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Opportunity Balance & Overcoming

S I F D

GRATË NË SHËRBIM PUBLIK

RAPORTI I MONITORIMIT BASHKIA MIRDITË

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Budget Accountability and Transparency

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INFORMATION REQUEST REPORT

1. INTRODUCTION

In the context of the youth budget oversight process for 2023, an initiative has been launched to assess the distribution and implementation of funds for youth programs in the municipalities of Lezhë, Mirditë and Kurbin. This oversight aims to ensure transparency in the distribution of financial resources and analyze their impact on improving youth services. The process also aims to verify whether the distributed funds have been used in accordance with the established priorities and whether they have managed to meet the set objectives and community needs.

INAt the end of the report, recommendations will be provided for improving youth programs in municipalities where they already exist and for expanding them or adding other missing components. These suggestions will aim to address the shortcomings identified during the monitoring process and promote a more effective allocation of resources to ensure that the needs of the youth community are met in a comprehensive and sustainable manner. This approach aims to promote social development and the inclusion of young people in decision-making processes, contributing to a more equitable and sustainable development of local communities.

1.1 METHODOLOGY AND IMPORTANCE OF THE INFORMATION REQUEST

The methodology on which this report is based includes the analysis of data collected from interviews with local representatives and surveys of young people in the three municipalities. Another important component of the monitoring is the analysis of youth budgets and programs for 2023. However, in the case of the Municipality of Mirdita, this cannot be included in the reporting, as the municipality does not have youth programs and consequently no budgets for monitoring.

Data was collected in several ways, mainly through online communications. Initially, a request for information was sent to the Mirdita Municipality, which constitutes one of the basic reporting links. The second phase included interviewing local representatives, which also included young people from the Mirdita district. These interviews were conducted to collect more details that were not included in the previous responses. The interviews were conducted online through the Zoom platform.

The report also includes a survey of young people in the municipalities of Lezhë, Kurbin and Mirditë. The surveys were conducted using Google Forms and the Excel application was used for analysis. This methodology aims to provide a detailed and reliable assessment of the perceptions and needs of young people, as well as the effectiveness of implemented youth policies and programs.

1.2 EXPECTATIONS AND USE OF MONITORING RESULTS

The results collected from the request for information, including all data collection links, will serve to draft a detailed report on the use of the youth budget in the Municipality of Mirdita. This report aims to raise awareness among young people and the community about the importance of transparency that institutions should demonstrate in the use of the youth budget and not only. Through this report, challenges and opportunities for improvement will be identified, providing concrete recommendations for local institutions to increase the effectiveness of youth programs.

This initiative aims to strengthen accountability and civic participation, creating a more open and responsive environment for the management of public resources. Furthermore, the report will serve as a basis for an ongoing dialogue between young people and institutions, promoting sustainable and equitable development for the entire community.

2. QUESTION/ANSWER ANALYSIS

1. What are the financial allocations approved for youth programs in the 2023 budget?

> *For 2023, we have not had any financial allocations for youth programs.*

The answer given clearly addresses the question posed. However, the lack of youth programs constitutes a serious problem for the Municipality of Mirdita. This situation requires special attention and should be integrated into the strategic and budgetary plans of the coming years. It is important that youth issues become part of the development programs of the municipality, promoting the active inclusion and development of the capacities of this age group, in order to contribute to the overall improvement of the social and economic well-being of the community.

3. How much of these allocations are planned for specific youth services (e.g., education, employment, cultural activities)?

We have not had specific allocations, but young people have become part of the activities organized by the municipality during 2023.

The response provided clearly mentions the lack of planned financial allocations by the Mirditë Municipality. This fact shows an institutional deficiency and a clear neglect towards the youth sector, which has particular importance in social and economic development. Meanwhile, the mention of youth participation in activities organized by the municipality is insufficient. The response lacks detailing the specific activities, the time period when they were organized, the relevant statistics and the areas that these activities have covered, which shows a lack of transparency and accountability on the part of the relevant institution.

3. Is there a separate section in the budget that outlines funds for youth development?
There is no such section for youth. We will see the financial capabilities of the Municipality during the preparation phase of the Budget for 2025 so that we can have such a forecast, proposals that may come from the members of the KVR for which the call for applications is open until August 30, 2024.

The lack of a special session in the 2023 budget for youth issues was also identified in previous responses. This fact indicates a clear and structured lack of inclusion of youth needs and priorities in the municipality's financial planning.

The response mentions that during the budget preparation phase for 2025, financial opportunities to include funds for youth development will be considered. This shows a recognition of the need for improvement and a desire to make changes in the future. However, the lack of concrete details and a strategic plan makes this possibility unclear and not concrete.

4. What are the sources of funding for youth programs (e.g., local funds, grants, donations)?

For 2023, we did not have a vote for youth activities, but the sources of funding for youth activities remain those provided for by the Youth Law.

From the response it is understood that there was a lack of youth programs for 2023 in the Municipality of Mirdita. In the absence of these programs, opportunities could have been identified for applications for donations or various projects involving the youth of the area. The sources of funding according to the law on youth include:

a) grant funds from the state budget dedicated to youth;
b) local budgets;
c) income generated by youth organizations; d)
donations;
d) sponsorships;
dh) other legal sources.

5. Are there any changes or deviations from the initial budget plans for youth programs?

No, there isn't.

The lack of deviations from the initial plans reflects the fact that there was no initial plan addressing youth issues.

6. What are the main challenges identified in official documents for implementing the youth budget?

We have not had a dedicated budget and as a result we have not had such challenges. The challenge for the Mirdita Municipality remains the budgeting of youth activities and their implementation.

The lack of challenges identified in official documents is due to the lack of budget for youth programs. The response identified the municipality's biggest challenge, which is the inclusion of youth issues in the municipality's programs and budget. However, the response does not provide sufficient information on whether the lack of a youth sector and funds for youth issues has been addressed for review by competent persons.

7. How were expenditures for youth programs monitored and reported during 2023?

We haven't had any.

The answer given is in line with the question, as it is impossible to monitor a program that does not exist. The lack of youth programs means that there were no activities planned and implemented for this age group, and consequently, no reported expenditures.

for them. This reflects a lack of commitment from the municipality to the youth sector for 2023.

If there were no expenditures, it is unclear how funds that could have potentially been allocated to youth were managed and reported. This may indicate a lack of control and transparency in the management of funds, calling into question the accountability of institutions for this sector. If the municipality intends to develop youth programs in the future, it is important to have a clear monitoring and reporting system to ensure transparency and effective use of resources.

8. Which youth projects have received the most funding and why?

We haven't had any.

The response indicates that there were no youth projects during the period under review. The municipality should create and implement planned youth projects that include the allocation of funds and engage in the development of initiatives that address the needs of youth.

9. Is there any information on the participation of young people in the decision-making process for the youth budget?

During the 2023 budget hearings, we did not keep such statistics, but we can confirm that there were young participants.

The response confirms that there were young people participating in the hearings, but does not provide sufficient detail to understand to what extent and how they were engaged. The participation of young people is a positive step towards their inclusion in decision-making processes, but without detailed information on their numbers, role, and impact, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of this involvement.

The response also indicates that during the 2023 budget hearings, no detailed statistics were kept on youth participation. It also does not provide details on whether the youth of the Local Youth Council participated in the public budget hearings. Their participation in the hearing could encourage young people to provide suggestions on youth issues.

10. Have performance indicators ever been mentioned for measuring the success of youth programs?

No.

The response reflects that there were youth programs and therefore, there was no opportunity to mention or use performance indicators.

11. What are the main priorities for youth investments in official documents for 2023?

We haven't had any.

The lack of documents specifying priorities for youth investments highlights a neglect in planning and allocating resources for this sector. This shows that youth investments have not been treated as a priority and that there has been no clear and documented strategy for youth development. Something that has also been identified in the answers to the questions above. It is important to create clear priorities for youth investments in official documents and for these priorities to be integrated into the planning and budgeting process. To develop the aspect of youth investments and place youth in the priorities of the municipality, stakeholders such as youth organizations and experts can help.

12. What is the organizational structure of the Local Youth Council?

a. Mayor, chairman
b. Representative of the Municipal Council or the administration (youth sector) of the administrative unit, member;

c. 2 representatives from youth organizations or organizations for young people (members);
d. 2 representatives from active youth of the Administrative Unit (members).

The response presented a well-organized structure that complies with the legislation in power for the members of the Local Youth Council (LYC). However, considering the lack of a youth sector in the municipality, it would be useful to also define the position of the administration representative in the Council. It is important to note that the LYC is composed of different representatives from multiple aspects of youth, indicating the presence of youth organizations in the community that in cooperation with the relevant bodies and the young people of the area can contribute to the improvement and development of youth issues.

13. How are the members of the Local Youth Council elected?

Members of the Local Youth Council are elected in support of the Youth Law and according to Decision No. 28 dated 29.03.2022 of the Mirditë Municipal Council.

The selection of the members of the Local Youth Council is confirmed as having been carried out in accordance with the legislation in force and through official procedures. This process guarantees transparency and ensures a fair selection of each member.

14. What are the main functions and duties of the Local Youth Council?

According to the law, the functions of the council are:

1- Advises local self-government units (Municipalities) on the direction of local youth policies and plans

2- Assesses the situation of young people and the implementation of youth plans and policies at the local level,

3- Proposes improvements to local youth policies as well as initiatives that adapt to the needs of young people in the territory where they operate,

4- Cooperates and exchanges information with the National Youth Council.

The response is based on the functions of the Local Youth Council (LYC) as defined in the Law on Youth, but does not provide detailed information on the actual role and functions of the LYC in the Municipality of Mirdita. More in-depth information is needed to understand whether the LYC has effectively carried out these functions during 2023 and whether it has fulfilled all the duties and responsibilities set out in the law. In order to fully assess the effectiveness of the LYC, it is important to include details on the activities carried out, their impact on youth policy-making and any challenges that may have been encountered during this period.

15. What were the main priorities of the Local Youth Council for 2023?

For 2023, we have not had any announced priorities for the Local Youth Council. The main priority has been the inclusion of young people in the activities of associations that have implemented projects from the EU4Culture program and implemented by UNOPS in Albania, since out of 5 organizations, 4 of them have had activities, seminars and trainings for young people, where a considerable number of

of young people have participated in these activities. More information can be found at the link http://bashkiamirdite.gov.al/?page_id=3502

The response indicates that specific priorities for the Local Youth Council for 2023 have not been announced.

It is also mentioned that the main priority has been the involvement of young people in the activities of associations that have implemented projects from the EU4Culture programme and managed by UNOPS in Albania. While this priority shows a commitment to the involvement of youth in cultural and educational activities, it is important to understand that this is a specific aspect and not an overall priority of the Local Youth Council. The activities of associations are an important part, but do not provide a complete picture of the function and role of the Council in general. The engagement of young people in activities shows a good level of activity and interest in the involvement of young people, but does not fully address aspects of the responsibilities of the Local Youth Council and its role.

Also, the link provided to obtain more information on the activities of Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs) engaged in projects, directs us to the official website of the municipality. There, some of the projects developed in Mirdita are reflected.

16. What activities and projects has the Local Youth Council carried out during 2023?

The Local Youth Council did not organize any activities during 2023, but it participated in the projects and activities of the aforementioned organizations.

The response highlights the lack of activities by the Local Youth Council for 2023, but does not provide sufficient details to explain the reasons for the Council's inactivity for a relatively long period (one year). Also, during the exploration of the official website of the municipality, no data was found in the reports of non-profit organizations (NPOs) or institutions to verify the participation of young people in these activities. This indicates a lack of information and transparency regarding engagement and participation in activities.

17. What were the main sources of funding for the activities of the Local Youth Council in 2023?

The main source of funding can be considered the donor, which is the EU, through the EU4Culture program implemented by UNOPS in Albania.

The answer is not in line with the question, as the activities within EU4Culture were not acquired, applied or assisted by the Mirditë Local Youth Council. For this reason, these activities cannot be included under the name of the Local Youth Council.

18. How are young people informed about the opportunities and activities organized by the Local Youth Council?

Activities involving young people specifically for 2023 have been published on the official website of the Mirdita Municipality, but also on the official Facebook page of the Municipality, as well as on the Facebook page of the Mirdita Integration Unit.

The response confirms that the main means of communication about the opportunities and activities of the Mirditë Local Youth Council, as well as the Municipality, are online platforms such as the Web and Facebook. Communication through social networks is an effective method for informing and connecting with young people. However, no details are provided on the way in which the person or representative of the youth administration communicates closely with young people, such as whether WhatsApp groups or other applications preferred by young people such as Instagram are used.

In this context, it is important to note that young people often prefer applications such as WhatsApp and Instagram for communication and information, and the use of these channels can help improve engagement and information. Also, the response did not confirm or deny the existence of a social network dedicated to the Local Youth Council, which could provide a more suitable platform for communication and collaboration with young people.

19. What are the most successful activities and programs organized during 2023?

The most successful activity is the embroidery course, which was organized for girls, specifically 25 girls mainly from the Rreshen High School who developed their skills in embroidery.

traditional clothing, which has also been declared a National Intangible Heritage Value. This activity was organized by the MileuKontak organization, which conducted a 5-day training held at the Infokulla and where the young women were trained by experienced artisans.

The participation of a significant number of young people shows a clear interest on their part to be part of the youth projects and activities developed in Mirdita. This interest should serve as an incentive for institutions to apply for youth projects and include youth programs in their annual budgets.

20. How have activities and opportunities for young people been promoted during 2023?

The activities were mainly promoted through posts on the official website of the Mirdita Municipality and on the official Facebook page of the Mirdita Municipality and the European Integration Unit.

Promotion on social networks is a good and effective method, showing a positive approach and adapted to current demands. The use of these channels by the institution offers benefits, such as a higher number of followers and ease for young people in finding information. This approach helps increase engagement and access to information by target groups, improving communication and connection with young people.

4. CONCLUSIONS

From the data collected from the Request for Information, addressed to the Municipality of Mirdita on allocated funds and youth programs, a deficiency and obvious negligence on the part of the institution in the youth sector has been identified. A lack of a youth sector and a specialist for this sector is noted in the municipality's organizational chart. This lack is followed by a financial lack of commitment, as there is no specific space in the 2023 budget for youth issues.

The lack of programs and funds for youth has also been accompanied by a lack of transparency in the use of funds that should have been dedicated to this sector.

A positive step in the youth aspect is the establishment of the Local Youth Council, which, according to the statements of the municipality representative, in the request for information, has participated in the activities organized by NGOs. However, it is evident that, apart from these activities, the role and function of the KVR for the year in question has been non-existent.

The financial aspect remains a significant challenge for the Municipality, and the answers to questions about the budget for youth programs have been insufficient, indicating that youth has not been included in the municipality's plans for 2023. On the other hand, an apathy of the Local Youth Council in this context has been noted. This problem may be related to a number of factors that were not identified in the request for information.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the email returned by the Mirditë Municipality regarding the Request for Information on the allocation of funds for youth programs and based on the identified shortcomings, it is recommended:

Increasing funds designated in the annual budget for youth issues. Although the response mentioned the possibility of including youth programs in the 2025 budget, this is not sufficient. It is suggested that the institution first establish a dedicated youth sector and appoint a competent person to handle issues addressed to youth. This step would contribute to improving the focus and management of youth activities and would help allocate funds in a more structured and effective manner.

Clear identification of the role and functions of the Local Youth Council. Although the establishment of the Local Youth Council (LYC) is an important step in addressing and representing youth in decision-making issues, in the responses provided, a confusion was observed between the projects applied by the LYC itself and those applied by Non-Profit Organizations (NPOs), where members of the council have been participants. The LYC should carry out the functions defined in the legislation and have a visible impact on the community, effectively representing the youth voice.

Maintaining relevant statistics. The participation of young people in activities organized by NGOs is an indicator of youth interest in activities. However, this youth representation has not been accompanied by relevant statistics, which should have been provided in the response. To ensure the effective functioning of the KVR, it is important to improve transparency and provide concrete data on its role and impact on youth activities and projects.

Expanding means of communication with young people. The use of social networks is one of the most effective methods for communication and information, but these tools must be adapted to

topicality and target group. Although Facebook and the Web are useful platforms for disseminating information, they are not always the preferred method for youth.

It is suggested that the Local Youth Council create specific social networks that include platforms most used by young people. For example, a WhatsApp group could be opened managed by the municipality's representative in the KVR, as well as profiles on Instagram and Facebook. These steps would enable more direct and efficient communication with young people, increasing opportunities for inclusion and engagement in youth activities.

Improving access and information for the Local Youth Council (LYC). The Local Youth Council serves as a youth advisor to the mayor and is integrated into the municipal system, despite the lack of economic dependence. In order to increase access and strengthen the connection with the youth community, it is recommended that the names and biographies of the members of the Mirdita Local Youth Council be published on the official website of the municipality.

This would allow the youth of the community to be informed about their representatives and have the opportunity to contact them for suggestions or further communication. Creating this form of access would help strengthen the connections between the KVR and youth, increasing the council's commitment and effectiveness in addressing youth issues.

3. REPORT AND ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEW WITH THE MUNICIPALITY REPRESENTATIVE Mirdita

1. What are the municipality's priorities for developing youth programs in 2023?

The Municipality of Mirdita has not had any announced priorities for 2023 for youth programs. We had a youth council established in July 2022, in implementation of the youth law, but it has not been properly functioning. It has been a first general test and the main problem has been that the municipality has not had a sector dedicated to youth issues.

The response provides a clear picture of the problems and shortcomings that exist in relation to the development of youth programs in the Municipality of Mirdita. Improving transparency requires that these issues be addressed in advance and publicly informed, so that young people and the community are aware of the challenges and efforts to solve them. Mention of

The establishment of the youth council in July 2022 is positive information, indicating the municipality's efforts to meet legal requirements.

2. Describe the municipality's main objectives for youth this year.

The main objective, despite the lack of a specific youth sector, has been the inclusion of young people in the activities of the municipality from various sectors such as culture, tourism or the European integration sector. The year 2023 has been a specific year for the functioning of the municipality for several reasons. We have been in the midst of local elections and we have had political changes that have not reflected any major changes in youth issues. But what has been the focus of the municipality staff is that the cultural activities, organized by the culture sector, have focused on the inclusion of young people such as dance and song groups and the promotion of young voices. In addition to young people formalized by law, young people under the age of 15 have also been included.

A special specificity was that in 2023, 5 projects were implemented by associations in Mirdita within the UNOX call, with funding from the EU4Culture program from the EU. These projects mainly focused on promoting tourism and with special specifications such as training or workshops for the involvement of young people in activities, learning crafts and trades. There was a high number of involvement from young people in these activities. In July 2023, 4 different five-day courses organized by the Mileikontact association were held. The first was for hotel tourism, where 25-30 young people, mainly boys, participated, who learned the basics of service. Another course was for embroidery and traditional clothing of Mirdita and for five days 25 young girls, mainly in the 15-20 age group, from the city of Rrëshen and Rubik, participants from the gymnasium, but also from other villages, were trained.

There was also another course on painting and pyrography, stone and wood carvings, where about 12 young people participated. The course on guiding and guiding had space for 25 people and 15 people were involved, of which 3-4 young people. The period may have had an impact, as it was the end of July. Another activity was on painting and clay works, organized by the organization Te Bunkieri, where a considerable number of young people, mainly young women, participated (4 days of workshops).

The funds that the organizations received for the projects were 50 thousand dollars. Were there funds for the municipality's activities? - The current municipality's infrastructure was always used; there are

The square, the Palace of Culture and the sound system were used with the available funds of the municipality. When there were big concerts, there were donations and payments were made from abroad for the best sound system or the stage. The only commitment mentioned from the municipality's funds is the end-of-year activity with a fund of about 2000 euros.

The response indicates a partial and incomplete commitment of the municipality to youth issues, with a clear lack of a dedicated sector, sufficient funds and a clear strategy for the development of youth programs. In order to improve transparency and effectiveness, it is necessary for the municipality to establish a dedicated youth sector, allocate sufficient funds and develop a clear and well-structured plan for youth engagement and support.

The involvement of young people in projects funded by the EU4Culture programme and implemented by associations demonstrates the engagement of young people in community activities and the benefit of training opportunities. However, these projects are external to the municipality and cannot be considered as its direct initiative for youth.

3. How many funds have been allocated for youth programs and services in the 2023 budget?

The reason for the lack of an answer to this question lies in the fact that no funds were provided for youth programs and services in the 2023 budget.

4. Detail the amount of funds allocated and the main categories of expenses.

No details about the funds were shared during the interview, as there was no budget foreseen for the issues in question.

5. What are the main sources of funding for youth programs in your municipality?

There were no programs organized by the municipality, but the various activities were mainly supported by foreign donations.

The response indicates a lack of programs organized by the municipality and a dependence on foreign donations to finance various activities. To improve transparency and youth inclusion, it is necessary for the municipality to create and implement internal programs dedicated to youth, allocate sufficient funds and provide more details on the sources and use of funding for youth activities. Details on projects implemented by NGOs are mentioned in the response to question 2.

6. Describe funding sources such as local funds, grants, donations, etc.

They are mentioned above.

The lack of response is related to the fact that there were no funded youth programs, except for the projects mentioned in the answer to question 2 where the necessary details were provided.

7. How is the inclusion of young people in the municipality's decision-making processes ensured?

The budget hearings have been open and usually the Mirditë Municipality organizes both the budget and local tax hearings in a structured manner with meetings announced 1-2 weeks in advance. The meetings are held in each administrative unit. The involvement of young people has not been recorded; there were young people, but we do not have an exact number because we did not keep statistics. Also, there was no dedicated hearing for the youth budget (there was no budget).

The response emphasizes that the hearings on the budget and local taxes have been open and announced in advance. This shows an effort to ensure a transparent and accessible process for the community. Organizing meetings in each administrative unit is a positive approach to achieve broad participation. The hearings evidence a lack of focus and specific monitoring of youth participation. Organizing hearings dedicated to youth issues and the youth budget could help in more active inclusion of this group in decision-making processes.

8. Detail the mechanisms and initiatives undertaken for youth involvement.

During 2023, we did not have a proper mechanism for youth involvement. We made efforts through the aforementioned activities, but we did not have a specific mechanism for this purpose.

The answer points to a lack of genuine mechanisms for youth involvement during 2023 and insufficient efforts to increase their engagement. But in general terms it answers the question posed.

9. What are the main youth projects implemented during 2023?

For young people and children, in addition to the 5 projects that were from associations, the municipality also had a project within the framework of "EU for Municipalities" that focused on children, but also included young people. As part of this project, a playground was also built in the city of Rrëshen.

The answer is clear about the projects implemented, but does not provide sufficient details to understand the involvement of young people in a deeper way. For example, there is no information provided on the number of young people involved in the project within the EU4Municipalities, the role that young people have had and the impact of this project on the community.

10. Describe the most important projects and activities carried out.

Activities with organizations, in which young people have also participated,

For question 10, the answer has been addressed in the answers to previous questions, so this answer may seem truncated.

11. What are the main challenges you have encountered in implementing youth plans?

It has been difficult to draft plans, given that there has been no structure or person dedicated to youth. This has made it difficult or impossible to develop plans of this nature.

The response identifies the lack of a structure and a dedicated person as the main challenge for the design and implementation of youth plans. This information is valuable for understanding the difficulties the municipality has encountered in its efforts to develop youth plans.

12. Identify the main problems and obstacles during the implementation of the programs.

 The main obstacle has been the lack of a contact person or person dedicated to youth. The local
 budget is minimal and this makes it difficult for such issues to find a place in front of the concerns or problems of citizens.

The response identifies two main problems: the lack of a dedicated youth person and budgetary constraints. These problems are essential to understanding the obstacles the municipality has encountered in implementing youth programs, but further details on the concrete impact of these problems and efforts to address them are lacking.

13. What measures have been taken to address these challenges and improve youth services?

During 2023, we have had an attempt to enrich the city library with materials and books that can be adapted to this age group. We are still in discussions with the Japanese embassy on a project related to waste management, but the continuation of the project is based on this aspect. We do not have a concrete answer yet.

The lack of a youth center has prompted us to think about alternative options. We were prepared to apply to the AKR call, but due to the premises and sharing the space with another age group, we left it without applying. We have addressed this concern during 2024 and until September we are waiting for a response from a donor to dedicate a space for youth. We can complete the equipment of the environment during 2025.

Participation in an international waste management project shows the effort to involve young people in global issues, but the continuation of this project is awaiting confirmation. The lack of a youth center has prompted efforts to find alternatives. Participation in AKR calls and seeking funding to allocate a space for young people are important steps, but they are still awaiting answers and implementation.

The response states that the Youth Center issue has been addressed, but does not provide sufficient details on how and where this issue is being addressed. In general, the response provides information on the suggested options, however, these options have not been completed due to the difficulties identified in the response provided.

14. Describe the solutions applied or planned to address the challenges.

We can't say we have a choice, because we haven't planned.

The answer given fits the question, despite once again emphasizing the problem of the lack of youth-oriented plans.

15. How is the effectiveness of youth programs monitored and evaluated by the municipality?

There are none, because there are no programs.

The response confirms that the lack of youth programs is the main cause that has led to the lack of monitoring and evaluation. Without youth programs, there are no activities to monitor and evaluate.

16. Describe the monitoring and evaluation processes used.

no

Although the answer is short, it shows the fact of the lack of a monitoring and evaluation process as a result of the lack of youth programs.

17. What are the main results achieved by youth programs in 2023?

The involvement of some young people in activities comes as a result of a number of factors, but since there are no youth programs, it does not come directly from youth programs.

The response highlights that the lack of youth programs is a factor that has influenced the results achieved during 2023. To improve results and increase youth inclusion, the municipality should create and implement structured youth programs, establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and collaborate with other organizations to provide opportunities for young people.

18. Detail the achievements and impacts of youth programs in the community.

There is no program.

The response shows that the lack of youth programs has resulted in a lack of measurable achievements and impacts in the community.

19. How has the municipality cooperated with the Local Youth Council and youth organizations?

The presence of youth organizations, at least at the moment the KVR was established, has not been visible in Mirdita. During 2023, the OBO organization crystallized, but during 2023 we did not have any cooperation between the organization and the municipality. Meanwhile, with the KVR, since it was an election year, both the former and current mayors did not have close interaction and were not active in order to avoid political misunderstandings.

The response shows a lack of cooperation between the municipality, the Local Youth Council and youth organizations during 2023. To improve the situation, it is important to encourage closer cooperation, activate the Youth Council and create mechanisms to ensure sustainable and effective support for youth. This has also occurred as a result of the lack of youth organizations operating in the area. Moreover, leaving the Youth Council passive for an entire year cannot be justified only by the fact that there were local elections in 2023, as the entire period of the year is not an election campaign. This shows the inability of institutions to separate bodies with social/state functions from the political aspect.

20. Describe the nature of the collaboration and the results of this collaboration.

Invisible

During 2023, the Mirditë Local Youth Council has not had any active role and has not performed any of the functions foreseen by the legislation for this council. The answer is short, but it represents reality and in some way directly and objectively answers the question posed.

21. What are the plans and priorities for the further development of youth programs in 2024?

The first plan is to establish and operationalize a relevant unit to focus on youth issues. With the drafting of the new structure for 2024, the European Integration and Projects Unit has been created, which also addresses youth issues. The next step is to establish the Local Youth Council and create a joint program between the unit and the KVR for 2025. We have also addressed the issue of the Youth Center and hope to have a solution as soon as we have a concrete idea of where to physically place it. Afterwards, we will apply for various calls to equip the center or we will try to adapt it with the Municipality's funds for 2025. During 2024, the situation has been more or less the same as in 2023 for youth issues.

It seems that the situation for youth issues in 2024 is similar to 2023, without any noticeable improvement so far. In 2024, the European Integration and Projects Unit was established, which also includes and addresses youth issues. The integration of youth issues in this unit could help create a closer connection with international projects and funding opportunities, bringing direct benefits to young people. However, the creation of a dedicated youth unit will help focus and improve youth policies and activities, ensuring that youth issues are addressed more systematically and efficiency increases. It is understood from the response that the plans are mainly for 2025, and not 2024 for which information was requested.

22. Describe objectives and initiatives for the future.

- -

Future initiatives were mentioned in the answer to question 22, where the main priority and objective for the future are the establishment of a youth sector and the opening of a Youth Center in the city. However, the lack of an answer is related to the steps that the institution will take to activate the Local Youth Council, which will be elected in 2024 and will have a two-year mandate.

23. How has the municipality helped in the development of skills and employment of young people?

The municipality has been open during 2022/2023 to offer young bachelor/master students to complete professional internships. There have been young people who have been interns at the municipality in various sectors.

There have been no cases of success, as the young people who have done the internship have moved to work and live in Tirana.

The Municipality has provided opportunities for young students to complete professional internships in various sectors within the institution. This is a positive step to help develop the professional skills of young people and to give them valuable experience in relevant fields. Professional internships are an important tool for developing skills and preparing young people for the labor market. They can help build a professional network and improve future employment opportunities.

However, problems of displacement and lack of local employment opportunities pose significant challenges.

24. Describe programs and initiatives that support the professional development of young people.

Professional development is mainly programs in collaboration with AKPA and the St. Joseph School. There are 3-month professional training programs in mechanics and hydraulics, which have certification. There is also a course that is conducted by the St. Joseph School, where the municipality is also a collaborator.

Vocational training programs are an effective technique for the development and training of young people, as well as of different age groups. From the response, it is understood that the municipality has been cooperative in these trainings, specifically with the Shën Jozefi school. However, the deficiency of the response lies in the lack of details on the manner of cooperation of the municipality and what this institution has offered to the young people. Also, information on the funds invested by the municipality in these trainings and courses is missing.

25. What are the communication mechanisms used to inform young people about the opportunities and services offered?

- Web
- Official Facebook
- Integration Unit Facebook
- Facebook Info Mirdita Tower
The answer given in the interview coincides with the response received from the request for information.

26. Detail the communication channels and strategies used.

- - -

Communication channels are mentioned in the answer to question 26, as well as in the request for writing. These channels are used for the publication and announcement of activities and hearings. In the answer to question 7, it is confirmed that notices for public hearings are published 1 to 2 weeks before the scheduled date.

27. What are the financial challenges encountered in implementing budget plans for youth?

- *Small budgets and low income levels bring limitations*

The financial challenges experienced in implementing youth budget plans are mainly related to a limited budget and low levels of income. To address these challenges, it is necessary to improve budget planning, identify alternative sources of funding, and maximize the use of existing resources.

The response is brief and does not elaborate on the challenges encountered, nor does it mention whether youth issues have been addressed in the relevant municipal structures or public hearings.

28. Describe financial problems and ways to address them.

We try to solve issues of this nature through applied projects or projects coming from foreign donors. Budgeting dedicated funds is very difficult for a municipality with capacities like ours.

The response identifies two challenges of the municipality: limited capacity and low budget. It shows a valuable intervention to address the financial challenges, focusing on the application

for projects and seeking support from foreign donors. However, it is important that the municipality continues to develop capacities and other strategies to manage and improve funding for youth programs in order to be able to provide more sustainable and effective support to young people.

29. What are the municipality's recommendations for improving policies and services for youth at the local level?

The municipality should open a consultation process and it would be great if, with the establishment of the Youth Council, an expanded youth assembly were established, where, in addition to the members of the Youth Council, other young people would be included to contribute to the drafting of youth policies.

This response provides two valuable suggestions for the development of the situation of youth programs and policies in the Municipality of Mirdita. It shows an approach focused on the inclusion of youth and the creation of appropriate structures to address their needs and demands. This recommendation for the improvement of youth policies and services is important for building a sustainable and inclusive approach at the local level.

30. Identify suggestions and recommendations for improving the situation.

-*increasing the youth sector*

The response offers an important suggestion and recommendation, but does not contain details on how to resolve this issue, the period for resolution, and the functioning of the youth sector. It does not specify whether specific funds will be allocated for this sector, how the use of the funds will be monitored, and from which funds it will be financed.

31. How has the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the implementation of youth programs and services?

The pandemic has shattered budgets, because a large part of them were used for emergencies, disinfections, etc. During 2021-2022, there were increased costs in the municipality's budget, because the disinfection of schools, kindergartens and nurseries had an unforeseen cost, and funds had to be removed from other programs.

The response clearly indicates that the pandemic has brought changes to the budget and worsened the financial situation of the municipality. However, although budget changes are mentioned, it is not clearly specified the period and years when these changes occurred, as well as from which programs funds were removed to be used for managing the situation during and after the pandemic.

32. Describe the impacts and changes made to cope with the situation.

- -

In terms of youth programs, the COVID-19 situation has not been related to youth issues, as there were no funds foreseen for youth that could have undergone changes. Some changes were mentioned in question 31, but they were not detailed enough and exact figures were not used.

33. What are the initiatives undertaken to increase youth participation in social and cultural activities?

The Mirdita Ensemble is mainly made up of young people from the city and Mirdita, young people who come from the KFK courses, so it is like a chain. Also, the cooperation with schools, mainly music teachers, is a source of nourishment for the Mirdita Ensemble.

Initiatives for the inclusion of young people in the Mirdita Ensemble and cooperation with schools are a positive step to increase participation in cultural and social activities. However, it is important to examine the possibilities to expand and improve these activities and to strengthen cooperation with educational institutions to provide wider opportunities for young people. The network created by the QKF courses and cooperation with schools creates a chain that helps in the development of skills and in maintaining a strong connection between young people and cultural activities.

34. Describe programs and activities that encourage social and cultural engagement of young people.

- Ensemble

Although the answer is short, it is described in more detail in question 33. However, demographic data on the youth and the source of funding for the Ensemble are missing.

35. How has the cooperation with educational institutions been to support young people?

Very good

The response provided offers a positive aspect of good cooperation with educational institutions. However, it is not sufficient to be fully evaluated, as it does not provide sufficient data and does not specify the educational institutions with which this comprehensive and successful cooperation has been developed.

36. Describe the nature of the collaboration and the results achieved.

There has been continuous cooperation mainly with music teachers. There is a connection: music teachers-QCF-Mirditë Palace of Culture-Ensemble that have a cooperation.

This information helps to better understand the cooperation between educational and cultural institutions. However, the results achieved as a result of this cooperation are not explained. Also, clear data on the number of young people who have benefited from this cooperation and the period over which the cooperation has been extended are missing.

37. What are the strategies used to support young people in coping with mental health challenges?

It is addressed mainly in schools through the security officer and the Public Health Directorate, in collaboration with the Social Service. But the municipality's influence in this aspect is slightly smaller, we have a supporting role but not a leading one.

Efforts to support young people in facing mental health challenges are important and include an integrated approach through schools and cooperation with other institutions. However, it is necessary for the municipality to strengthen its commitment and create a more coordinated and comprehensive approach to improve support for young people in this regard. The limited role of the municipality contributes to the lack of an integrated and comprehensive approach to youth mental health. The municipality has the opportunity to contribute more by providing more direct support and developing new initiatives in this area.

38. Detail the programs and services provided to support the mental health of young people.

Psychosocial services are mainly provided by the Public Health Directorate. The municipality has a psychologist attached to the social sector. This psychologist, in cooperation with the DPH and the coordinator of the protection unit for abused children and women, organizes activities of this nature, but they mainly focus on schools.

In the answer to question 38, several services and programs that address the mental health of young people are described, such as: Psychosocial Service, Psychologist Attached to the Social Sector and Cooperation with DFS and Coordinators of Protection Units. The psychosocial services provided by DFS and the municipality psychologist constitute a well-integrated approach that addresses the mental health needs of young people. The role of the municipality in providing mental health services is clear through the engagement of the psychologist. However, it is important to assess whether the capacities provided are sufficient to effectively meet the needs of young people.

39. What are the most successful programs implemented so far and what made them successful?

One of the initiatives that the municipality is taking in the wake of these projects is the establishment of a 72-hour reception center for abused women, which will be the first of its kind.

The initiative mentioned in the response is undoubtedly a positive approach of the municipality in protecting citizens of different age groups, including the age group considered young according to Albanian legislation. However, the problem with the response is that it does not provide sufficient data. The deadlines, funds, methods of organization, as well as the institution or sector that will be responsible for the center and the capacities of this center are not specified.

40. Describe the key success factors and their impact on the community.

I can't say success factors because we need to have a program. But I can say that the involvement of young people in the general activities organized in the community has been satisfactory.

The response again highlights the fact that the municipality has not had any programs dedicated to youth. However, from the programs and activities carried out within the framework of other cultural or tourist areas, it is claimed that there was youth participation. This claim is valid to show the presence and desire of young people to participate in activities, but cannot be monitored as part of youth issues.

Additional information from the representative of the Mirdita Municipality

Our goal as a municipality is to advance those initiatives and initiatives that we have taken. Even though the economic difficulties of our country limit us, we will try to find different ways to realize these projects. In addition to being in the process of twinning with an Arbëresh municipality in Italy, at the same time we are working on applying for a project in the "Town Twinning" calls that involves young people in preserving traditions, culture and mainly the values of the Albanian language.

Another program that we are considering and for which we will apply by the end of November is for the quality certificate in the "EU Solidarity Corps" program. The goal is for the municipality to become a certified partner of this program and to use its funds to send young people for internships at NGOs or public institutions accredited in the EU, as well as to receive volunteers from other countries in Mirdita for periods of three months, six months, up to one year. This program gives young people the opportunity to gain new knowledge, experience and skills.

From the information provided, it is understood that the Municipality of Mirditë is taking initiatives to improve the youth aspect. Also, applying to various projects that bring development and capacity building to the youth of the area is a positive approach and will have a positive impact on the youth community. Also, the data shared by the representative is important and shows an incentive towards a higher level of transparency, despite the fact that the project is current and has not been part of the monitoring.

conclusion

The following conclusions emerged from the interview with the representative of the Mirditë Municipality:

1. **Partial and incomplete commitment to youth issues**: The municipality has shown limited commitment to youth issues, lacking a dedicated sector, funds

sufficient and a clear strategy for the development of youth programs. These shortcomings have resulted in a lack of participation of young people in decision-making processes and a weak activation of them in activities aimed at youth development and assessment.

2. **Financial problems**: Financial difficulties, including inadequate budgeting and challenges in securing funds, require different solutions. Effective strategies for addressing these challenges include applying for projects and funds from foreign donors, engaging in co-financed projects, optimizing expenditures, increasing capacities for fund management, and seeking alternative sources.
3. **Local Youth Council**: This body, created in July 2022, has functioned in a negligible manner. Members of the Mirditë Local Youth Council have participated in NGO activities, but have not undertaken any initiative or activity organized and led by the council. Its functioning as an advisor to the mayor has not been realized, with the justification that 2023 was an election year, which does not logically and legally coincide with the way the council should have functioned.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

Creation of structured mechanisms and strategy for youth involvement: To increase youth involvement, it is necessary to create structured and sustainable mechanisms, which may include youth commissions, working groups, and youth forums. The municipality should develop a clear strategy for youth involvement, which should include measurable objectives and a specific action plan.

Use of social networks and technology: Use social media and technology to engage and inform young people about opportunities and decision-making processes. This recommendation was also given at the end of the analysis of the Request for Information, as it is seen as an innovative and effective form of communication between the institution and young people. It is also a

way to measure the institution's transparency on the management of funds and the fulfillment of the objectives set for the youth sector.

Monitoring and evaluation: Establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to ensure that youth involvement is effective and to identify areas that require improvement. Evaluation would be a good and necessary strategy to develop before drafting a youth plan, in order to identify the challenges and issues that most need improvement.

Improving the activity of the CVR: The KVR should be activated and take a more visible role in representing and supporting youth. This includes creating an action plan and engaging in activities and projects that involve young people. The municipality should encourage closer cooperation with youth organizations and the KVR to develop and support youth initiatives. This can be achieved through regular meetings, joint projects and resource sharing.

Eliminating political influences on the Local Youth Council: Regardless of election periods, it is important to create mechanisms to ensure that youth activities and cooperation are not influenced by politics, to guarantee a sustainable and effective functioning of the youth council and organizations.

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ANNEX 1

PHOTO DURING THE INTERVIEW WITH REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE MUNICIPALITY

Mirdita

YOUTH SECTOR

