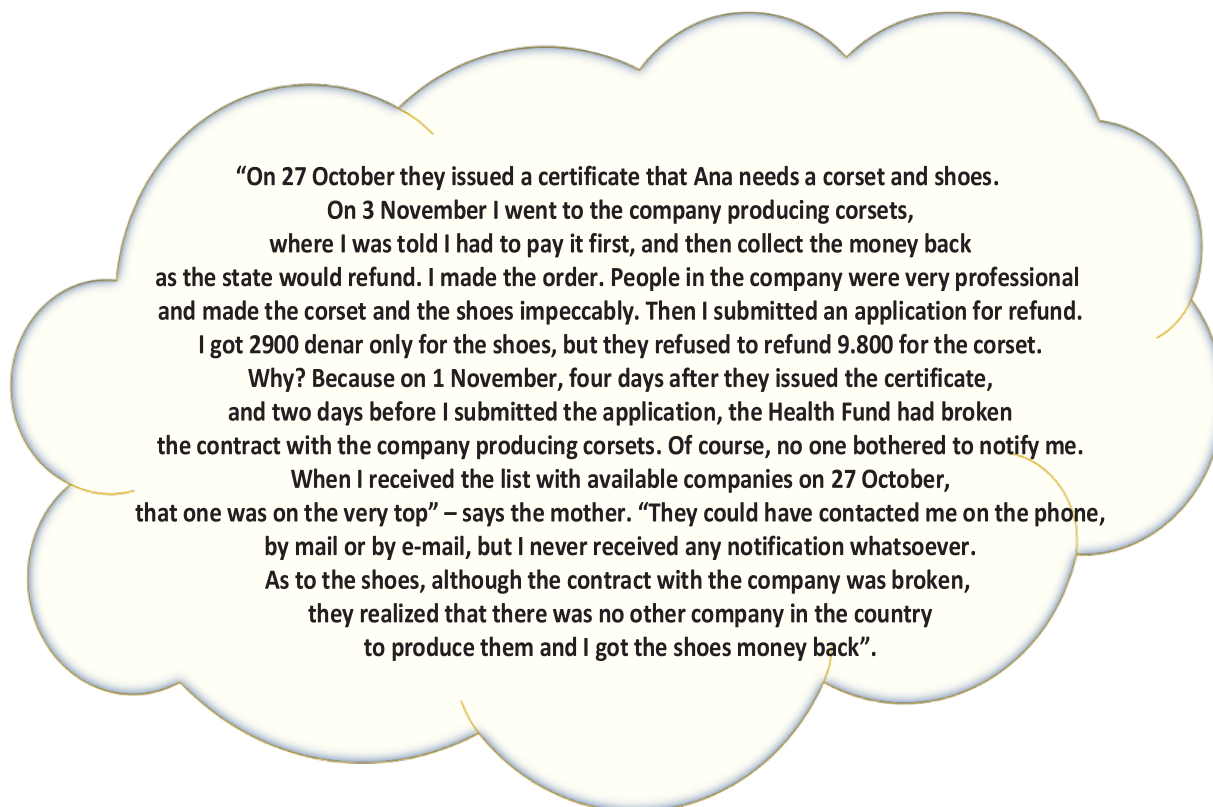
From the general practitioner to the Social Services Center.

There you need to have the documents certified. And hope that the general practitioner have not made a mistake with the information, which happens very often.”

3.3.2 STORY 2

Problem: Rules often change, and citizens deal with consequences.

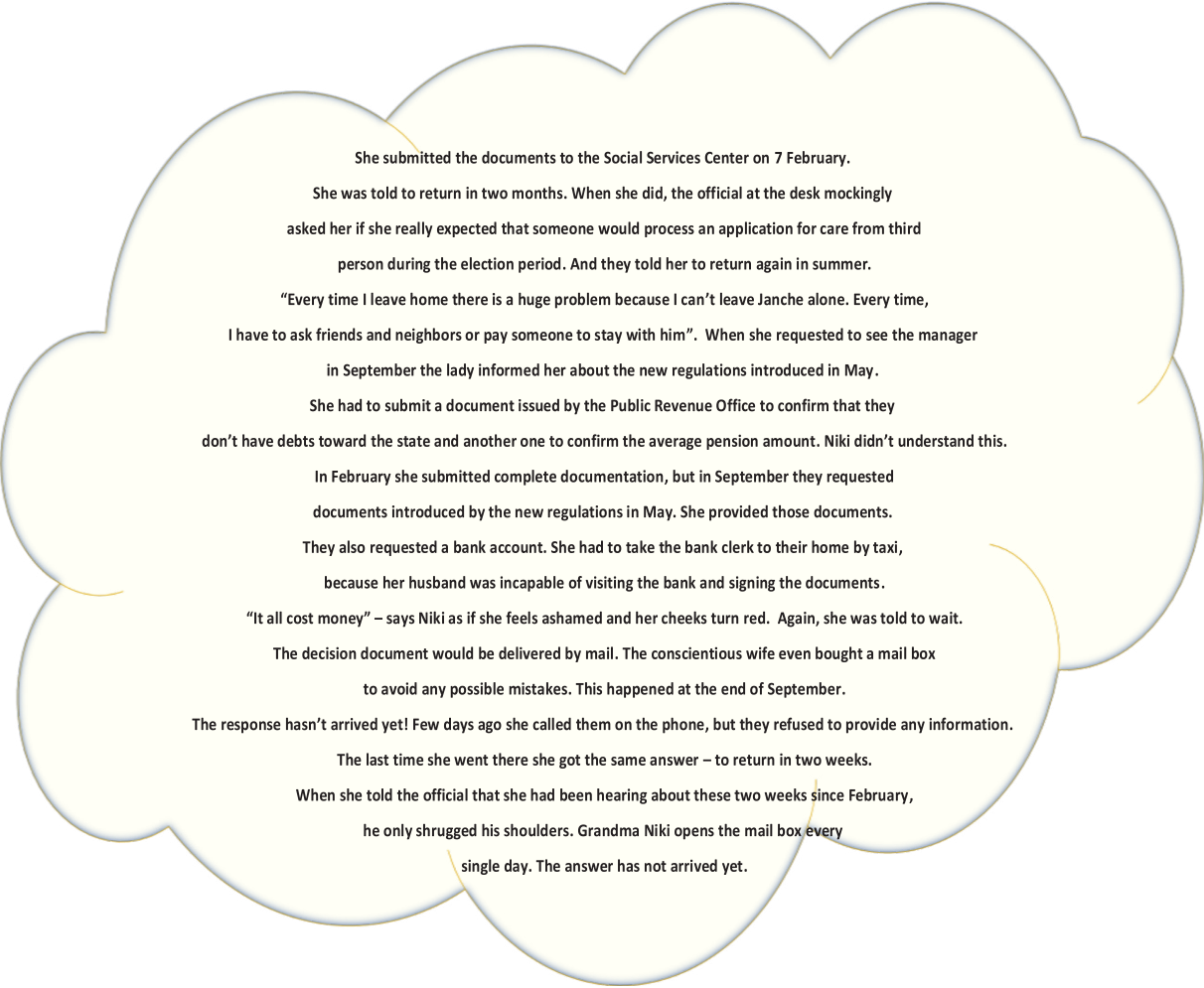
The case with Valeria, mother of a child with rear disease, shows that these groups of citizens remain invisible for the state and the burden of the care for them is entirely on their families. This case shows the absurd of non-existence of a social state, which instead of treating the disease as social risk, it makes the parents feel guilty for the trouble they got into by accident and that the problems they face are only their own responsibility.



3.3.3 STORY 3

Problem: There is no care from third person, but there should be

The case with grandma Niki, a wife of very ill and weak person, shows insufficiency of care from the state to another vulnerable category of citizens. This case is not unique for the impossibility to exercise the right to care from third person since there are many citizens in Macedonia who face the danger of their decision document being lost somewhere in the administrative labyrinth. What really makes this case special is the love between these two people and decisiveness of grandma Niki to keep her husband alive.



She submitted the documents to the Social Services Center on 7 February.

She was told to return in two months. When she did, the official at the desk mockingly asked her if she really expected that someone would process an application for care from third person during the election period. And they told her to return again in summer.

“Every time I leave home there is a huge problem because I can’t leave Janche alone. Every time, I have to ask friends and neighbors or pay someone to stay with him”. When she requested to see the manager in September the lady informed her about the new regulations introduced in May.

She had to submit a document issued by the Public Revenue Office to confirm that they don’t have debts toward the state and another one to confirm the average pension amount. Niki didn’t understand this.

In February she submitted complete documentation, but in September they requested documents introduced by the new regulations in May. She provided those documents.

They also requested a bank account. She had to take the bank clerk to their home by taxi, because her husband was incapable of visiting the bank and signing the documents.

“It all cost money” – says Niki as if she feels ashamed and her cheeks turn red. Again, she was told to wait.

The decision document would be delivered by mail. The conscientious wife even bought a mail box to avoid any possible mistakes. This happened at the end of September.

The response hasn’t arrived yet! Few days ago she called them on the phone, but they refused to provide any information.

The last time she went there she got the same answer – to return in two weeks.

When she told the official that she had been hearing about these two weeks since February, he only shrugged his shoulders. Grandma Niki opens the mail box every single day. The answer has not arrived yet.

IV TRAIL OF DOCUMENTS

4.1 TRAIL OF DOCUMENTS— HOW MANY OFFICIALS ARE INCLUDED IN PROCESSING AN APPLICATION?

The interviews we conducted with the employees of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths (OMBMD) showed that in the department issuing certificates there are five officials included in the process, who perform the following duties:

1. One officer receiving applications
2. One officer searching for details in the main registry book
3. One officer preparing a document in the computer
4. One officer issuing a document at the desk
5. One officer storing a document in the archives

4.2 Cooperation of Officials with Citizens

With respect to the services offered by the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, there has been certain improvement concerning their availability. Certain changes have been made, which significantly alleviated citizens' lives: issuing a birth certificate for a newborn baby immediately in the hospital; on-line submission of application for birth certificate or marriage certificate; delivering a certificate to a home address, and work of the public administration offices in two shifts.

Still, very few citizens use the opportunity to submit an application for a birth certificate for a newborn baby in the hospital. Employees of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths informed us that they only received five applications for a birth certificate from hospitals that same day we were conducting interviews. Using the tool for obtaining public information from the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths - Regional Office of Skopje, we received the following numbers of applications submitted in hospitals: 119 in August 2017, 146 in September 2017 and 99 in October 2017.

Two factors influence such low numbers:

- Parents are poorly informed about availability of the service
- Parents do not decide about the name of the baby while in hospital

Submitting an application on-line is very simple and prompt process, but this service is not sufficiently used by the citizens, mostly because they are not informed about its availability, but also because of their poor computer skills. According to the information we received from the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, between October, when this service became available, and November, when we conducted our research, only 250 applications were submitted electronically.

Regardless of the fact that all necessary documents for submitting an application are listed on the web site of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, employees claim that very often citizens approach their desks insufficiently informed or they do not know how to fill in a particular form.

"Very often citizens come with incomplete and inadequate documents and it causes problems; they become nervous and start disputes. We try to patiently resolve it, although it takes time for us to find the appropriate information and to deal with the issue" – stated an official of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

"Citizens get nervous; many of them are still dissatisfied. Sometimes they do not bring the necessary documents and they just take it out on us" – said another official of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

With respect to cooperation of the officials and the citizens, the on-spot surveys including 118 subjects showed the average mark of 3,9 for attentiveness of the officials, whereas 1 denotes "not satisfied at all" and 5 denotes "completely satisfied". The average mark for the service in general was 3.82.

There are certain practices that aggravate communication between the citizens and the civil servants working on the desks. Although the Law on General Administrative Procedure regulates the rights of the citizens, which includes assistance to uninformed customers, officials of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths are not allowed to assist a client to fill in a form when they are incapable due to ignorance or another reason. Employees of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths that we interviewed said that this practice is their internal rule they abide to. This allows for developing a grey area, where outside persons target this category of citizens and offer them assistance for certain amount of money. Part of the interviewed subjects pointed out the fact that in some neighboring countries this is controlled by the state. It means that there are desks within institutions that charge this kind of assistance, only the money goes to the state budget and not in the grey economy.

4.3 Necessary Time for Entry or Change of Personal Details in the Registry of Citizens

Officials claim that it takes not more than one day to prepare an application, sometimes even less. In order to provide sufficient time and to avoid the possibility for dissatisfaction, citizens are told to collect their documents later than the real processing period. According to the officials, it is possible to complete the entry and the death certificate in 20 minutes provided all documents are adequate.

Although general perception, confirmed in the information obtained by our survey, is that the state administration is inefficient and late in delivering services, the officials claim that their efficiency is in correlation with the conditions they operate in.

Officials of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths pointed out insufficient space as the biggest problem. It is usually small and narrow and increases stress for both parties in the process. Officials explained that they face nervous, insufficiently educated citizens who require a lot of patience. They suggest introducing the rotation principle in the desk work in order to provide efficiency and high quality of service. This may be achieved by improved internal organization, where each official would spend no more than two hours at the desk and the rest of the working hours performing other administrative duties that do not require immediate contact with citizens.

Other problems and challenges, according to the officials of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths, are the following:

- Insufficiency of office supplies, which is especially the case in pre-election period
- Insufficiency of qualified personnel
- Voluminous working duties
- Low and unified salaries inadequate to the work volume (quotation of an official employed with a regional office: “an official in the regional office of Kratovo makes two birth entries and three death entries and produces one marriage certificate a week, while the officials in the Skopje office make incomparable higher number of entries, and they all receive the same salary amount”.)
- Digitalization process of old certificates is very slow; it was initiated in 2012, but only one eighth of the data has been entered so far

4.4. Access to and inclusiveness of the current system

When it comes to openness and physical accessibility of the institutions for disabled persons, the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths -Regional Office of Skopje has built an access ramp for this category of citizens. This is very important as this regional office has the largest work volume in the country. Only half of the other 35 regional offices have access ramps. The fact that majority of the regional offices in small and rural towns are placed in the ground floor mitigates the situation, as it is possible to enter the premises of the Office directly from the pavement.⁷

In order to realize to which extent institutions are open to the persons with blindness we asked the question "Are there applications and forms that may be filled in with the Braille?". The Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths answered negatively with the following statement: "Forms of that kind do not exist; however, there are officials authorized to assist persons with such disability in filling in the forms appropriately. Disabled persons reach for this assistance when they come to the Office."

V. Conclusions and Recommendations

After summarizing the information from the research the impression remains that the public services in Macedonia have improved compared with the past, but there are still problems, especially for citizens who need social assistance the most. In this context, the perception is that the better living standard of the citizens, the more satisfied they are with the public services, and vice versa⁸. This stems from the fact that citizens with lower living standard have higher need to use the services of the public administration, which generates growing dissatisfaction. Actually, problems mostly occur when providers of services find themselves in situations different from the established working procedures. In other words, the more complex the subject of a particular service, the more complicated is finding the solution. This context occurs due to several aspects. Although the Law on General Administrative Procedure allows independent work of civil servants, usually they are afraid to operate independently and to make independent decisions out of the established rules and practice as this implies personal responsibility and brings fear from repercussions.

Another aspect is lack of internal rules in the institutions for cases that are "out of the box of the daily work". Third aspect is the volume of work of the employees in the public administration, which disables them to be thorough in dealing with particular problems. Such cases are challenges, which may be dealt with appropriately if there are protocols and established methods to allow flexibility and independent work. Heterogeneity and variety of applications should be anticipated and not treated as a problem to be ignored. One of the ways is creation of mobile organizational units to deal with "extraordinary" needs of the clients.

⁷ Information obtained through application for free access to public information

⁸ See Graphic 3

In conclusion, majority of the citizens is satisfied with the services being the object of this research. Interestingly, there is a present phenomenon of general dissatisfaction with the work of the public administration, but it does not reflect in the work of particular institutions visited by the subjects of our survey.

This is the situation expressed in numbers: only 18.1% of the subjects answered that the public administration is good; nevertheless, satisfaction with the work of the five researched institutions individually is higher than the above percentage.

Some 53.43% of the interviewed subjects are satisfied with the operation of the office for issuing personal ID and travel documents at the Ministry of Interior vs. 49.95% that are satisfied with the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

Cross-reference of the obtained information indicates huge regional differences in satisfaction with particular public services. Constantly present pattern is that citizens in the eastern region are generally satisfied with the services, while those in the Polog region are the least satisfied of all. Consequently, it is our opinion that regional activities and more profound analysis of the source of dissatisfaction are necessary.

The problems indicated by the interviewed citizens may be divided into several subgroups:

Health services

- Ambulance does not react immediately if the call is made for a person of age above 65
- State hospitals refuse to admit and to hospitalize and perform surgery on senior patients, and the families are forced to either treat them at home or take them to very expensive private medical institutions
- Hospitals refuse to admit patients without personal documents, even in emergency cases
- Citizens with chronic illnesses are forced to renew the same documents, which is time and money consuming

All services in general

- Citizens are not notified about the changed procedures, which results in the cases being kept "in a drawer"
- Citizens are requested additional documents not mentioned at the time of submission
- Even in case of existing decision document for refunds citizens are forced to put pressure on the institutions for their realization
- During the pre-election periods the work of the public administration significantly stagnates
- Citizens do not know how to fill in the forms, and the officials are not allowed to assist them

Social Care

- In order to become eligible for social care, a citizen is obligated to register as an active claimant of social care with the Employment Agency and additionally with the Social Services Center on monthly basis

General conclusion of the persons carrying out the research is that the interviewed officials, employed with the public administration, fear to speak freely and transparently about the difficulties they are facing on their jobs. We reached this conclusion based on the fact that we had difficulties in arranging interviews with each public administration official we communicated. Although initially all of them immediately agreed to be interviewed, they indicated that, according to the protocols for expressing opinions and revealing official information, public administration employees must obtain approval from their superiors. None of the interviewed officials gave permission to record the interview, although it was explained that the recorded interview would be solely for internal use. This clearly reveals the fear of officials to speak freely about the problems and challenges of their jobs as well as the fact that they do not accept existence of audio materials on the expressed opinions, primarily of fear from abuse of the same.

In conclusion we suggest that creation of policies is based on input from officials who face various problems and challenges on daily basis, but also from citizens who communicate their dissatisfaction with the existing procedures. This is necessary in order to bring appropriate and durable decisions, and to completely change the approach toward the problems. The current “top-down” should become “bottom-up” approach to creating policies. Policies and laws should stem from the challenges of the daily work performed by administrative professionals. This is the only way to overcome the problems and the challenges. Finally, happy employees deliver better and more efficient services.

VI. Annexes

Annex 1 – Interview with grandma Niki, no care from third person – the state is a mother to some and stepmother to senior citizens

It is said that old age is a state of mind. When we entered the tidy apartment of our interviewees, with many pictures of children and grandchildren, a knitted table cloth and a tapestry in the left corner near the TV set, I had a thought - this is how typical old-age life looks like in Macedonia. My feeling enhanced with every next word of our hostess – a pleasant ruddy - cheeked old lady (we will call her Niki in our story). All in tears she spoke about her children and grandchildren who live abroad, insisting that we help ourselves with juice and cake she served. Her husband, who is immobile, was sitting on the couch (we will call him Janche in this story) waiting for his favorite show on TV to begin. At the moment there was snooker on the program. Grandfather Janche precisely explained the snooker rules to me and told me that the French billiard functions as exact mathematical science. There were sheets of completed Sudoku equations on the bed.

Then I realized it was not going to be just another story. The lively gentleman, although immobile, obviously kept his mind busy and did not intent to just give up life. If he could not control his body, he was determined to keep his mind bright.

It was him and his Niki taking care of each other; it was so obvious how very committed they were to each other.

His Niki entered the room carrying cups of coffee (we simply could not refuse her) and said : “My children, we would have been long gone and forgotten if we hadn’t taken care of each other. We let our children build their own lives and happiness far away from here. Here in Macedonia we are in disfavor with the institutions”.

I noticed disappointment in Niki’s voice as she began her story. It was New Year’s Eve; they were preparing to watch TV after a short walk. She thought Janche was joking when his talk turned into a murmur. Suddenly Niki realized that his mouth curved. She immediately knocked at neighbor’s door and called an ambulance. But it took them almost two hours to arrive to Niki and Janche’s home. Our interviewee said it happened because she mentioned her partner’s age. “If I had known, I would have lied to them” – Niki said, although her sincere look reveals an honest person who probably would not do that.

They didn’t come when it was most important to react. They kept telling kind lies for two hours. When doctors showed up they gave him injection and did not give me any diagnosis. They only said they would come again the next day for another one” – said Niki.

The next morning this scared wife called the ambulance again and got shocked when they asked if she was calling for “the case of the old man with stroke”. “He could have been saved and not get into the condition he is in now. They didn’t tell me he was not to move at all. During the night he went to the toilet and fell. At that moment he actually had another stroke”.

Niki’s voice changed although she was trying to control it. “They came again to give him another injection and again they wanted to leave him at home, refusing to take him to a hospital”.

Then Niki decided to take things into her hands. She called several hospitals and only a private one agreed to take him with a transportation vehicle. Niki decided to leave him there as none of the state hospitals would admit him. “I was afraid to keep him at home as I didn’t know what to do and how to nurse him. What if he died on me?” The doctor warned them repeatedly that hospitalization in a private hospital would be very expensive. For the week he spent there they had to pay 3000 eur.

“I am not going to lie to you; I pulled some strings to put him in Kozle Rehabilitation Center, but again, only for a week.” She started crying and tried to hide the tears from us. “We would never be able to pay that with our low pensions. Our children sent us money”.

But, the Golgotha didn't end there. Janche's condition aggravated. The worst moment for her was when he didn't recognize her. She stayed in the Kozle Center with him, because she was openly told they were understaffed and could not provide good care for Janche. She fed him and bathed him. She brought linen from home. She helped him to the toilet and took him downstairs to therapy. Forty days later the hospital informed them they had to leave and charged them 1000 eur. The explanation was that it was the cost for her stay in the hospital. She had to pay the invoice although she was not warned in advance.

From that moment on Niki devoted to Janche. Completely. Unconditionally. With the help of a physiotherapist she set him back on his feet within three weeks.

However, the feeling of being betrayed by the system remained. The same system to which they have devotedly contributed for years as teachers and pedagogues.

Treatments continued in a private health institution. It took four years, several surgeries, and three by-pass heart interventions for Niki's Janche to improve. She did not seek help from no one. The most important was that after the tragic New Year's Eve of 2012 they would celebrate future ones together.

MACEDONIAN HOSPITALS

Until this 2017. Again on the New Year's Eve Janche fell and broke his hip.

For the first time Janche joined the conversation. "Here, I fell right here. I bent my leg".

They didn't have any more money. He was taken to one of the state hospitals, where doctors wanted to perform surgery. Niki explained that with his heart condition, he must not pull out a tooth, let alone operate a hip. The doctors left the idea of surgery and requested from Niki to take his husband home.

It was 31 December and people were preparing for celebration. Simply, nobody cared about these two "old people". Although Niki never had time to be ill, at that moment she gave up. This "super grandma" simply started losing the ground under her feet and feeling cold sweat. But she thought "I must not give up". After they refused to at least immobilize the hip, this brave old lady took his husband home. The attending doctor only offered to give them prescription for a walker and a wheelchair. They only got a walker. In doctor's eyes Niki read that there was no hope for Janche.

Niki couldn't do it alone anymore. She is also in her 70's. It was very difficult to lift Janche, to feed him and dress him. They decided to hire a woman to help her with the daily chores. They paid her from their pensions for months.

The physiotherapist lent them his mother's wheelchair. The woman helping in the house gave them the walker that helped Janche to move through the house and go to the toilet alone. Niki and Janche were aware that without these aids their life would be much more difficult.

After a month, when Janche was supposed to go to the hospital for control, at first the hospital refused to send a transportation vehicle. After few hours Niki finally convinced them to send the vehicle. Unfortunately, Janche with his broken hip had to lie on a wooden board inside the vehicle. For the first time during our conversation Niki spoke words of accusation. "Is this what we get for paying taxes?" When they arrived in the hospital the doctor could not hide his surprise that Janche was still alive!

After this odyssey finished, Niki said, she had to find another solution. She paid 12.000 denar to the woman who helped her every day between 10 am and 3 pm. It was rather low price for this kind of engagement.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR CARE FROM THIRD PERSON

Stroke, four bladder surgeries, three by-pass interventions, broken hip, surgery of carotid artery. Niki put together all the documents and took them to the Social Services office.

We asked how much money and time she needed. Janche spoke again. Luckily, his Niki is a very organized person and she kept all the documents of surgeries and hospital treatments. She said she was lucky to get an appointment for the Commission for concilium opinion very soon.

On 7 February she submitted the documents to the Social Services office. They told her to return in two months. When she returned the official at the desk asked her if she seriously expected anyone process an application for care from third person during elections? She was told to return in summer.

"Every time I leave home there is a huge problem because I can't leave Janche alone. Every time, I have to ask friends and neighbors or pay someone to stay with him".

Entire summer passed without any progress. They repeatedly turned Niki down telling her to return later.

When she requested to see the manager in September the lady informed her about the new regulations introduced in May. She had to submit a document issued by the Public Revenue Office to confirm that they don't have debts toward the state and another one to confirm the average pension amount. Niki didn't understand this. In February she submitted complete documentation, but in September they requested documents introduced by the new regulations in May. She provided those documents. They also requested a bank account. She had to take the bank clerk to their home by taxi, because her husband was incapable of visiting the bank and signing the documents. "It all cost money, children", said Niki.

Again, she was told to wait. The decision document would be delivered by mail. The conscientious wife even bought a mail box to avoid any possible mistakes.

This happened at the end of September. The response hasn't arrived yet!

“Few days ago”, she said, “I called them on the phone, because I could not leave Janche alone. They refused to provide any information. She went there again. And again she got the same answer – to return in two weeks. When she told the official that she had been hearing about these two weeks since February, he only shrugged his shoulders.

Grandma Niki opens the mail box every single day. The answer has not arrived yet. (This interview was conducted on 2 November 2017).

UNCERTAIN RESPONSE – and it is only valid for six months

There is no response. Niki has lost her hope. She said: “I will receive the document”. And it will be only valid for six months. Then, the same Golgotha all over again.

She was finishing her story with weak and helpless voice. She said “I can’t leave him alone and there is nobody to watch him, I can’t even go to the doctor’s. It would be of great help if someone could watch him for a while”.

Niki said that this system is not created to provide help. The state writes off senior citizens too early. We wish to be good citizens, but this country is reckless toward its citizens.

NO REFUND OF MONEY

Niki got used to this already. Even for refund of the money for Klexan she had to wait since January until September. Janche received the drugs at the beginning of the year. In May Niki was informed that refund had been approved. The money was refunded in October. She claimed, only because she was persistent and called very often to check the progress.

We left Niki’s home hoping that she would find the way out of this institutional labyrinth very soon. We left with hope, but she seemed to have lost it. At the end she said “There is no conscience anywhere. They will make healthy people sick, but there is no way that they heal a sick person.”

Annex 2: Interview with Valeria – The state does not recognize existence of children with rear diseases

Valeria is a mother of a girl suffering from a rear disease, PETT syndrome. This syndrome includes elements of multiplex sclerosis, epilepsy, osteoporosis and scoliosis. Four diseases in one. “Everything is put in one body” – the mother sighed during the interview that we conducted at her working place. Only there she could spare some time for us. The other 16 hours after work are completely dedicated to her daughter who is totally tightened to her bed.

Rare disease for which there is no cure. There are only 350.000 children with this disease in the entire world. Only three in Macedonia. Our interviewee's daughter Ana and two others, all living in different cities. The battle with institutions began in the girl's early childhood, who is now 16.

She was born healthy, but when she was only two years old convulsions started, first in the legs. Then she stopped making noises and pronouncing the few words she knew. Signs of autism showed up. The girl was born in 2002; first symptoms occurred in 2004 and the diagnosis was made no earlier than 2008.

When Ana was four years old, examinations at the MANU showed that everything was in order with the girl. They received a finding according to which her amino-acids were in order. The parents decided to search for additional answers and went to Belgrade. Only few months later they received the final diagnosis from Belgrade, where the immune system examinations confirmed the presence of PETT syndrome.

We asked the desperate mother what was her experience with the institutions.

"Horrible"- she answered instantly.

"I will start with the fact that nobody was able to make diagnosis for our child. Finally, she was diagnosed by pure coincidence by a defectologist who used to work with children with PETT syndrome in Germany."

After all Macedonian hospitals failed to make diagnosis, Ana's parents seek help in neighboring Serbia. Macedonian hospitals refused to issue a letter of referral for treatments abroad and claimed to be capable of treating the girl, despite the fact that they had never had a chance to encounter this disease before. There are experts in the private hospitals, but I can't afford it" – said the mother.

"Ana has physical problems, not only mental" – she said, as if she was trying to convince us. "PETT Syndrome is incurable. Nowhere in the world was it cured, it is not going to happen in Macedonia either. Children with rare diseases receive certificate for participation. But we must provide documents every year. As if Ana would get cured" – she repeated with pain on her face and continued, furious and full of disappointment. "If the Health Fund makes contracts with all private hospitals for refund of money, why can't they do the same for this disease?"

When she asked the Deputy Minister of Health this same question, the answer was that they, as parents, were ungrateful and would not understand that the Ministry was facing insufficient medical personnel. "But that is not my problem"- the mother said. How many children with rare diseases are there? Fifty? Only very few, yet, they do not have the opportunity to get treatments wherever they could find relief. This is a systemic issue and can be resolved to make our lives easier. But, only if there is will."

Valeria spoke about the problems wrapped in the institutional veil. "Every year we have to submit a document to confirm that Ana needs diapers." And again, twitch on the mother's face. "As if Ana will start to walk or talk to tell us that she must go to the toilet.

Unless they need to make sure she has not passed away in the meantime, God forbid, and I keep collecting diapers”.

Every year the same procedure. First referral for neurologist through the system “My Term”; then examination at the neurologist; then waiting in line at the Health Fund to get a document for perforated diapers. Once again to the general practitioner to get prescription for the diapers. Then back to the Health Fund to certify the prescription. And then begins the long search for diapers in Macedonian pharmacies.

Both Ana’s parents always take their vacations immediately after the New Year. It takes more than a week running around and getting only the documents necessary for diapers. “Although we don’t pay anything for almost any of these documents, it still costs us money for gas, and even more nerves and time. Valeria said that the institutions are supposed to be connected in a single computer system, but this doesn’t work either.

One of the aids to ease this girl’s life is a corset as she has a high degree of scoliosis. However, this year the state refused to refund the money, so, Valeria filed charges against the state.

“On 27 October they issued a certificate that Ana needs a corset and shoes. On 3 November I went to the company producing corsets, where I was told I had to pay it first, and then collect the money back as the state would refund. I made the order. People in the company were very professional and made the corset and the shoes impeccably.

Then I submitted an application for refund. I got 2900 denar only for the shoes, but they refused to refund 9.800 for the corset. Why? Because on 1 November, four days after they issued the certificate, and two days before I submitted the application, the Health Fund had broken the contract with the company producing corsets. Of course, no one bothered to notify me. When I received the list with available companies on 27 October, that one was on the very top” – says the mother. “They could have contacted me on the phone, by mail or by e-mail, but I never received any notification whatsoever. As to the shoes, although the contract with the company was broken, they realized that there was no other company in the country to produce them. They continued cooperation with the company only for shoes, so I got the shoes money back”.

The next closest place to turn to for a corset was in Tetovo. This corset has to be replaced with a new one after nine months. The corset is very important because it reduces the pain that the girls has at such degree of scoliosis. This phase of the disease requires a surgery, which is, however, impossible, because Ana can’t receive general anesthesia due to her general diagnosis.

As a result of the poor functioning of the state institutions Valeria can’t take her daughter to physical therapy. Namely, the Rehabilitation Center doesn’t allow individual exercise for children older than 14. The desperate mother wonders how a person with mental disorder could be a part of an exercising group. The only state institution of this kind closed the doors for Ana.

I asked her if she had tried to seek justice in court for this as well. She raised her head off her hands that were shaking and said: “ I can’t any more. I gave up”.

Valeria is a brave and determined woman that life couldn’t break, but she is also fully aware of the situation in which we all live and work. “ I need a lot of money for lawyers, a lot of time and nerves to go to court. I don’t have any of it anymore. But what I lack the most is time”. While she is at work, her 72 –years old grandmother stays with Ana for four hours. The next four hours Ana’s father takes care of her as he works only four hours. Unfortunately, there is no institution to take care of the girl.

The biggest problem occurs when a grandmother stays with Ana. If she falls down, she stays there until her parents come as the grandmother is not strong enough to lift her up. The same problem is when she gets wet.

Ana is turning 16 soon. Caring for her becomes more and more difficult. Even her mother can’t lift her easily anymore. Ana is entitled to amount of 4.300 denar a month, which is way below the amount for hiring a person to take care of the girl. Valeria suggested if it was possible that the Ministry hires a person to take care of the girl four hours a day instead of paying the monthly amount. The person should be a trained professional, especially because Ana gets epileptic seizures as well.

She was in tears. “ I feel betrayed, lied to. I feel as if someone is mocking me when they only approve 90 diapers a month and I need minimum of 120. I feel played when I can’t get out. I don’t have life anymore. I can’t take care of my other child. I am afraid I will lose my mind. And more and more often I get the feeling that I am not a good mother for either of my children. I’ve been taking care of a baby for almost 17 years.

Serbia has a center for children with PETT syndrome. I understand it is not possible here for only three children, but how difficult it can be to train three personal assistants. An assistant could replace me at least one day of the month, so that I can spend some time with my husband and my other child.”

Valeria and her family also need psychological support, which is another thing that the state fails to provide.

Annex 3: Interview with Victoria, care from third person with 100 obstacles

Victoria is an owner of a private nursing since 1998.

She established this institution with the idea to create a place for good life of those who can’t take care of themselves; a place full of wellbeing, friendship, happiness and safety. Many years of successful work witness that she has been successfully accomplishing her mission. We conducted the interview exactly the day the institution was celebrating the 19th anniversary.

This intelligent, optimistic and determined woman decided to act more widely. Her experience with exercising the rights of her clients directed her toward improving the

national legal framework and social care-related legislation. The story about how she decided to join this community action began with her experience and the awareness of the difficulties one faces when trying to get necessary documents related to the needs of old and incapable persons. These procedures are long and complicated and definitely require a young and strong person capable of dealing with the rules and regulations. Since things work this way, it is almost impossible for an old person to exercise their rights.

“ They send you back some 100 times to bring this or that, irrespective of what your application is about – diapers for adults, care from third person or aids for an invalid.. The path is the same. First you visit the general practitioner to get a referral. Then you see a specialist. Then back to the general practitioner with specialist’s report. The same procedure if you need a wheelchair or diapers for adults –general practitioner first and then to the Social Services Center, where you have to certify the documents. There you just hope that the general practitioner hasn’t made any mistake in the details, as this happens very often – said Victoria. And if you happen to be a senior person running around to do all this for your spouse, you have to carry 90-kilo heavy diapers or even heavier wheelchair. Besides, if the person passes away within five years, you are obligated to take the wheelchair back.

The same is the situation with the treatment for diabetes. Although this a permanent condition, the Health Fund requests a medical report every three months in order to issue the remedy. And again the same round – general practitioner, specialist, again the general practitioner, every three months. This procedure is the main reason for the drastic increase of the number of patients with diabetic foot.

Victoria has a lot of examples of institutional contradictions. She personally goes along this path for all 80 persons who reside in her institution.

She talks about persons with dementia forced to show up in front of the Commission every year, although it is also a permanent condition. And it costs 1700 denar. But this not only costs the patients, but the state as well. People can’t provide care and remedies, and that is why our hospitals are sick. We block the system completely. We don’t provide primary health care on time, which further disrupts the work of hospitals and emergency services.

“ I prefer not to be given the right, if I can’t exercise it”- says Victoria.

She pointed out the problem with some tests and examinations, for which patients must wait for months. “If you decide to make them in a private hospital in order to get results sooner, the diagnosis and the reports are not valid for the Health Fund, which means you must pay for the remedies. Regardless of the fact that it is the same state that issues licenses to the same private hospitals.” – said our interviewee.

She sees the solution in improving the services. There are old people who don’t have to stay in nursing homes. But there is no other type of service in this area. She mentioned Spain as an example of a country with very well organized social and health services. Victoria made a simple calculus. If the state invests one euro in such service, the

returns will be four euro. If services are provided in a timely manner, people don't have to go to hospital so often. One day in a hospital costs the state 100 euro. If old people have someone to go shopping and run errands for them there will be much lower risk of accidents and broken hips in winter. One artificial hip costs the state 8.000 euro. It is huge money. One service a month costs 4.500 denar"- said Victoria.

She singled out the Municipality of Centar, which has recently developed services of this kind. "It costs us 50.000 euro per year for 90 persons. If one of them fell and broke a hip, the implant would cost the state 10.000 euro. So, does it pay to have service in this state?" – asked Victoria.

Services mean basic care; dressing and undressing, bathing, buying drugs and food; helping with documents. She thinks that this is a good idea, because in small towns there are no nursery homes. Actually, they are not even necessary because seniors there resist being taken care in this way. There should be services and daily centers.

"I had to provide everything. I purchased my own ambulance vehicle, because state ambulance fails more often than not; I pay a visiting doctor, because general practitioners mustn't leave their offices; I pay an internist, because they don't make home visits either. All these are things that nobody took into consideration when they were drafting the laws. We have created a state within the state" – said Victoria with a smile as we were concluding our interview.

Annex 4: Interview with Bojana – Users of social care must spend at least 100 denar for transportation every month when they go to register with the Employment Agency and the Social Services Center

Our interviewee, the activist Bojana is very often recognized in public as the Voice of Roma. Bojana began our conversation with the following words: "Our fellow citizens should stop expressing stereotypes and prejudice toward the Roma. We need understanding and support from all relevant parties in the country; they shouldn't forget that Roma are some of the most loyal citizens in Macedonia. They mustn't be constantly discriminated and degraded."

Bojana claimed that lack of education and information of this minority group is being abused. One of the biggest problems that Roma are facing in exercising their social rights is the fact that most of them don't know how to fill in the forms to submit for a third child and what documents they need to provide. Another problem for some citizens is cancelling the social financial support after their relatives sent them money from abroad via Western Union. This is the reason why many of them lost their monthly social support.

"Without announcement, without any explanation. They were stunned. We have submitted about 45 petitions and complaints to the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy" – said Bojana. Only five of those continued receiving the monthly social care amount. The others are just kept there "-Bojana explained and concluded: "That is the law".

In the past, in order to get entitled to social care a person had to provide a pile of documents (about 20). Although nowadays the procedure is less complicated and

departments communicate internally (the citizen only needs an ID, marriage certificate and birth certificates for children), the applicants are obligated to register as unemployed on monthly basis.

According to her, employment is the biggest problem, which requires systemic and urgent solutions since the principle of equal opportunity is not applied appropriately. Recent data of the Employment Agency show that by the end of January 2016, out of 116.601 unemployed persons, 5.930 were Roma, 2.128 of which were females.

“Although high school education is obligatory, majority of the Roma citizens don’t have an educational basis, which makes it difficult to be successful further in high school or at university” – There are Roma who have finished high school, but still don’t know how to fill in a form. This is a huge administrative barrier. And this is where “hunters” show up. They move around institutions, especially inside and in front of the Health Fund. They make money from the ignorance and illiteracy of Roma. “ I will help you with the forms, but you have to pay”. They charge between 50 and 100 denar for the ZOO form. Institutions are aware of this, but they don’t forbid it. It is because officials generally have bad and discriminating attitude toward Roma. They chase them away from the desks and refuse to give them additional information.”

Further, she claimed that there are cases of persons without personal identification documents, which have not been processed since 2012. Identification requires DNA analysis that most of the “phantom people” can’t afford. So, instead of resolving the problem it becomes even more complicated. DNA is requested even for children born in a hospital. Although it is an institution that issues a document, these children have not been registered because their parents are uneducated.

It is valid to request DNA analysis for children born at home, but it is non- sense to request analysis of 300 euro for those born in hospital. She explains that for each next child 100 euro is charged for proving parenthood.

There are people who will die without identity. She recalled a boy who died from cancer last year, but couldn’t be treated because he didn’t have any identification documents. There are criminals, who have been convicted and don’t have an ID. She also said that modification of the laws should be made without delay. The procedure in the Social Care Centers has to be simplified.

With decision of the Government all cases and procedures for registration in the registry of citizens have to be immediately processed and finalized. Many citizens with complete documentation have been waiting for years to obtain certificates. There are eight categories of citizens without personal identification documents.

According to Bojana, Roma women are the most discriminated citizens; they not only have existential problems, but they also face barriers in receiving primary health care.

Roma women without identification documents don’t receive minimal attention at the Clinics. “Few months ago”- said Bojana –“ a Roma woman almost delivered a baby in the hall of the hospital, because they refused to hospitalize her. This leads to another

problem – women deliver babies with someone else's health- care books and register them under another woman's name.

Another problem is the fact that a person without permanent address can't obtain a personal identification document. There is a case of a woman who obtained her identification document for the first time at the age of 42, because she had always lived with cousins and friends and never had a permanent address. Bojana suggested establishing a center for registration of persons who don't possess a home. Some of them register as tenants in someone's home, but most Roma citizens can't afford to pay rent or pay the tax.

(According to the NGOs, additional problem is insufficient utilization of budget assets allocated for Roma health care. For illustration, the government spent only 59.786 euro for improving the health situation of Roma in the period between 2005 and 2011. This is only 1,4% of the necessary and planned amount of 4.270.456 euro.

Annex 5: Interview with an employee of the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths

The first interviewed public administration employee will be called Dara. She agreed to speak after we convinced her via personal contacts. However, she decidedly said she would only join us for 15 minutes in the nearby park.

At first Dara only answered yes or no. She didn't reveal any information, and her only words were "It is going to be better...I hope". For a long time she didn't dare to speak freely; she kept turning around to make sure that none of her coworkers could see her. She didn't give us permission to record the interview.

She said that after the on- line submission has been introduced things are improving, but it takes time for the system to start functioning properly. We asked her what is necessary for the system to function. Then she started talking – there is deficiency of personnel and space, and often working material. They have difficulties in communication with other institutions, especially the Ministry of Interior. "We send a courier two or three times a day, and he walks there.

Dara said she is aware that citizens deserve prompt and more efficient service; therefore, she supports the idea of working in two shifts. "Usually citizens come to submit the application and I make appointment for another day" – she said. "It could be better and faster, but there is not enough space. Sometimes there is no available computer to work. And then she went again "to the other side of the desk".

"Citizens are nervous; the number of those who are dissatisfied is still very big. Sometimes they miss a document and then it's our fault. I must admit that Roma come with the biggest problems. Generally speaking, citizens are always nervous and never satisfied with the service. Chaos and disputes start very easily. All citizens are the same. They lack manners and often use bad words." As to the on -line submission, she said "those who understand, they will use the on –line system. I don't have hope for the troublemakers. They will keep coming to the desk. They don't have their basic details, when they were born, when they got married. There are senior citizens, and a number

of illiterate ones. Sometimes they request service on their language, although rarely, and we immediately react and provide it.”

She said their salaries are low. Most of her colleagues receive about 12-13.000 denar. And again, she hopes for the better.

She talked about the on-line submission of applications. Submission is done electronically, but the certificate must be collected personally or delivered to the door. “It will be efficient system, it just takes time.”

She said that the number of nursing mothers and couples who use the option of registering their babies in the hospital is insignificant, although it is so easy and saves time. They simply use it very rarely. “Today only five citizens used this service” – said our interviewee. She thinks that citizens are poorly informed. Additional problem is the lack of computer skills. People can’t see on Internet which documents they need. If the citizens were more informed and had better skills, the on-line system and the second shift would help very much in resolving the problems.”

At the beginning of the interview Dara complained about the lack of computers. We asked her if they happen to lack other necessary supplies, such as paper or printers. “Yes, there are periods when we lack everything. When the last government came, they provided everything, and then as the time was passing to their end, there was nothing” –she said joking, but then she nodded and confirmed it to be true.

Our interviewee has worked in the same department for 20 years. She is an ultimate optimist and keeps believing that things will improve. “My colleagues feel the same. We have to try not to bring ourselves into position of lacking pens, paper and toner. People working at public administration desks are underpaid for this very stressful job. Working with people is very exhausting, especially when one person works through the entire shift alone.”

In conclusion of our interview we asked her, if she was a decision maker, what three things she would change. This question seemed to flatter Dara and for the first time she spoke comfortably and joyfully. “Well, first I would provide larger space. Then I would introduce an evaluation system and see who really works and who doesn’t. Finally, I would establish a new employment system to prevent employing unqualified persons. There are so many of them” – answered Dara without thinking.

Annex 6: Interview with a group of officials from the Office for Management of Births, Marriages and Deaths

Our second interview with an employee of the administration was also scheduled via personal contacts. The lady that we will call Ljupka immediately agreed to speak with us, but she told us she would inform her superior on her participation in this research. We asked her to invite other colleagues to the interview. She agreed, but again with previous consultation with her superiors.

After few days we met in a café in Skopje. It was a public meeting, without hiding and in relaxed atmosphere. Ljupka selected various profiles of civil servants.

At first they spoke about general issues. How applications are submitted at the desk; how much they cost. They all said that to prepare a death certificate, for example, if all necessary documents are submitted it takes no longer than 20 minutes, that is, the time necessary to enter information in the books.

They were happy to say that they are connected with the majority of local offices and communication with them works smoothly. Only few distant rural places are not in the system, so, sometimes receiving information takes longer. But they pointed out that the citizens very often come missing necessary documents. Then a problem occurs because they become nervous and start quarreling. "We do our best to help, but there are issues that take time to be resolved"- they said. One of them, a woman with longest working experience, told us that very often they deal with illiterate and uneducated persons who don't know how to fill in the forms. "We do our best to help them, although the law forbids us to do that for them". (Few days after the interview we called them to ask which law regulates this prohibition. The answer was that it actually is not a law, but internal rules introduced because the information they deal with are classified and any possibility for their abuse must be eliminated).

We were told that in other towns there are offices working as facilitators, but they are not under the umbrella of the state. Again, it is about personal documents containing personal details and the whole issue is sensitive. They all agreed that it would be a good idea that similar offices are established by the state to provide assistance for a small fee and contribute to the budget.

Our interviewees admitted that sometimes they make mistakes as well. Most often a mistake is made while entering data into computer, or in the main book while taking data from other institutions.

We asked them where they would start with changes if they were decision makers. Some agreed that the first thing would be providing adequate space and employing more personnel with adequate education. All of them especially emphasized the necessity of educated personnel. They all agreed that there are always and everywhere people who do their job appropriately, but there are also those who don't lift a finger, so the others have to work twice as much.

They all agreed that salaries have to increase. "We especially have a problem with the fact that here we have the same salaries as our colleagues in the local offices, who sometimes issue less than three certificates a day". They insist on creating a system for appraisal and assessment of the work volume. In their office, they said, in the period between 11 am and 3 pm people have to wait between half an hour and few hours. Everybody knows that more officers are necessary at the desks during this period. However, not only the lack of personnel, but also poor internal organization is the reason for this situation.

It brings back the idea of introducing payment by norm. Working on a desk is very difficult; therefore, they suggested that officials rotate in communication with clients. This would reduce the pressure and the official's stress.

We asked them if they feel stressed. They said yes, but the work must be done.

They explained that they are electronically connected with the Ministry of Labor, Health Fund, Pension and Disability Insurance Fund, Ministry of Health and the State Election Commission. Only with the Ministry of Interior they work via courier. The explanation for this probably lies in the fact that the information they receive from there is confidential.

Concerning the obligation to renew a birth certificate every six months, they openly told us that there is no legal obligation for that. What is more, on the back of the birth certificate it reads that it is a document of permanent validity and every person is responsible for their own personal details.

The next topic was digitalization of the database of births, marriages and death. They complained that the process is moving very slowly. Hardly 15% have been processed since 2012. It means, if there are 8 million data, only one million has been processed. The solution is very simple; appoint people who would only do that job. Again, the same conclusion is made: appoint personnel and perform functional analysis.

We asked the interviewees about their experience with registration of newborn babies while in hospital. They said that parents are the biggest problem as they don't have a name for the newborn at that moment and they postpone registration for later. According to some available information, in the Chair hospital, every second child has a name; not one at the Gynecology clinic; in Gevgelija every baby has a name. They expect the hospital personnel to inform the parents about this option, and maybe establishing info points.

Annex 7: Interview with an employee of Social Services Center

Our last interviewee, a lady employed with the Inter-communal Social Services Center, agreed to see us after long negotiation. She admitted that after she had initially agreed to speak to us, she recalled that the rules obligated her to ask permission to participate in our research and provide answers to our questions.

We conducted the interview in the manager's office, because other offices are too small and shared by several employees. The manager's office was also pretty small, and in a very bad condition. The three of us hardly found place to sit. There were clients waiting outside.

Our interviewee that we will call Mariana, first apologized for the inappropriate conditions. In her own office her colleague had a client at the moment. Offices are small and narrow. Their clients usually give family and personal details, which are not to be heard by other persons from both ethical and security reasons. Therefore, they tend to make appointments with clients in different times, although some of them just show up unannounced. "That is why the lady you just saw must wait in the corridor until the client inside finishes" – explained Mariana." We are understaffed" – she continued. "We need

more personnel, and they need to be professionals (social workers, pedagogues, psychologists and lawyers) to complete our teams adequately.”

She said with laughter that she would like to see higher salaries and payment of overtime hours, for which they don't get paid, only get days off. The work volume is big. One official deals with many various administrative duties. After a case is formed the social worker prepares an individual finding; finding from the expert team; individual calendar for work with client, follow-up list and list of documents. There is no precise statistics as to the number of cases per official, but she alone has about 100 clients in only one small segment. It means that the real number is probably ten times higher.

Among other problems is nonexistence of protocols or memorandums for cooperation with other institutions. She claimed that the other institutions simply don't perceive them as an institution (for example, they have been waiting for months for a reply from a nursery home).

One of the biggest problems is the fact that the Center is not electronically connected to exchange data with other institutions. Citizens keep hearing that the officials at the desk only need to make “one click” to get what they want, and they expect us to actually have all the information and documents we request from them. This creates situations like the one when tutors or beneficiaries don't come to register someone's death because they think we are supposed to know.

According to Mariana, the Center should be included in drafting or modifying the laws relevant for their work, because, logically, they are the most competent and fully aware of the problems in this area.

Problems especially occur when a tutor is to be appointed to a person deprived of working capacity or special tutor for particular activities. Very often relatives refuse because they don't get any financial assets or they don't inherit anything, so tutorship brings them nothing but responsibilities. Yet, when the Center proposed amendments to the Law on Family concerning this area they were not accepted.

Often, citizens are not informed on the procedures, and on-line information for necessary documents and citizens' rights and obligations almost don't exist. They have trouble finding out which documents they need concerning their condition, such as financial social support, blindness and deafness allowance. Our further research showed that among the few procedures offering a list of necessary documents is the one concerning child adoption.

Mariana said “Citizens are not informed, for example, that the request for depriving a person from working capacity doesn't automatically mean getting tutorship. In such case, getting the necessary documents (certificates from court and medical certificate) costs more than 2.000 denar. If the tutors can't afford it, the Center delivers notification to the courts to get them in an official way. They either never receive a response or it arrives in two or three months. “This shows how badly we are connected with the other institutions” – said Mariana. She pointed out the existence of a telephone line in their Center. There are only few employees, but in these circumstances the line works well.

When we entered the Center I noticed there was no formal security. When I asked Mariana if she feels secure, having in mind that they communicate with various hazardous categories of citizens, she answered: “At the moment I am dealing with a person with paranoid schizophrenia and I have a feeling that he has “fixed” his attention on me. When he comes, as he does very often with various requests, I am very careful about what I say and how I gesticulate. I definitely don’t feel safe. We have guards, but there are many clients throughout the building while we deal with serious family issues that might escalate to very serious disputes.” – said Mariana.