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- Press Release-

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50% of municipalities have not published information on their web portals about services they provide to citizens and legal entities

Based on the conducted audit, the authorized state auditor concluded that the existing quality of services provided by LSGUs on the web portals do not provide effective and fast service to the citizens and same treatment, equal access and availability for every citizen and legal entity.

Availability of - e-services with the application of the Standards for web accessibility of e-services is NOT yet at a satisfactory level. The movement through the web portals and the provision of e-services, as well as the availability of the information, instructions and forms for a certain service are NOT unified for all LSGUs, and the search of the web contents is also problematic.

During 2019 and 2020 SAO conducted IT audit as performance audit on the topic *“Quality of LSGUs services provided through their web portals”*.

The audit covered all local self-government units and the City of Skopje as a separate unit of local self-government (81 LSGUs), as well as the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the Ministry of Information Society. The audit covered the period 2016 - 2020, as well as certain areas, issues and events before 2016 and subsequently until the day of reporting on the audit.

To increase the audit scope, auditors submitted online Questionnaire to all municipalities in RNM to collect data on the quality of services provided by LSGUs through their web portals. 77 LSGUs responded to the questionnaire except for the following 4 LSGUs: Aracinovo, Saraj, Studenicani and Kicevo.

With the performed audit on the quality of services provided by LSGUs through their web portals, the authorized state auditor concluded the following:

- 38 LSGUs (49.3%) do not have information on their web portals about the services they provide to citizens and legal entities;
- 2 LSGUs (2.6%) have inaccessible web portals;
- 36 LSGUs (46.8%) do not have published Forms for the services they provide;
- 39 LSGUs (50.6%) do not have published information about the administrative fees for the services;
- 23 LSGUs (29.8%) do not offer the possibility for electronic reporting on a problem concerning public services.

In December 2019, the National Portal for e-services was launched, which should serve as the single connection between the citizens and the institutions. The portal <https://uslugi.gov.mk/> offers 810 services, of which 151 electronic services (e-services), from various activities and institutions, but no electronic services under the jurisdiction of LSGUs.

In accordance with the legislation, planning of local economic development, and defining development and structural priorities is under the competence of LSGUs. 35 LSGUs (45.4%) do not have Strategy for local economic development and 71 LSGUs (92.2%) have not prepared Strategy for development of the information system and use of information technology. 54 LSGUs (70.1%) have not published the Strategy for local economic development on their web portals.

Although transparency and accountability of LSGUs are provided for in the Law on Local Self-Government, the Law on Free Access to Public Information and the Law on the Use of Public Sector Data, most LSGUs lack information or have incomplete information on the use of public funds by LSGUs, i.e. insufficient budget transparency, and the access to public information is not provided or the published public information is incomplete.

Most of the municipalities lack human and material resources, which are necessary for setting up e-services. There is also no analysis and determined minimum of necessary resources for unimpeded provision of quality services through LSGU web portals.

The authorized state auditor detected non-functional solution for monitoring service provision by the entities that perform public services, as well as absence of regular monitoring of the quality of public services at local level. At the same time, some municipalities do not have secure HTTPS protocol for accessing web portals, for secure exchange of emails and data.

The authorized state auditor recommended that competent institutions need to take activities and specific measures to improve and enhance the quality of services provided by LSGUs through their web portals, as well as to increase the number of e-services.

Moreover, it is necessary to act proactively in order to raise citizens' public awareness about the use of e-services, as well as to provide information about the benefits of e-services, especially in conditions of pandemic like Covid-19.

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