



# PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND MINORITY PROTECTION IN SOUTH EAST EUROPE

Promoting Human Rights and Minority Protection in South East Europe

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Presentation of findings

Deliverable 4



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## 1. Introduction

The history of the Western Balkans and of the minorities in the region is a complex jigsaw puzzle. The definition of national and/or ethnic and linguistic minorities has changed over time and is not uniform in all the beneficiaries and entities in the region. From the moment in which these beneficiaries affirmed their national sovereignty since the break-up of the Former Yugoslavia and the transition in Albania, they have been gradually adopting regional, international and EU proposed standards and norms. The EU accession process in which some beneficiaries are taking part and to which others aspire requires for potential EU candidates to ratify and implement the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (hereafter Convention) and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (hereafter Charter) in order to satisfy the political criteria to join the EU.

The Convention and the Charter commit South East Europe to ensure protection of minorities and their rights. However, the individual beneficiaries and entities have unevenly ratified and implemented these conventions. Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro have all ratified, whereas Kosovo<sup>\*1</sup> is still unable to do so due to its status; Albania and 'former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' still need to sign and ratify the Charter. The slow progress on constitutional changes in Bosnia and Herzegovina means that outside the three 'constituent nationalities',<sup>2</sup> minority rights are still dramatically short of being respected. The European Court of Human Rights' (ECtHR) rulings on the right for minorities to hold office have not been implemented through constitutional change yet. Progress has been made, though, in legislation, with recognition of 17 national minorities and the educational needs of Roma. Croatia holds a distinction between 'old' minorities, such as the Italians, and 'new' ones, such as the Serbs who were not seen as a minority before 1991. Even the tools for identifying minorities in the region are uneven. For instance, Bosnia and Herzegovina has conducted a new census to replace the 1991 one, but its results have not been published yet. 'The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' has not been able to renew the census of 2002 due to politically contentious methodological disagreements.

In light of this situation, the Council of Europe (CoE) and the European Union (EU) are actively pursuing several projects to improve national minority rights in the entire region. In particular, the project "Promoting Human Rights and Minority Protection in South East Europe" aims at improving access to rights for minorities at various levels of government (but especially at local level), based upon the CoE's standards in this field.

The project aims at improving access to rights for minorities by:

- supporting local governments' capacity to enhance policies and to implement recommendations on minority rights in practice in a number of municipalities in the region;
- identifying and sharing good practices at local government level and by developing models which can be adapted to other municipalities in the region;
- supporting changes at the national/central government level in the legislative and policy fields, using the findings from experiences at the local level together with those from CoE monitoring reports.

In the course of the project to promote human rights and protection of minorities in South East Europe, 36 municipalities in seven beneficiaries were selected to implement small-scale projects to ensure basic services for minorities. From February 2015 onwards, these projects have been implemented by Municipal Taskforces, assisted by project consultants engaged by the CoE. A Research Team gathered by the College of Europe in Bruges (Belgium) composed by

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<sup>1</sup> \* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ opinion on the Kosovo Declaration of Independence.

<sup>2</sup> Bosniak, Croat and Serbian.

national and international experts has been tasked to conduct an Awareness Assessment of the Convention and the Charter, and a Project Assessment to identify elements of good practice among the local projects, in order to disperse these practices further and thereby improve the implementation of the Convention and the Charter.

In the following, the main findings of this research will be presented.

## Main Findings

### Awareness Assessment<sup>3</sup>

- Overall, there is **low awareness of minority rights**;
- There is more awareness of the Convention, followed by national legislation, policies and strategies. The Charter is the less known instrument;
- **Women are less aware** of minority rights than men;
- There is most awareness of the Charter in the “former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, notwithstanding the fact that it has not signed it;
- Even among the educated, no more than 30% is familiar with the Convention and its content;
- **Young respondents<sup>4</sup> are least aware** of minority rights - Less than 18% of them is aware of the Convention and its content, 11% of the Charter and its content;
- Those working to promote minority rights are most aware of minority rights, but even among them an alarmingly high percentage is not aware of the content of the Convention (58%), Charter (70%) or national legislation and policies (65%)
- All respondents see minority rights as important but differ in opinion about the way to promote them (role of language learning, education, employment)
- The **international community does have a role to play**.

### Project Assessment<sup>5</sup>

- The **projects were widely seen as relevant**;
- So far, only five of the 36 projects showed no risk factors at all at the time of the first assessment, but most risk factors could be overcome;
- The organisational capacity of Taskforces seemed to be higher if all relevant stakeholders were involved in the project design;
- The cooperative capacity of Taskforces seemed to be higher if the members of the Taskforce had worked together successfully in the past;
- The biggest risks are seen in a **difficulty in engaging the target group** of minority persons;
- The level of organisation of minority groups seems to be a factor. In the municipalities where minority groups have a low or very low level of organisation, engagement will be a greater challenge;
- The **greatest difficulties were met in projects aiming at engaging Roma minorities**.

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<sup>3</sup> A methodology disclaimer is necessary about the representativeness of the results from the awareness assessment. The sample is not representative of the population but is based on the CoE's selection of the local projects.

<sup>4</sup> Under 28 years of age.

<sup>5</sup> The first assessment was carried out in 2015 and it is the first stage of a two-stage assessment. Therefore, the findings are not conclusive at this stage.

## 2. Awareness of minority rights: key findings

In total, **1,302 respondents were interviewed**, which means the minimum target of 1,078 was more than reached. The group of respondents as a whole is gender balanced. Adults form the majority of respondents, as opposed to young people and seniors. This is not surprising, considering the target groups of municipal officers, and minority persons involved in minority protection. The municipal officers were all likely to be in the age group of 28 to 65 years old. Young persons were mainly to be found in the fourth target group of minority persons not involved in minority protection. As regards education level, the majority of respondents was university educated. This could be may be because the target groups of municipal officers are likely to have a university education, and also minority persons involved in minority protection policies are likely to be higher educated.

Some general trends can be identified.

**Awareness** of minority rights may be called low in all target groups. In comparison, respondents seem to be most aware of the Convention, followed by national legislation, policies and strategies. They are least aware of the Charter. Women are much less aware of the Convention and the Charter than men, but the difference is smaller for national legislation, policies and strategies.

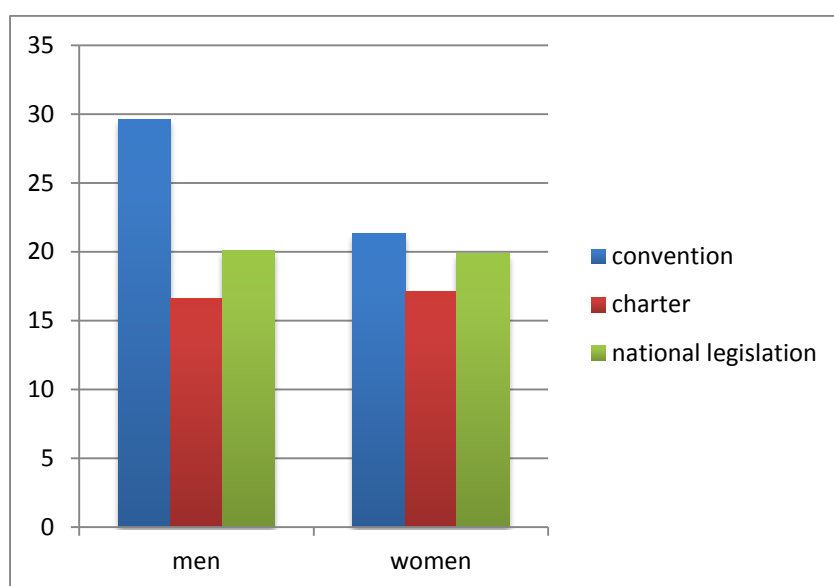


Figure 1: Respondents' awareness of instruments and their content by sex

When comparing awareness of Convention, Charter and national legislation, policies and strategies in the different beneficiaries, the most striking result is found in 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia'. This beneficiary has not signed and ratified the Charter, but nonetheless the Charter is relatively well known by respondents there. Different from other beneficiaries, Macedonian respondents are most aware of national legislation, policies and strategies, followed by the Charter. The Convention is least well known among them. It might be useful to further research the reasons why the Charter is relatively well known in 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', as this could offer ideas on methods to raise awareness.

A more pronounced difference exists between respondents of different education levels. Those with no or only primary education have very little awareness of the Convention and national legislation, and even less of the Charter. Respondents with vocational or university education are relatively far more aware of minority rights, but even within this group, no more than one third was familiar with the Convention and its content.

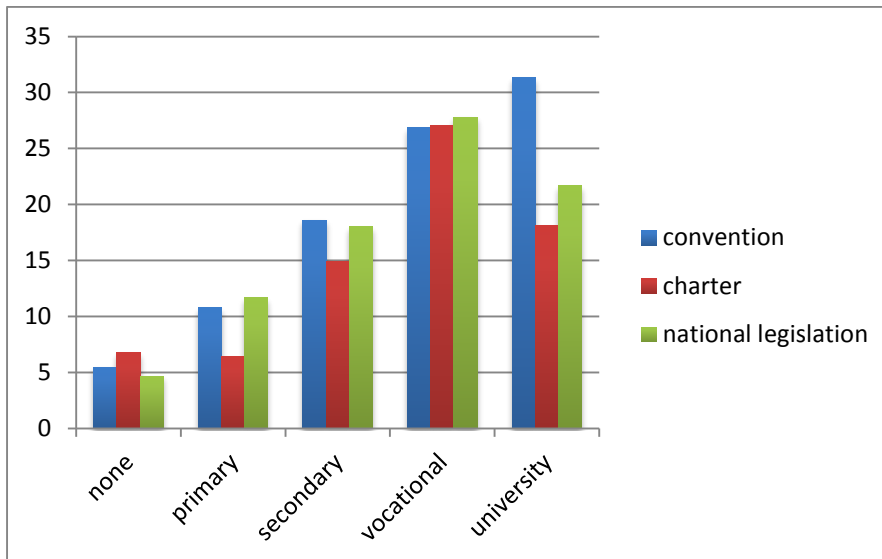


Figure 2: Respondents' awareness of instruments and their content by education level

Young respondents under the age of 28 are far less aware of minority rights than adults and seniors. Only a little under 18% of them is familiar with the Convention and its content. For the Charter and national legislation, policies and strategies, this percentage is even lower, around 11%.

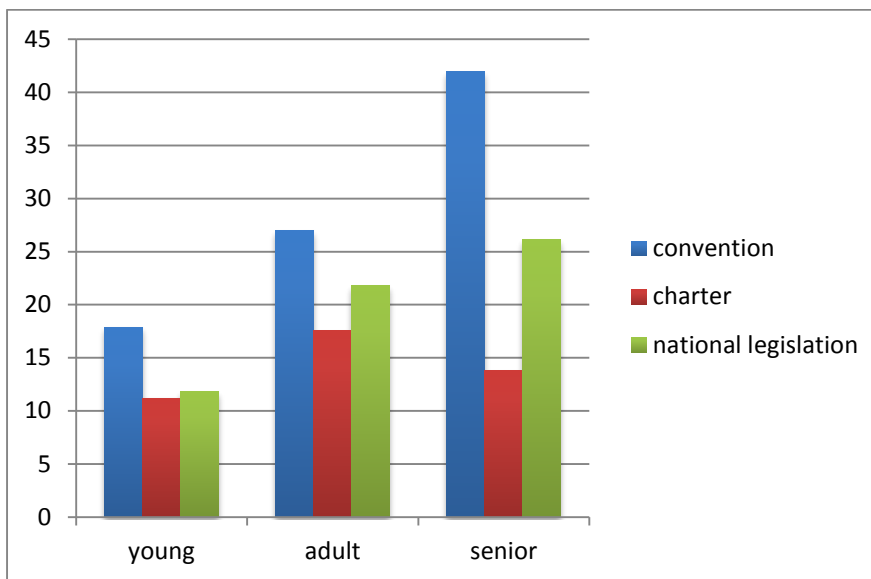


Figure 3: Respondents' awareness of instruments and their content by age

The most pronounced difference in awareness is between respondents who are involved in minority protection policies, and those who are not. Of the respondents who are not involved in minority policies, a little over 21% is aware of the Convention and its content, 10% is aware of the Charter and its content and 12% is aware of national legislation, policies and strategies. Respondents who are involved in minority protection policies are far more aware, but nonetheless the percentage of them that has never heard of the rights at international and national level is worrisome. Over 18% has never heard of the Convention, 27% has never heard of the Charter and also 27% is not familiar with national legislation, policies and strategies. It might be useful to aim activities to raise awareness of minority rights specifically at persons involved in minority protection policies, especially because this may have an important spill-over effect on awareness of rights among minority groups in general.

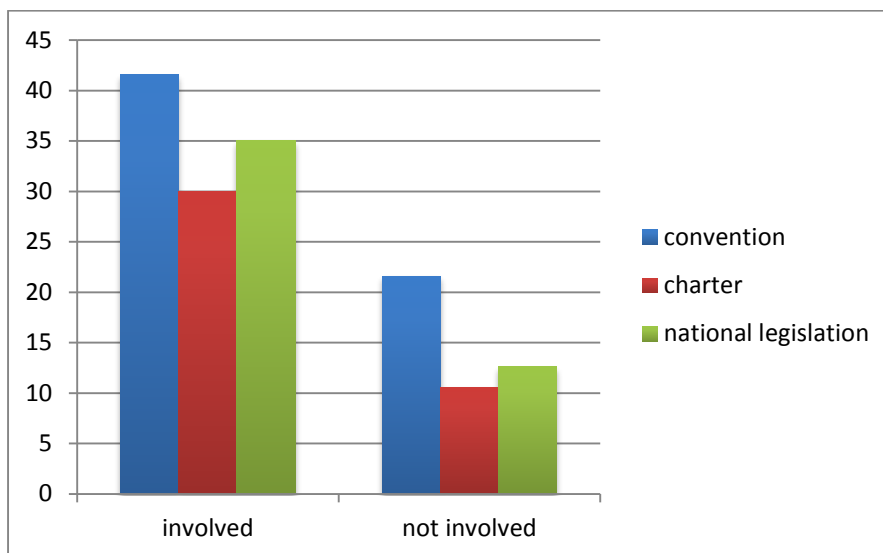


Figure 4: Awareness of instruments and their content of those involved in minority protection compared to those not involved

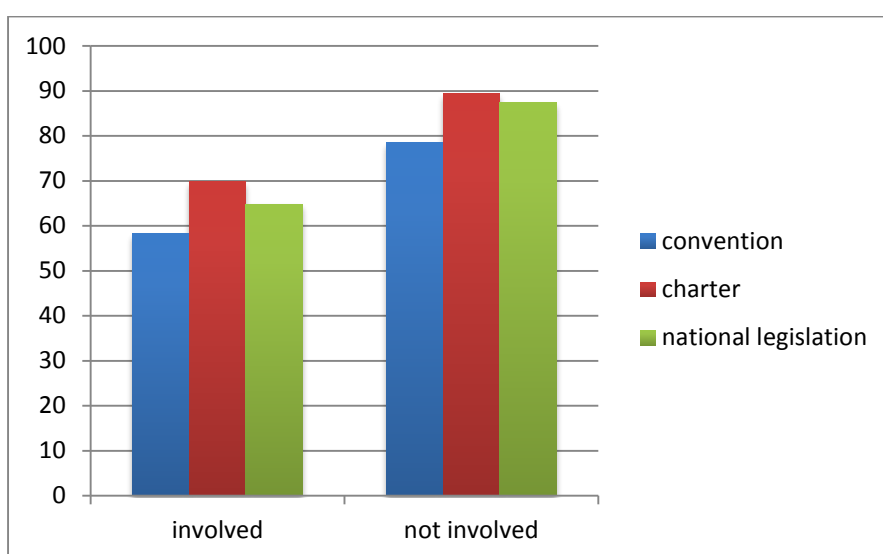


Figure 5: Lack of content awareness by those involved in minority protection compared to those not involved

Asked to rank 11 rights taken from the Convention and the Charter according to **importance**, the respondents deemed all rights moderately to very important without much difference. **Equality before the law was deemed the most important right**, while the right to display signs, local names, street names, etc. visible in public in their minority language is deemed the least important right of the 11 rights, but as said, the difference is minimal.

When asked in an open question what right the respondents deemed most crucial for the preservation of identity of minority groups, language, culture and education were named most often. Men tended to cite language most often, while women cited education most often. The only exception were respondents with no education. To them, employment is the most crucial right for preservation of identity.

Respondents cited **lack of awareness of rights among minority persons by far most often as the main barrier for the implementation of minority rights**. Other barriers mentioned were lack of funding for measures, lack of commitment of municipal authorities, lack of interest in rights among minority persons and barriers at national level.

In most beneficiaries, **authorities** at national, regional and/or local level were among the actors deemed most responsible for taking minority protection measures; more specifically, in Croatia and Montenegro, local authorities were seen as the most responsible authorities, and in

Kosovo\* and Serbia the national authorities. Respondents in Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina named the international community as most responsible, and those in 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' pointed to minority persons themselves as most responsible.

Respondents in all beneficiaries except Montenegro consider the **international community** one of the most effective actors in taking minority protection measures. Minority persons themselves are also deemed relatively highly effective, in five of the seven beneficiaries. National authorities on the other hand were mentioned in only three of the seven beneficiaries as one of the most effective actors, even though they are considered one of the most responsible actors in six out of seven beneficiaries.

Follow-up (qualitative) research might possibly be done into the perceived responsibility and effectiveness of minority persons themselves in taking minority protection measures. It may be useful to know why minority persons are deemed highly responsible, especially in 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', but also in four other beneficiaries, and what these responsibilities entail according to respondents. Also, it might be useful to get insight into the measures that are now taken by minority persons themselves, because of which they are deemed one of the most effective actors in five beneficiaries.



### 3. Assessment of the projects: key findings

For each of the project capacities assessed in the first project assessment, a cross-country summary of the results is given and any remarkable situations in specific beneficiaries or municipalities will be pointed out.

#### Differences between municipalities

It must be noted that, for a number of reasons, a direct comparison between projects cannot be made. The first reason is that the seven beneficiaries as well as the thirty-six municipalities differ from each other. In a larger municipality with multiple minority groups, a project is often more challenging than in a smaller municipality with only one major minority group. Moreover, the social and economic situation of minority groups differs significantly in different municipalities. In municipalities with minority groups that have a relatively low education level and low living standards, it will be more difficult to engage them in the project, either as members of the Municipal Taskforce or as participants. However, a project aimed at improving these living standards and the exercise of rights of minority groups might be more challenging there, but also more essential.

The projects themselves also differ substantially. Some municipalities have a very concrete and relatively easy to implement project idea (such as translating municipal documents), while others have a much more encompassing and ambitious project plan that is less concrete and less easy to implement. Some projects are also politically more controversial and challenging than others, especially when the targeted minority group shows low levels of organisation. Moreover, a few of the more ambitious projects aim at finding additional financing, or require some physical infrastructure, which is not yet assured. It could however well be that the less concrete, more encompassing and more controversial projects will eventually have a greater reward for the target group than the more concrete and less ambitious or controversial projects.

A final difference lies in the stage of implementation of the project at the moment in which the research was undertaken. Some of the projects had already started implementation, while others had yet to start. The contracts with the Council of Europe had not been signed in all municipalities, and some waited until this would happen before the project could start. Projects that were already underway would score better on issues such as clarity of purpose, tasks and decision-making than projects that were not.

It can therefore never be concluded that projects for which more risks are indicated in the score sheet 'are doing worse' than projects that have less. The specific nature of the country, municipality, minority group and project always need to be taken into account, as well as the stage of implementation the project is in.

#### Difference in methodology

While an effort was made to coordinate the methodology across beneficiaries and municipalities, among others by using a common questionnaire and following the same directions for choosing the target group, some differences in methodology occurred in this first project assessment.

In some municipalities, many more respondents were interviewed than in others. The least

respondents were two in Prijedor, and the most were thirteen respondents in Prnjavor, both in Bosnia and Herzegovina. In some municipalities, a low number of respondents can be explained by the fact that no additional people are involved in the project implementation. In a few other cases instead, it is due to the fact that no other respondents returned the questionnaire, even after multiple reminders. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, some difficulties arose in the communication between some municipalities and the national expert in the Research Team, which may also have contributed to a lower number of respondents in those municipalities. The number of respondents, however, does not seem to have any correlation with the number of possible risks or success factors for the project in any of the municipalities with a relatively high or relatively low number of respondents compared to others.

As a final note, it must be emphasised that not only the local circumstances, the projects and the methodology necessarily differ between municipalities, but the personality of the respondents does too. The results as conveyed in this first project assessment report are not the personal opinion of the Research Team, nor are they an objective opinion of a neutral outsider. They are the **subjective thoughts and feelings of the persons most closely involved in the implementation of the projects**, and these may be more positive or more negative depending not only on the situation but also on the character and personality of the individual respondents.

### Projects with the most success factors

Emphasising again that comparisons are not possible, some projects can be highlighted as facing the least possible risks and having the most success factors in place. There are five municipalities in total where no risks at all could be discerned and all signs are on green for a successful implementation. The project team in Novi Pazar in Serbia had the best scores of all. The Municipal Taskforce members there seem to be brimming with enthusiasm for this project and have formed a close-knit team that have a high level of trust in each other, clarity about all organisational aspects and a high level of involvement of minority groups. Interestingly, two of the other four projects with no discernible risks are also in Serbia: Petrovac na Mlavi and Pancevo. The remaining two are Knezevi Vinogradi in Croatia and Tivat in Montenegro. Krushevo in ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ and Subotica in Serbia deserve mention too. In those municipalities, only one slight risk could be discerned, as can be seen in the summaries of their first project assessment.

### Target groups

In most municipalities, the members of the Municipal Taskforce were the target group for the project assessment, as identified by the contact person for the project in the municipality. In some cases, participants or outside experts were added to the target group, if they are also closely involved in the project implementation.

### **Respondents**

<b>Albania</b>	<b>5 municipalities</b>	<b>30 respondents</b>
<b>Bosnia and Herzegovina</b>	6 municipalities	41 respondents
<b>Croatia</b>	6 municipalities	33 respondents
<b>Kosovo*</b>	4 municipalities	24 respondents
<b>“the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”</b>	4 municipalities	19 respondents (excl. Tetovo)
<b>Montenegro</b>	4 municipalities	27 respondents in total
<b>Serbia</b>	6 municipalities	34 respondents

Most target groups include men as well as women. In Fier in Albania and Bosanska Krupa in

Bosnia and Herzegovina, however, the Municipal Taskforce or respondent group consists solely of women, while in Plav in Montenegro there are only men involved in the project implementation. In most beneficiaries, the women and men share management and implementation positions, with women being responsible for the project management to a slightly higher degree. An exception is 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia', where most often men hold management positions and women have implementation roles.

A few municipalities have Municipal Taskforces that are one-sided in some way: either they consist solely of minority persons, or they consist solely of municipal officers. This is often correlated to possible risks, such as a lack of support from the municipal administration in general if the Municipal Taskforce consists solely of minority persons or a lack of involvement of minority groups if the Municipal Taskforce consists solely of municipal officers.

## Relevance of the project

In most municipalities, the project was deemed relevant by the respondents to the project assessment as well as to the awareness assessment, meaning that municipal officers and minority groups both think that the project addresses a problem that has priority and that the project is a suitable way to do so. In Kosovo\*, however, many respondents across almost all municipalities pointed to the social and economic situation as the most pressing problem for minority groups, and attached a relatively low priority to the projects there that do not address this problem directly. In a few instances in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the relevance of the project also was questioned.

A difference could be noted between projects plans that have been debated in the municipality for quite some time and now finally have a chance to be implemented with funding from the European Union with implementing support from the Council of Europe, and project plans that were recently newly designed specifically for this purpose. Where project ideas had been debated for some time already, the relevance attached to it was higher, and most often the opinion of respondents about the level of involvement of minority groups and the way the project design took place was more favourable.

In some municipalities, there was a significant difference in the priority attached to the project between minority respondents and municipal respondents. This mostly correlates to the way the project design took place. When the project was designed mainly by the municipality whereas the minority stakeholders were only later engaged, the municipal officers would attach higher priority to the project than the minority respondents. In some cases the reverse was true: the project was devised and designed by a minority NGO and the municipality was only engaged later. In those cases, minority respondents would attach higher priority to the project than the municipal officers.

## Organisational capacity

### ***Project design, staff, decision-making***

In many municipalities, the purpose of the project and the task division and decision-making procedures within the team are not clear to all Municipal Taskforce members. Three common reasons for this could be discerned from the project assessment. The first is that at the time some projects had not started implementation. The Municipal Taskforce members therefore had not been fully briefed on all aspects and had not had any common meetings yet. In the second project assessment, the Municipal Taskforces will again be questioned on this topic, and the expectation is that in these cases the lack of clarity will no longer be an issue then.

Another reason for a difference in clarity of purpose, task division and procedures between projects is that some projects are much more concrete and tangible, while others are vaguer in

nature. For concrete projects such as the mobile kindergarten or the translation of municipal documents into minority languages, the Municipal Taskforces usually have a clear idea of purpose, tasks and procedures. For projects that are less tangible, such as those aimed at drafting and implementing a strategy or an action plan, these things are much less clear. In those cases, it will be important for the Municipal Taskforce to work on a common focus, realistic expectations and a clear outline of what will and will not be covered by the strategy or action plan in an early stage of the project. If opinions, expectations or emphases keep differing, these could be risks to the project's success. The second project assessment will show whether this has happened or not.

A final reason for a lack of clarity among some members of the Municipal Taskforce in some municipalities is that only a few people were closely involved in the project design, while others felt less engaged and did not fully understand the purpose, task division and procedures of the project. Hopefully, the Municipal Taskforce has been able to close this rift in the early stages of project implementation. The second project assessment will show whether this has succeeded.

### ***Organisation level and involvement of minority groups***

The involvement of minority groups is a main possible risk for many projects. Almost all projects depend in some way on the engagement of minority groups and persons as the target group for their successful implementation. The Municipal Taskforce may be able to furnish a cultural centre, provide translation, design a language programme or organise a minority rights class, but if the target group does not participate or use these facilities, the project will not succeed.

The situation seems to be the most difficult for projects aimed at Roma people or Egyptians. In general, they seem to have a very low level of organisation and are difficult to reach and engage. Only one municipality, Tivat, indicates that the Roma community there has a relatively high level of organisation and has been able to engage the target group in their project design. All other projects aimed at Roma people or Egyptians have concerns about reaching the target group.

Many other Municipal Taskforces have difficulties engaging minority groups too. In many cases, this correlates to a low level of organisation of minority groups in the municipality. There are, however, also cases in which the level of organisation of minority groups is low, but they are, nonetheless, engaged in the project through local NGOs with extensive experience of working with these groups.

Another difficulty seems to arise in municipalities where there are multiple minority groups involved in the project. In some cases, the project design included only one group, and the others were not closely involved. In Fier (Albania) for instance, Roma were involved, while Egyptians were not. In Shijak (Albania), Bosniaks were involved, while Roma were not. In Pakrac (Croatia), Serbs were involved, while Italians and Czechs were not and in Plav (Montenegro), Bosniaks were involved, while Albanians were not. There are projects where multiple groups were involved, but seem to be in competition with each other for financing and attention within the project. Minority respondents in these municipalities pointed to jealousies and hostilities between different minority groups as possible risks to the project.

## **Cooperative capacity**

### ***Ownership***

In the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rank different authorities and organisations they thought were more and less responsible for solving the problem addressed by the local project and for the success of the project itself.

Municipal authorities were most often mentioned as most responsible for solving the problem



addressed by the project in all beneficiaries except for Bosnia and Herzegovina. There, the national or state authorities were mentioned most often as most responsible. Three municipalities mentioned minority people themselves as most responsible for solving the problem, one in Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina each.

Though not directly of influence to the projects, the assessment also shows how much responsibility the respondents award to the international community for solving minority problems. Especially considering the stereotypical image that some beneficiaries have vis-à-vis the international community to solve their problems, it would be interesting to see whether they find the international community more responsible than others. The stereotypical image was not confirmed at all in this assessment. In general, respondents put the international community in fourth or even fifth place, after municipal and national authorities and minority groups. The country where on average the respondents awarded the most responsibility to the international community was Croatia, although the answers between municipalities differed so widely that no general conclusion can be drawn from this.

Directly of interest to the projects is who respondents consider the most responsible for the successful implementation of it. In 28 of the 36 municipalities, the municipal authorities are seen as most responsible, as expected. Minority groups were seen as most responsible in five municipalities. In a few of these, this is not a cause for concern, because the minority group has taken the lead in the project and awarding them responsibility for its success is reasonable. In the others, it could be a risk to the project, because while the municipality has the lead, the municipal officers do not feel they are the most responsible. Cause for concern also exists in the three municipalities where municipal officers and minority groups point to each other as most responsible for the project's success. There could be a risk there that no one takes full responsibility and any problems encountered in the course of implementation will be blamed on the other group. The second project assessment will show whether this is indeed a problem or not.

### ***Past experience***

The first project assessment asked respondents whether they had cooperated together in the past, and if so, how successful this was. Considering the small size of many of the municipalities, and the fact that most respondents have extensive experience in the field of minority protection, it is highly probable that people in the Municipal Taskforces had worked together before. If this cooperation had been successful, this could be a success factor to the project, because Municipal Taskforce members are already familiar with each other and have a good experience to build on. If on the other hand the experience was not good, it could be a substantial risk to the project, creating distrust between Municipal Taskforce members before implementation even begins.

The expectation was confirmed by the results. In almost all municipalities, at least some of the respondents had cooperated before. In almost all cases, this cooperation was successful or even highly successful. Only in very few cases, the respondents were less enthusiastic. This was always in a project where the same respondents were also discontent with the way the project design had taken place or with other aspects of the project.

### ***Trust***

In general, the respondents display a high level of trust in each other. They feel that there is a good chance or even a very good chance that the municipal and minority stakeholders will execute their tasks in a proper and timely way. Only in a few municipalities are some Municipal Taskforce members worried that others will not prioritise the project enough to make it a success, or that they will not have the capacities to do so.

The level of trust is on average higher within Municipal Taskforces that are more homogenous. If the Municipal Taskforce consists of only women, only men, only minority persons or only municipal officers, their opinions are more similar and they trust each other more to do what is needed. Of course, this also has a downside: a more homogenous group will often trust each other more, but those outside of the group less.

Past cooperation seems even more decisive for the level of trust than homogeneity. Municipal Taskforces where all members have proven to work together successfully in the past display a higher level of mutual trust, also if the team is diverse in sex, ethnicity or function.

### ***Expectation***

Fortunately, there are no municipalities where a majority of the respondents said the project would not or only maybe be a success. This is to be expected, at the outset of the project implementation, all involved should feel confident that it can and will be carried out successfully. Therefore, if even two of the respondents indicated it would only maybe or not be a success, this is indicated as a risk in the score sheet. This is only the case for projects where the respondents also identified other risks, or where some respondents feel insufficiently engaged in the project.

Respondents who are implementing projects that have been debated in the municipality for a long time, and that can now finally be implemented with Council of Europe and European Union financing and support, expect the best chance of success. In those cases, everyone has intimate knowledge of the purpose of the project and attaches high priority to it.

## 4. Next steps

The results of the awareness assessment show that awareness raising activities would seem to be most effective if aimed at a number of specific target groups. First and foremost, raising awareness among persons involved in minority protection policies, especially of the Charter and of national legislation might be effective. Other target groups could be young persons, women and persons with little or no education.

The results also give rise to questions that might be explored in follow-up research. This research might benefit from choosing more narrowly defined target groups, and adapting the methodology and questions asked to the specific characteristics of these groups. Illiterate or very low educated persons were difficult to reach with this, more generic, methodology, and had trouble understanding the questions. A qualitative approach, in which the questions can be translated in dialogue to reflect the daily life of this group, might yield better results.

Another avenue for follow-up research could be the manner in which awareness is gained. Especially the relatively high awareness of the Charter in 'the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia' is interesting in this sense.

As described above, the fact that minority persons themselves are deemed highly responsible as well as relatively highly effective in taking minority protection measures in multiple beneficiaries could be a useful topic for (qualitative) follow-up research. This could offer information on the view that people have of minority persons and their responsibilities, as well as on the ways in which minority persons themselves help implement minority protection measures already.

A final avenue for further research could be the differences between different minority groups. Although the results of this awareness assessment raise the impression that there is a difference in awareness between minorities from other former Yugoslav beneficiaries or Albania, minorities with a kin-state and minorities without a kin-state, this could not be concluded safely here because the methodology and questionnaire was not aimed at segregating different minority groups. With a methodology suited to answer this question, differences in awareness and enjoyment of minority rights by different groups could be explored in follow-up research.

## 5. Conclusions

### Awareness Assessment<sup>6</sup>

Awareness of minority rights may be called low in all target groups. In comparison, respondents seem to be most aware of the Convention, followed by national legislation, policies and strategies. They are least aware of the Charter. Women are much less aware of the Convention and the Charter than men, but the difference is smaller for national legislation, policies and strategies.

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A more pronounced difference exists between respondents of different education levels. Those with no or only primary education have very little awareness of the Convention and national legislation, and even less of the Charter. Respondents with vocational or university education are relatively far more aware of minority rights, but even within this group, no more than one third has heard of the Convention and is familiar with its content.

Young respondents under the age of 28 are far less aware of minority rights than adults and seniors. Only a little under 18% of them has heard of the Convention and is familiar with its content. For the Charter and national legislation, policies and strategies, this percentage is even lower, around 11%.

The most pronounced difference in awareness is between respondents who are involved in minority protection policies, and those who are not. Of the respondents who are not involved in minority policies, a little under 21% is aware of the Convention and its content, 10% is aware of the Charter and its content and 12% is aware of national legislation, policies and strategies. Respondents who are involved in minority protection policies are far more aware, but nonetheless the percentage of them that has never heard of the rights at international and national level is worrisome. Over 18% has never heard of the Convention, 27% has never heard of the Charter and also 27% is not familiar with national legislation, policies and strategies. It might be useful to aim activities to raise awareness of minority rights specifically at persons involved in minority protection policies, especially because this may have an important spill-over effect on awareness of rights among minority groups in general.

When asked in an open question what rights the respondents deemed most crucial for the preservation of the identity of minority groups, language, culture and education were named most often.

Respondents in all beneficiaries except Montenegro consider the international community one of the most effective actors in taking minority protection measures.

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<sup>6</sup> A methodology disclaimer is necessary about the representativeness of the results from the awareness assessment. The sample is not representative of the population but is based on the CoE's selection of the local projects.



## Project Assessment<sup>7</sup>

In most municipalities, the project was deemed relevant by the respondents to the project assessment as well as to the awareness assessment, meaning that municipal officers and minority groups both think that the project addresses a problem that has priority and that the project is a suitable way to do so.

Emphasising again that comparisons are not possible, some projects can be highlighted as facing the least possible risks and having the most success factors in place. There are five municipalities in total where no risks at all could be discerned and all signs were on green for a successful implementation.

The organisational capacity of the Taskforces seemed to be higher if all relevant stakeholders were involved in the project design and similarly, the cooperative capacity of the Taskforces seemed to be higher if the members of the Taskforce had worked together successfully in the past.

The biggest risks are seen in a difficulty in engaging the target group of minority persons; the level of organisation of minority groups seems to be a factor. In the municipalities where minority groups have a low or very low level of organisation, engagement will be a greater challenge. The greatest difficulties were met in projects aiming at engaging Roma minorities.

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<sup>7</sup> The assessment was carried out in 2015 and is only the first stage of a two-stage assessment. Therefore, the findings are not conclusive at this stage.

## 6. Annex 1 – Methodological note

### Methodology

#### **Methodology awareness assessment**

The awareness of the Convention and the Charter was assessed 36 municipalities in seven beneficiaries in the Western Balkans. These had previously been chosen by the Council of Europe to implement the project, which aimed at protecting the rights of or improving basic services for minorities. The municipalities were not chosen for their measure of representativeness of the population in general, or of minority groups. Rather, through a call for proposals, the 36 municipalities were selected on the basis of different criteria, including the quality of their project proposals and the likely success of their implementation. In other words, the selection criteria prevent the possibility of reaching methodologically solid comparative conclusions on awareness of the Convention and the Charter.

Indeed, the chosen municipalities differ in population size, in socio-economic situation, living standards, the size and characteristics of minority groups living there, average education level and geographical lay-out aspects. These factors may all influence the awareness inhabitants have of the Convention and the Charter. Given the diversity in beneficiaries and municipalities, as well as the criteria for choosing the 36 participating municipalities, no general comparative claims can be made about awareness of the Convention and the Charter among minority persons and municipal officers in South East Europe.

The awareness assessment aims at measuring the awareness of minority rights in the municipalities among specific target groups, namely:

- municipal officers involved in minority policies
- municipal officers not involved in minority policies
- minority persons involved in minority policies
- minority persons not involved in minority policies

These target groups were selected for two reasons. The first is the accessibility of target groups. Within the financial and time constraints, a large-scale poll among the population in general would not have been possible, nor would it have been useful for the purposes of this research. The second reason is that these are the groups that will be mainly involved in the local projects in the framework of the project as a whole.

The questionnaire for the awareness assessment was drawn up by the international experts, in close cooperation with the Council of Europe. A number of different lines of questioning were included in the questionnaire. Personal information on gender, age, education level and such was asked, as well as questions on minority status and whether or not a respondent worked for the municipality and was involved in minority policies or not, that would distinguish between target groups. To assess respondents' awareness of the Charter and the Convention, they were asked outright whether they were familiar with these pieces of legislation and knew the content, but were also asked to answer true or false questions about their content. Another line of questioning involved the importance respondents attach to different rights enshrined in Convention and Charter, and how well they feel these are implemented in their municipality. And the questionnaire asked respondents to say what organisation, group or authority they felt are most responsible for promoting minority rights and protection, and which was most effective in doing so. A final line of questioning was mainly relevant for the project assessment that took place simultaneously. Respondents were asked whether they thought the topic to be addressed by the local project is a priority, and whether they think it would be a success.

Since the target groups are quite narrow and specific, non-probability purposive methods were used to approach them: expert sampling and quota sampling. How respondents were approached differed per municipality. A number of methods were used, suited to the specific nature of the different municipalities and minority groups. In some cases, many respondents were gathered to a common meeting at which they also filled out the awareness assessment questionnaire. In other cases, the national experts contacted NGOs and other organisations to do a snowball sample, or they went to a neighbourhood inhabited mostly by minority persons to do door to door surveys. So while an effort was made to harmonise methodology, this was only possible to a certain degree due to the differing circumstances in municipalities.

Specifically for minority persons lower education or illiterateness was a complicating factor. Persons with little or no education tended not to understand the purpose of the research, had difficulty understanding the questions, and if they did consent to participate had to be guided through the questions by the interviewer, limiting the number of persons that could be interviewed within the timeframe. In this group, it was also harder to find female respondents. In some municipalities, women declined to participate, suggesting their husband was interviewed instead. For this particular group of minority persons with little or no education, a qualitative research method or a method specifically designed for lower educated or illiterate respondents might yield better results.

### **Methodology project assessment**

A full project assessment will be carried out in 2016, based on up to three separate exercises:

- at the start or even before the projects' implementation, to identify risk factors to the projects' eventual success;
- mid-term project-specific support halfway through the implementation;
- an evaluation of the projects' success factors after implementation has finished.

The reason to assess at these three moments, and not only at the end of the implementation phase, is to monitor the impressions of the persons involved in the projects at different stages of implementation. If a project is deemed a success afterwards, those involved in its implementation are likely to feel positive about all aspects of the project and towards each other, even if there was a difficult period halfway through in which deadlines were not reached, lines of communication were clogged or participants protested. Likewise, if the project is deemed a failure afterwards, those involved are likely to feel more negative about every aspect of the project and point out the actions of others that might have led to the failure, even if the project saw positive developments in an earlier phase. With the three assessments at different stages, the Research Team will be able to look back after implementation has finished and see which factors that led to success or failure were already in place at the start of the project, and which arose during implementation. This in turn will offer information as to which project ideas have worked well in practice and what circumstances need to be in place to make them a success.

### **Participative Action Research**

The project assessment is a form of Participative Action Research, whereby the **researcher interacts with the subject**. The report of the first project assessment is public and can be used by the Taskforces implementing and co-ordinating the local projects to improve their work. It is not a neutral observation of the local projects, in which the projects would take their course uninfluenced by the research. A Participative Action Research is almost always qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. This research employs a qualitative method too; in-depth interviews with those persons most closely involved in the implementation of the local projects.

**A common questionnaire** was designed, in order to draw out information that can be used for more project-specific questioning in the second assessment and to afford a small measure of comparability across municipalities. The first questionnaire includes open questions, asking respondents about their understanding of the project, the priority they attach to the project and their level of trust in one another. Aside from these open questions, respondents were also

asked to rank some of these issues on a five-point scale, thus giving them multiple ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. The five-point scale is sometimes more effective in drawing out the information sought. **The next questionnaire(s)** will focus on the project itself, and leave even more room for variation within the interviews, exploring the answers of the respondents more in-depth. It is hoped that the final stage will show what factors, within the municipality and the implementing team, have been decisive for the success of the projects.

## Target group

The target group for the project assessment is uniform across municipalities, mainly composed of the members of the Municipal Taskforces which were set up in the context of the local projects in each municipality. There should be at least five members in each Municipal Taskforce, as stipulated by the Council of Europe. If relevant and according to the local situation and the nature of the project, others directly involved in the implementation of the projects could be involved in the project assessment too, such as participants, teachers, local minority leaders and other relevant parties. In the target group, there should be at least two municipal officers and two people belonging to (a) minority group(s). The size of the sample could differ between municipalities, according to how many persons are involved in the Municipal Taskforce and the project implementation. Considering the qualitative nature of the research, a difference in sample size has no bearing on the validity of the results, unless a minimum threshold is not reached. Mainly through the municipal contact persons, the national experts identified the persons to be interviewed, making sure the group includes enough persons involved in the project implementation to ensure representativeness.

The respondents were divided into four target groups:

Target groups
A. minority persons
B. municipal officers
C. both minority person and municipal officer
D. neither minority person nor municipal officer

They were mainly identified as part of one of these target groups with two questions in the questionnaire, asking whether they considered themselves part of a minority group and whether they were municipal officers. Further support will be given to the same group of people (except if there were changes in the team) during the project's implementation. The last assessment will, in as far as possible, again be taken in a personal interview with the same people, barring organisational changes. If there were any changes in the target group during the project period, this will be clearly indicated in the report of the national experts on the project assessments.

## Five project capacities

To be able to identify the factors that may decide the success or failure of a project, with a view to comparing projects across municipalities and beneficiaries and to promote adaptability of good practices into models for further implementation, a common assessment framework for projects has been developed. This framework is based on different project capacities. These capacities each in their own way may influence the success of a project.

Assessment criteria of the project
•Relevance
•Organisational capacity
•Cooperative capacity



•Problem solving capacity
•Results

### Relevance

This assessment took place at the start of the project implementation only, as it is not likely to change throughout implementation. To assess what relevance the Municipal Taskforces attach to the projects, questions were asked, such as: *What is the problem to be solved by the project? Is this a priority, considering the local situation? Is the project a suitable way to solve the problem?* Moreover, the respondents were asked to describe the problem to be solved by the project in their own words. It could be that people have different ideas on what this is, which in itself can constitute a risk to the project's implementation.

A question was also included in the awareness assessment to ascertain whether minority persons as the projects' target group deem the project a priority. The answers to both the questions in the project assessment and the awareness assessment could thus be compared.

### Organisational capacity

This assessment takes place in all phases: at the start of the project implementation, during its implementation phase and after implementation. The questions themselves will be adapted to the phase of the project. The questions posed included: *How did the project design take place? How is the project organisation set up and coordinated? How effective and inclusive is decision-making within the project organisation? Is the project properly funded? Who are the persons directly involved in the implementation of the project, are their tasks clear to them and are they the most suitable persons for their task? What is the level of organisation of minority groups, and their level of involvement in drafting and implementing the project plans?*

Another important issue is the level of organisation of minority groups and their level of involvement in choosing the topic of the project and designing the project itself. For projects concerning minority groups, or any group that may be difficult to reach, a higher level of organisation can often be related directly to a higher chance of success of the project. It facilitates engaging participants, dispersing information and results and also gaining information that can be used to tailor the project to the target group. In some municipalities, enhancing the level of organisation and capacities of minority groups is the specific goal of the project. In those cases, a low level of organisation could even be a success factor, because much can be gained from a raised organisation level for any future projects aimed at improving the situation of minority groups. Aside from their level of organisation, their involvement in the project is also an important factor, because this might determine the general feeling of the target group towards the project and in turn their willingness to participate. It also means that there is a higher chance that the project's topic and design correlates to the reality of the target group.

### Cooperative capacity

This assessment takes place in all phases: at the start of the project implementation, during its implementation phase and after implementation has finished. The questions themselves, however, will be adapted to the phase of the project. To assess the cooperative capacity of the projects, questions were asked, such as: *What is the level of trust between the members of the multi-stakeholder task force? What is the level of ownership felt by different groups and persons involved in project implementation? What is the level of responsibility for solving the problem targeted by the project felt by different interlocutors?*

Considering the fact that many of the municipalities and minority groups are quite small, chances are that most of those involved in the project implementation will have worked together before on other minority protection projects in the past. Therefore, respondents were also asked whether they had worked together before, and if so, how successful this cooperation

was. If teams had indeed cooperated before but the cooperation was not a success, it might have negatively influenced their feelings toward each other and hamper cooperation in this project.

### *Problem-solving capacity*

This assessment will take place both during the project's implementation phase and after its conclusion, so not at the starting phase of the project. In all likelihood, most projects will not yet have run into problems to be solved at the start of implementation. To assess the project's problem-solving capacity, questions will be asked like: *How do those involved in the implementation of the project deal with barriers? How successful are they in removing barriers and how far do they cooperate to remove barriers? How are possible personal tensions, lack of clarity about task divisions or other interpersonal issues dealt with within the Municipal Taskforce? How are changes in the plan, the timetable or other changes communicated to the team?*

### *Results*

This assessment will take place after the project's conclusion, to see whether the project can be called a success or not, and most importantly, why. For the evaluation, questions will be asked such as: *Have the tangible results aimed at by the project been met? Are those persons targeted by the project helped? Did the project manage to keep within the financial and time frame? How has the cooperation within the Municipal Taskforce and its handling of barriers been perceived by its members?*

These five assessments, monitored at the start, halfway through the implementation and after the conclusion of the projects, will deliver the information needed to analyse the relative contribution of different project capacities to the measure of success or failure of a project.

## Process

The international and lead experts drafted the model questionnaire for the first project assessment to guide the interviews on project capacities. In the questionnaire, the project capacities were operationalised into sets of questions. The questions have been formulated in a non-confrontational way to avoid influencing the respondents negatively. They are suggestive in some cases, because the aim of the questions is to unearth any flaws in the areas of the different capacities that might exist at the outset of the project. At the start of the questionnaire, basic information about the project, the project design and the Municipal Taskforce was also asked.

In the analysis, the subjective opinion of the national experts was also included. In order to get a full picture of the situation in a certain municipality, not only the answers to the questions of the respondents themselves are important, but also the atmosphere in which the interviews took place and any relevant information given by respondents outside of the scope of the specific questions.

## Tools: project summaries and score-sheets

In this report of the findings of the first project assessment, project summaries and score-sheets are used as tools to relay the information drawn from the first assessment interviews. They are based on the confidential reports per municipality. It must be emphasised that the summaries and score-sheets are mainly tools to relay the qualitative information from respondents, and not in themselves the core of the research. Despite this tension, the Research Team feels it may be useful to present the first project assessment in this manner to allow for use of the report by those implementing, co-ordinating and overseeing the local projects in order to improve them,

in keeping with the participative nature of the research. Score-sheets are a relatively crude tool. It should be kept in mind that there is more nuanced and varied information at the basis of these sheets, and that the information from respondents was analysed in a qualitative rather than a quantitative manner. To protect the anonymity of respondents, this sort of weighed decision is not described in this report, though the information can be found in the confidential individual project assessment reports.

### Expectations from the assessments

The expectation for the first assessment is that all project capacities measured at the very start of implementation would score well. But the first project assessment has in itself no prediction value as all potential risks indicated are solvable, and may be solved in the near future. For the municipalities where some possible risk factors were identified in the first project assessment, these issues will be a focus during further monitoring of the project implementation in order to find out whether they are still indeed issues or whether they were solved and if so, how.

The last project assessment questionnaire will be based not only on the results of the former round, but also on an objectified evaluation of whether the project's goals were reached within the timeframe and budget. In that phase, the Research Team can combine these results to identify possible success or fail factors, and use this analysis to test possible hypotheses and anomalies in the final round of in-depth interviews with respondents.