

Provision of Public- Administrative Services at the Local Level



The Example of
Mitrovica South and
Novoberde

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Executive Summary

The GAP Institute, under the WeBER project, has evaluated the public administrative services provided by the Municipality of Mitrovica South and the Municipality of Novoberde. This assessment is based on the following three elements: to what extent is the administration focused towards the citizens, are there mechanisms that ensure a better quality, and is access of all citizens guaranteed.

The Municipality of Mitrovica South mainly applies three ways to provide public-administrative services to citizens: 1) in the relevant service office within the municipality, where citizens queue with electronic numbers in order to receive certain types of civil status certificates; 2) through three electronic devices (machines) one installed at the entrance of the municipality, and two in other parts of city and 3) through six civil registry offices located in six areas in the territory of the municipality. The reception office in the entrance of the municipality is another point for service delivery and this has greatly facilitated communication between the municipal directorates, and between the municipality and citizens. However, in addition to the digitalization of geodetic material and issuance of property tax invoices which can be made online (a process enabled by the Ministry of Finance), there are no other projects to enable the provision of online public-administrative services to citizens.

Despite these positive elements and avoiding long queues when receiving services, it is not yet fully clear what public-administrative services are provided to citizens, what is the procedure for their receipt and what is the price for each service. The complaints box is the only instrument to lodge a complaint about a service, but there is no other credible mechanism that allows citizens to give opinions and suggestions (not only complaints) on how to further improve public-administrative services. The municipality has established six registry offices in six villages: Suhodoll i Epërm, Zhabar, Shupkovc, Tunell i Parë, Stantërg and Bare. However, residents of the municipality of

Mitrovica estimate that this territorial extension is not sufficient because there is a considerable distance between villages Zaselle and Kçic and the nearest civil registry office in village Shupkovc. Also, in addition to the inclination at the entrance of the municipality to the first floor at the reception office, and in the municipality's annex where other certificates are issued, the mobility of disabled persons in other municipal floors is limited.

The Municipality of Novoberde provides public-administrative services to citizens through its Citizens Service Center and the four civil registry offices established in four villages of this municipality: Llabjan, Prekoc, Pasjak and Stanishor. However, citizens consider that the municipality should also operationalize the office established earlier in the village Jasenovik and thus the provision of services in this area would be closer to the citizens. The prices of all administrative services are part of the Regulation on Fees and Charges, approved by the Municipal Assembly. Novoberde municipality doesn't provide any online service and its residents who have been part of this survey believed there is no project or initiative taking the municipality of Novoberde towards digitization in the provision of public-administrative services.

Regarding the existence of mechanisms for the provision of opinions and suggestions to improve the provision of services to citizens, the municipality mainly applies public hearings when it comes to budget drafting and the complaint box. However, according to the citizens, the complaint box is used only by a small number of citizens due to the lack of opportunity for the complainants to remain anonymous (as a result of the position/position where the box is located and the small number of residents of this municipality). At the entrance of the municipality and at the entrance of the citizens service center there is an inclination for people with disabilities, but their movement on the other floors of the municipality is limited.

Introduction

Provision of services is one of the main principles of a public administration that essentially relates to three elements: 1) the focus of the administration towards the citizens, 2) existence of mechanisms that ensure a good quality of services from the administration, and 3) guaranteed access of citizens to such services. These three elements also have other aspects on the basis of which monitoring and evaluation of reforms takes place throughout the service delivery pillar. For example, with the first element, it is important whether the administration is open to citizens and the design of services is done with the mindset of how the service is obtained easier by citizens, online, etc. The second important element is whether service providers have designed mechanisms through which citizens have the opportunity to express their opinions on improving the service delivery. In the third element, it is important whether the administration has established branches /offices closer to citizens, if the administration is spread across the territory and that access for persons with disabilities is enabled. These three elements are the basic part of this paper and through them we evaluated the provision of services in two municipalities: Mitrovica South and Novoberde.

The adequate term used in English is “service delivery” and then other concepts such as public services and administrative services are used after the concept of service delivery. However, it is worth pointing out that not public utilities in the form of services such as electricity, water supply, waste collection, etc. are not treated in the paper, but rather the administrative services provided in the form of civil status certificates, ID cards, driver’s license, various certifications, which can be called administrative services. Although all of these services are ultimately public, as they are provided by the state, both public and administrative concepts make a clearer division into the character of services provided to citizens.

Public administration and steps to be taken by a country to reform it are not part of the body of EU laws (*acquis communautaire*), which would serve as the basis for a country to take reforms on the road towards EU accession. Nevertheless, six public administration principles have been developed at this level, serving as a framework for good and effective public administration. These principles have been developed for two sets of countries: candidate or potentially candidate countries for EU membership, and European Neighborhood Policy countries (ENP).¹ Based on the latest monitoring report published by OECD/SIGMA, the strategic framework for service delivery has been drafted but it does not contain a government vision for service delivery transformation.²

While drafting and coordination of central services delivery policies is part of the Ministry of Public Administration (MAP) portfolio, the Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) is the ministry responsible for the development of policies in service delivery at the local level. Moreover, under the Regulation on Areas of Administrative Responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministries, MLGA is also responsible for overseeing the quality of municipal services³. In this context, MLGA, United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in 2015 issued the “Kosovo Mosaic” as a continuation of UNDP reports since 2003. The purpose of the report is to measure the quality of public services and the performance of local governments in terms of service delivery. Although the report also includes the quality of services and the satisfaction of citizens with services such as water supply, electricity, emergency services, health-care, education, security and environment, which are not only the responsibility of municipalities, it is worth pointing out that the level of satisfaction of citizens with all public services has dropped from 2012 until 2015.⁴

¹ Public Administration Principles developed by OECD/SIGMA, accessible in: <http://bit.ly/2DzdITM>

² OECD/SIGMA, Monitoring Report, Principles of Public Administration, page: 102, accessible in <http://bit.ly/2BLUWtV>

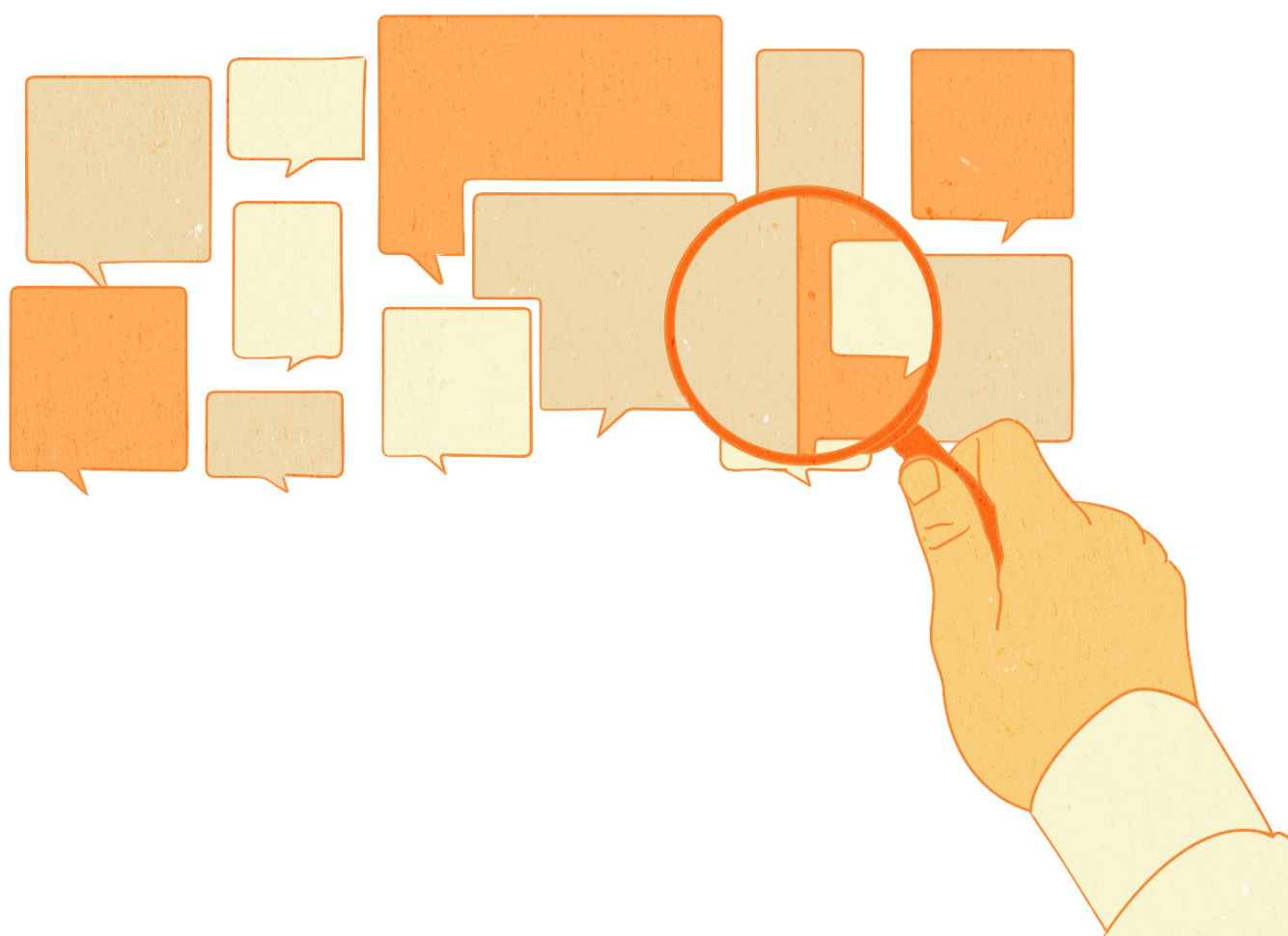
³ Regulation 02/2011 on the Areas of Administrative Responsibility of the Office of the Prime Minister and Ministries, Annex 12, point vii, accessible in: <http://bit.ly/2xzIzqm>

⁴ For more details on services and satisfaction level, see: Kosovo Mosaic 2015 via link: <http://bit.ly/2wkuTnr>

Methodology

The basic methodology for monitoring and evaluating services in Mitrovica South and Novoberde was realized through two focus groups organized in the two municipalities. Focus group participants were citizens, representatives of local NGOs and representatives of local media. The focus group discussion was guided by a number of questions that are relevant to the elements of service delivery mentioned above. In addition to focus groups, several meetings with administration officials in the two municipalities were part of the methodology, where the same questions were discussed in the focus group. The purpose of applying this methodology was to monitor the delivery of public-administrative services in the two municipalities using two sides or data sources: on one hand citizens, media and local NGOs, and on the other administration directorates on both municipalities.

Regarding access to information relevant to the delivery of services at the central level, a sample of central level institutions providing services at the local level is taken. Such institutions include: Kosovo Cadastral Agency (ACA), Civil Registration Agency (CRA), Kosovo Business Registration Agency (KBRA) and Tax Administration of Kosovo (TAK). The assessment of whether these institutions make public information relevant to citizens regarding service delivery was conducted through an online survey.





Municipality of Mitrovica South

The focus group with citizens, representatives of local civil society organizations and local media in Mitrovica South was held on 20 June 2017. The following is a summary of the findings emerging from the focus group ⁵ according to the questions addressed for the purpose of measuring

- 1) to what extent is the municipal administration in Mitrovica focused on citizens,
- 2) are there mechanisms available to enable citizens to provide opinions and proposals to the municipality to improve the quality of services delivered and
- 3) to extent is access for citizens to public services secured.

The left column includes the objective (or principle) and the right column the findings from the focus group which serve to evaluate the extent the principle in question has been met.

⁵ The Municipality of Mitrovica South failed to respond to the questions sent by the GAP Institute regarding the above-mentioned principles. The same questions that have been raised in the focus group have also been sent to the municipal Department of Administration so that the assessment of the fulfillment of objectives (principles) is done taking into account both sides: replies from the municipal administration on one hand and responses of the focus group on the other.



Administration focused on citizens

- Over the last few years, access to the administration has been made easier with regard to the provision of services and, as a result, time required to carry out public-administrative services in the municipality has decreased;
- Long queues citizens when obtaining public-administrative services have been eliminated through electronic numbers, extended working hours and three electronic machines offering a number of services;
- Electronic machines are not sufficiently used by citizens due to lack of knowledge in their use ;
- The reception office at the entrance of the municipality facilitated communication between citizens and the municipality, where citizens visit with complaints and requests which are then forwarded to the respective directorates;
- Citizens consider that the municipal administration is slowly moving towards digitization: there are some initiatives in this regard, such as: digitization of geodetic documentation which is underway and the property tax invoices will also be available online;
- In addition to the data on procedures and prices for obtaining civil status certificates, there is no single web page that publishes information on the procedures and prices of all public-administrative services;
- In addition to the complaint box, there is no other credible mechanism that enables citizens to offer opinions on ways to improve public-administrative services;



Existence of mechanisms that ensure a good quality of public services

- There is no project by local NGOs focused on monitoring and evaluation of public-administrative services provided;
- There is no accessible information or performance report on service delivery that the municipality draws up and publishes;



Citizens' access to public services is ensured

- Territorial coverage of the municipality in the provision of services is not good enough even though six civil registry offices were distributed in the territory of the municipality. For example: residents of villages Zaselle and Kcic should come to the registry office in Shupkovc to obtain municipal services. The distance between these villages is considered significant by citizens;
- The municipal administration is physically accessible only on the first floor because there is an inclination for access for people with disabilities from the yard of the municipal building. However, there is no elevator in the municipal building and people with disabilities have freedom of movement only up to the first floor;
- Citizens are not informed if municipal officials for service delivery have had any training on communication with persons with disabilities;
- The municipality does not offer other channels for the delivery of services, other than physical access to the municipality and through the electronic machines;

6 One machine is located at the entrance of the municipal building, one near the city's library (Agim Hajrizi square) and another on the Queen Teuta street (near the bus station). The machine at entrance of the municipality is open 24 hours a day, while the other two with shorter operation hours.



Municipality of Novoberde

The focus group with citizens and representatives of local civil society organizations in Novoberde was held on 6 July 2017. The same questions were addressed in both focus groups and the following table shows the results ⁷ according to the questions addressed for the purpose of assessing

- 1) to what extent is the municipal administration in Novoberde focused on citizens,
- 2) are there mechanisms available to enable citizens to provide opinions and proposals to the municipality to improve the quality of services delivered and
- 3) to extent is access for citizens to public services secured.

Findings for each of the three principles serve to assess how much the principle in question has been met.

⁷ It is important to highlight that the Municipality of Novoberde sent its replies to the questions sent by the GAP Institute regarding the above-mentioned principles. The same questions that have been raised in the focus group have also been sent to the municipal Department of Administration so that the assessment of the fulfillment of objectives (principles) is done also taking into account the replies of the municipal administration.



Administration focused on citizens

- There are no long queues of citizens waiting to receive services due to the fact that the Municipality of Novoberde doesn't have a high number of residents;
- The Municipality, in cooperation with MLGA and USAID, established the Citizens Service Center which provides services to citizens;
- After setting up the digital database for registration, services do not take much time unless the system is out of function;
- There are no online services that may be provided by the citizens of Novobërdë municipality;
- The prices of are part of the Regulation on Fees and Charges, which is approved by the Municipal Assembly.
- In the municipality of Novobërdë there are no local NGOs with projects in terms of assessing the municipal performance in service delivery to citizens;



Existence of mechanisms that ensure a good quality of public services

- The municipality applies "public hearings" as a way to obtain input from citizens, mainly during the period of the budget approval. Whereas the "complaint box" in the municipality of Novobërdë is not used because of the position where the box is located, as citizens cannot remain anonymous and often the complaints are made directly to municipal directors. There is no feedback mechanism in place to obtain information to improve service delivery;
- Citizens and NGOs are not involved in monitoring and evaluating public-administrative services by the municipality;
- There is no accessible information or performance report on service delivery that the municipality draws up and publishes;



Citizens' access to public services is ensured

- Territorial coverage of the municipality in the provision of services is not good even though four civil registry offices are distributed in the municipality, in four villages. Llabjan, Prekoc, Pasjak and Stanishor. Citizens have also considered the need for the operationalization of the office in village Jasenovik, which was earlier established but never put into function;
- The municipal administration is physically accessible only on the first floor because for access for people with disabilities as there is an inclination for entrance to the building. There is no elevator in the municipal building and people with disabilities have freedom of movement only in the first floor; The inclination also exists at the entrance of the reception office;
- Citizens are not informed if municipal officials for service delivery have had any training on communication with persons with disabilities;
- The municipality does not offer other channels for the delivery of services, other than physical access to the municipality;

Access to relevant information on public services at the central level



























A considerable number of public-administrative services provided at the local level are under the responsibility of central level institutions, for example: The Civil Registration Agency (ARC) has offices mainly in the municipal building and offers a number of services such as ID cards, passports, drivers' licenses, etc. This is also the case with the cadaster, where the Kosovo Cadastral Agency (KCA) through the Municipal Cadastral Office (MCO), provides certain services to the citizens, Kosovo Business Registration Agency (ARBK) has installed "one-stop-shop" offices for business registration, etc. As these institutions provide public-administrative services at the local level, this section analyzes the extent that the required information for access to such services is available online for citizens. Since Tax Administration of Kosovo (TAK) does not apply fees awards for a number of public and administrative certificates and other public services that can be obtained online, this institution was assessed whether if it has posted full contacts and provided information on how citizens can receive online services through TAK's main website.

As seen in the table below, there are a number of elements that show how basic information is accessible online for citizens. For example, what is the price of an administrative service, is there a difference between the price of the service if offered online and physically, are such prices published, are they easily accessible and in what format are they provided to citizens. For example, two of the agencies listed in Table 1 show prices of services, ARC does not have its website and some information is provided separately on the website of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MIA) while no prices for administrative services was found in TAK. In terms of whether prices are easily accessible for such services and agencies that apply fees, KCA and ARBK have listed the prices but in the form of administrative instructions and in PDF format. Regarding the focal point for the institution, with the exception of the ARC, the three other agencies/institutions have listed on their websites the full name and the address of the institution in question.⁸

⁸ It is worth noting that this doesn't include only the e-mail address, but also the full street address and all other details.

Table 1.

Access to important information about public-administrative services⁹

Elements of transparency	ACA	KBRA	CRA	TAK
Public-administrative services delivered by the institution are public			 ¹⁰	
The difference in prices of services provided physically and online				
Public-administrative services pricing information is available on the centralized website	 ¹¹	 ¹²		
The published information is in an open format	 ¹³			
Contact information is published	 ¹⁴			
Clear advice/guidance on how to access public-administrative services has been provided				

⁹ Elements of transparency were assessed in January 2018.

¹⁰ CRA doesn't have separate websites from the MIA and only some partial information is provided separately: some information on public-administrative services for the citizens that CRA offers is provided on the MIA websites and some on the national portal of the Republic of Kosovo.

¹¹ In the form of AI No. 11 of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP) on KCA fees for products and services: <http://bit.ly/2FINAMT>

¹² In the form of AI No. 03/2015 of the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) on determining the fees for the services provided by KBRA: <http://bit.ly/2CYmFZ3>

¹³ The information is in PDF as part of the AI No. 11 as above.

¹⁴ KCA has published the address in its website but also the contacts of officials in Municipal Cadastral Offices (MCOs) in 36 municipalities of Kosovo: <http://bit.ly/2moYvNV>

Conclusions and recommendations

Public-administrative services at the local level are mainly provided to citizens physically in the office desks that deliver such services. The municipality of Mitrovica South has started a geodetic digitalization process and now, through the Ministry of Finance, it allows for property tax invoices to be issued and paid online. Municipality of Novobërde does not offer any online service. The civil status offices in both municipalities cover most of the territory of the municipality, but citizens in both municipalities have highlighted the need for additional offices to have a full coverage in territory of the municipality. Regarding the existence of mechanisms that enable citizens to provide suggestions /suggestions to improve the service delivery, the two municipalities use complaint boxes and have thus far not developed any reliable mechanism that offers suggestions for improving the services based on citizen satisfaction with service delivery. In terms of physical access for persons with disabilities, both municipalities have installed inclinations at the entrance of the municipal building (and in annexes, in the Citizens Service Center in Novobërdë), but the movement of this category of citizens to other parts of the municipality is limited.

Based on the above and the conclusions, the GAP Institute recommends the following:

For the Municipality of Mitrovica South:

The municipality should continue with the digitalization process and enable the provision of a number of services online;

The municipality should have a single page (a section on the main website of the municipality) listing all types of public-administrative services that the municipality offers, the procedures for obtaining them, the contact address and the prices for each service;

The municipality should begin measuring the citizens satisfaction with the public-administrative services they provide. This can be done by hiring, on an annual basis, a professional company specialized in surveys and opinion polls, and the results of such surveys should guide the municipality in re-designing the provision of services. The results of such surveys should be made public on municipal websites;

The municipality should consider the establishment of a civil registry office for residents of Kçiç, Zaselle and other villages in this district so that the civil registry office in Shupkovc is not the nearest office for these villages;

The municipality, i.e. the administration department, should prepare an annual report on the performance of the municipality in the provision of services and discuss this report with local NGOs, citizens, local media, and the report should be published on the municipal website;

The municipality should consider training and certifying all officials interacting with citizens in the provision of services, especially those with disabilities;

The municipality should consider periodic checks of two electronic machines for issuing of documents (the one in Agim Hajrizi Square near the library, and the one in Queen Teuta street) to ensure they are functional 24 hours a day;

For the Municipality of Novoberde

The municipality should make preparations to initiate the process of digitalization of the administration and provision of online public-administrative services;

The section of services on the municipal website should clearly stipulate the types of services, the procedures for obtaining such services and the prices for the service. Prices of services should be also be shown in this section, rather than only in the Regulation on Fees and Charges;

The municipality should begin measuring the citizens satisfaction with the public-administrative services they provide. This can be done by hiring, on an annual basis, a professional company specialized in surveys and opinion polls, and the results of such surveys should guide the municipality in re-designing the provision of services. The results of such surveys should be made public on municipal websites;

The municipality should make functional the Civil Status Office, which was established earlier in the village of Jasenovik;

For KCA and KBRA

KCA and KBRA should list the prices for services in an open format, placed on the main section of the website, the procedures for providing services and guidance on how citizens should access such services;

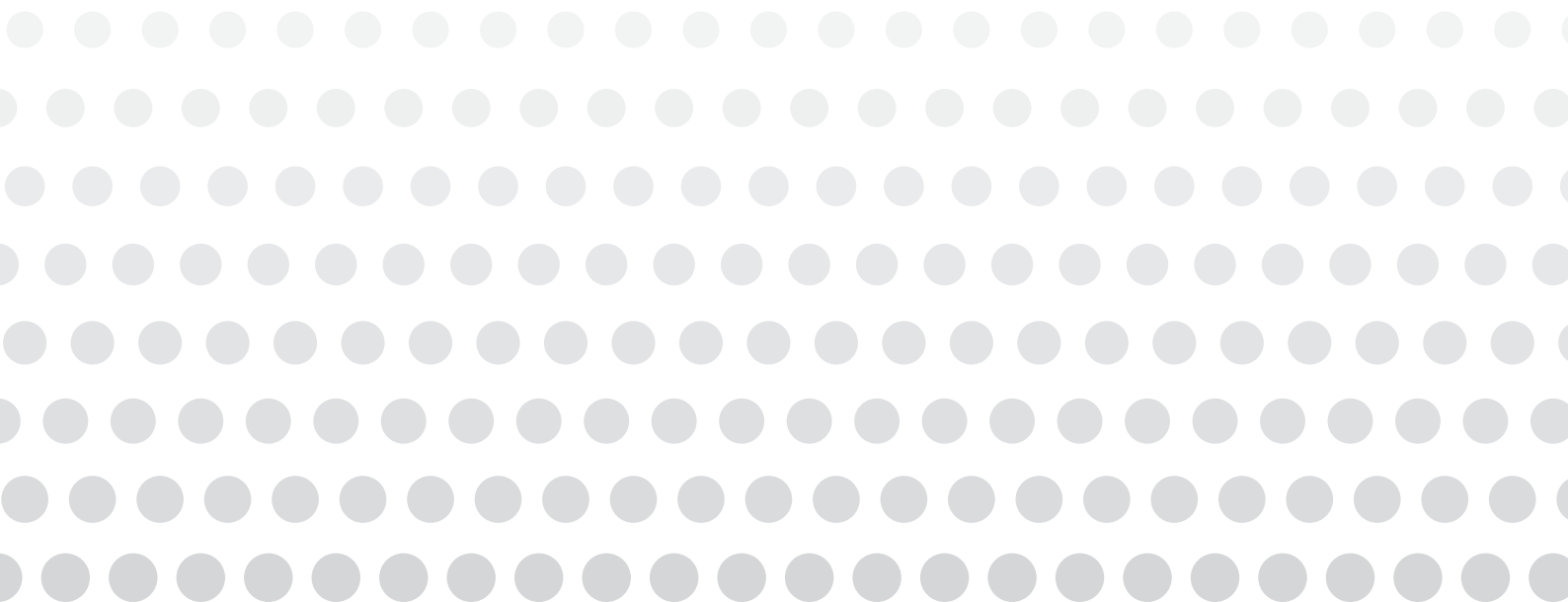
For CRA:

The CRA should create a separate website from the MIA, providing all the information required for the services it provides, procedures for obtaining them, guidelines for citizens on how to access them and all prices for each service. All such information should be open and easily accessible to citizens;



GAP INSTITUTE

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