



Funded by
the European Union



Second Round of Mystery Shopping
in Three Selected Public Services:
Birth Registration, Maternity Leave Extension,
and Pension Verification



Group for Legal
and Political
Studies

Group for Legal and Political Studies
Rr. "Rexhep Luci". 16/1 Prishtinë 10 000, Kosovo
Uebfaqe: www.legalpoliticalstudies.org
Email: office@legalpoliticalstudies.org
Tel/fax: +383 38 234 456

Second Round of Mystery Shopping in Three Selected Public Services:

Birth Registration, Maternity Leave Extension, and Pension Verification

ACT NOW -

Supporting the Reform of Public
Administration and the Rule of Law
through Combating Corruption and
Improving the Delivery of Services

*This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of GLPS and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

Contents

Introduction and Methodology	5
Service 1: Registration of children in the civil registry office	7
<i>Data from questionnaires</i>	8
<i>Other perceptions of the parties</i>	12
<i>Recommendations</i>	12
Service 2: Extension of maternity leave	13
<i>Data from questionnaires</i>	14
<i>Other perceptions of the parties</i>	16
<i>Recommendations</i>	16
Service 3: Confirmation of pension extension	17
<i>Data from questionnaires</i>	17
<i>Other perceptions of the parties</i>	19
<i>Recommendations</i>	20

Introduction and Methodology

This report was designed within the framework of the project "ACT NOW – Supporting Public Administration Reform and the Rule of Law through Fighting Corruption and Improving Service Delivery", supported by the European Union Office in Kosovo and implemented by the Group for Legal and Policy Studies (GLPS). The project aims to contribute to increasing the quality of public services, by identifying challenges and opportunities for improvement in the delivery of public administration services.

One of the approaches used in this project is Mystery Shopping, a research methodology that provides an authentic perspective on citizens' experiences when receiving public services. In Mystery Shopping, selected monitors act as ordinary customers, following pre-defined scenarios, in order to evaluate key elements of public services. These individuals report on the quality of communication with staff, the accuracy of information provided, waiting time and the implementation of prescribed procedures. The data collected from these reports serve to analyze the performance of services and suggest possible improvements.

The selection of services and the entire activity has been implemented in close cooperation and coordination with the Office for Strategic Planning within the Office of the Prime Minister, under the Program for the Prevention and Reduction of Administrative Burden, which is co-financed by the European Union and the German Government, and implemented by GIZ.

In this mystery shopping, three services from the public administration were analyzed:

1. First service: Registration of newborn children in the civil registry
2. Second service: Extension of maternity leave after 6 months
3. Third service: Verification for pensions

The methodology for collecting data in this Mystery Shopping exercise has been developed in several interrelated phases aimed at providing accurate and representative data on the quality of selected public services.

In the first phase, the Act Now team designed three specific questionnaires, each linked to one of the monitored public services. The questionnaires consisted of closed questions with predefined options and spaces for open comments, enabling citizens to share their experience and perceptions during the service delivery.

In the second phase, five field data collection officers were selected. Before the data collection process began, these officers were trained by field professionals in the use of questionnaires and data collection techniques. The training included instructions on maintaining a consistent, anonymous and professional approach throughout the monitoring process.

Data collection was carried out during the period 24-28 March 2025 in five regions of Kosovo: Prishtina, Mitrovica, Peja, Gjilan and Ferizaj. During this period, monitoring officers met and introduced themselves to citizens, and then accompanied them during the provision of services, observing the process and completing questionnaires in real time. A total of 184 citizens were interviewed, who were distributed across the three services as follows: 73 citizens for the child registration service in the civil status register, 13 citizens for the maternity leave extension service and 98 citizens for the age-based pension verification service.

The data is organized by regions and services and their breakdown is illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Sample of monitored services

Regiona:	First service (Registration of newborn children in the civil registry)	Second service (Extension of maternity leave)	Third service (Verification for pensions)	Total of respondents:
Prishtina	18	12	17	47
Mitrovica	19	0	17	36
Peja	17	0	26	43
Gjilan	12	1	16	29
Ferizaj	7	0	22	29
Total	73	13	98	184

After citizens completed the assigned services, monitors recorded the collected data in a centralized database, including both questionnaire responses and citizens' comments and impressions. This documentation aims to provide a detailed overview of citizens' experiences during the service delivery and identify the main challenges they encountered.

Service 1: Registration of children in the civil registry office

The registration of children in the civil registry is one of the most important public administrative services provided by the public administration due to the fact that through this process the person born at the time of registration becomes a subject of law, i.e. acquires legal capacity, which is one of the main relationships of the individual with the state.

In the context of modernizing services and reducing the administrative burden, the civil registration service for children is a “life event” type, which means that the fact of the birth of a child also requires the interaction of the state, that is, the public administration. This service is currently only offered at physical counters located in general public hospitals, while when births occur in private hospitals, the registration of newborns is also done at the counters of public hospitals.

This service is delegated from the central level (Civil Registration Agency - CRA) to the municipal level and the person responsible for registering children is the civil status officer in the municipality.

The legal basis for child registration includes: Law No. 04/l-003 on civil status¹, Law 02/L-118 on personal name,² Administrative Instruction (MIA) No. 17/2015 on the general procedure for registering the fact of birth, marriage and death,³ Administrative Instruction (MIA) No. 06/2016 on the personal number,⁴ Administrative Instruction (MIA) No. 12/2016 on determining the procedure for digitizing scanned basic civil status registers,⁵ Municipal regulations on taxes, fees and fines.⁶

To register a child in the civil registry, these documents are required and must be presented by the party themselves:

- Copy of a valid identification document of the person declaring the birth;
- Original medical report from a health institution;
- Marriage certificate of the parents, if they are married;
- In case the parents are not married and the father acknowledges paternity, the record of acknowledgement of paternity must also be completed;
- In case the father of the child is not known, the registration is made based on the mother's data;
- In case the acknowledgement of paternity is made after the registration of the child's birth, the surname accepted in the record must appear only in the extract from the central registry;
- In the case where the parents are not married in the Republic of Kosovo, but are married in another country, the marriage certificate must be provided;⁷

The above-mentioned documents, regardless of whether they are in the possession of the civil registry office or other public bodies or not, are required to be brought by the party. Such a regulation is contrary to the principle of conducting administrative proceedings ex officio as set out in Article 86, paragraph 3 of the General Administrative Procedure Law (GAPL).⁸

1 Law No. 04/l-003 on civil status. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2743>

2 Law 02/L-118 on personal name. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDocumentDetail.aspx?ActID=2570>

3 Administrative Instruction (Mpb) No. 17/2015 on the general procedure for registering the fact of birth, marriage and death. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=11020>

4 Administrative Instruction (Mpb) No. 06/2016 on the personal number. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=12653>

5 Administrative Instruction (Mpb) No. 12/2016 on determining the procedure for digitizing scanned basic civil status registers. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=12900>

6 Municipal regulations on taxes, fees and fines. Available on: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=90449>

7 Administrative Instruction (MPB) No. 17/2015 on the general procedure for registering the fact of birth, marriage and death; Article 5 paragraph 1. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=11020>

8 Law No. 05/l -031 on General Administrative Procedure; Article 86 paragraph 3. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=12559>

The child registration process is free of charge, while the certificate issued after registration costs 1 euro.





Since this service is a "life event" type, it has been digitalized through the initiative of the Digital Transformation Unit and is currently in the piloting phase, with the support of the Program for the Reduction and Prevention of Administrative Burden. The service can be found on the state portal e-Kosova under the life events heading "childbirth". This electronic tool, in addition to registering the child by health workers, will simultaneously initiate the processes for registering the child in the civil registry, registering the mother and child for benefits, opening parents' accounts on the eKosova platform, and registering the health data of the mother and child in the electronic health registry.

Data from questionnaires

Citizens who had completed the civil registration service for children were asked to share their experiences by answering structured questions covering several key aspects of the process. The questions aimed to highlight the waiting time, the clarity of the information provided, the behavior and professionalism of the staff, the number of visits required to complete the service, as well as aspects of payment and documentation required.






First, it was measured how long citizens waited to perform this service. The majority of them, 47%, waited less than 5 minutes, suggesting a relatively quick procedure. Another part, 32%, waited between 5 and 10 minutes, while for 19% of them the wait lasted from 10 to 20 minutes. Only 3% of citizens reported waiting more than 20 minutes, which indicates that situations of prolonged waiting are rarer.

Table 2. Waiting time for service 1

How long did you wait to perform the service?		
Less than 5 minutes	47%	
5-10 minutes	32%	
10-20 minutes	19%	
More than 20 minutes	3%	

Next, citizens were asked to indicate how clear they found the information regarding the location of the office, the necessary documents, and the procedures for registering a child. The majority of respondents, 63%, reported that the information was very clear, indicating that communication about the procedure was generally good. Another 25% said that the information was moderately clear, while 7% reported that the information was a little unclear. 1% of citizens described the information as not at all clear.

Table 3. Clarity of information about service 1

How clear was your information regarding the location, necessary documents, etc. before coming to perform this service?		
Not at all	1%	
A little	7%	
Moderately	25%	
A lot	63%	
I refuse to answer	4%	

In the next question, citizens were asked to assess whether staff had provided them with accurate and understandable information regarding the child registration service. The majority of them, 77%, reported that the information provided by staff was accurate and understandable. A smaller percentage, 18%, stated that the information was somewhat accurate, suggesting that there were

cases when staff were not completely clear in communicating the details of the service. 3% of respondents reported that they did not receive accurate and understandable information.

Table 4. Provision of information by staff about service 1

Did the staff provide you with accurate and understandable information about the service?		
No	3%	■
At some point	18%	■
Yes	77%	■
I refuse to answer	3%	■

Citizens were then asked to rate the behavior and professionalism of staff during the child registration process. The vast majority of respondents, 84%, reported that staff were polite and professional. A smaller percentage, 16%, stated that staff behavior and professionalism were somewhat satisfactory, suggesting that there were cases where the approach to citizens could be improved. For this question, none of the respondents reported unprofessional behavior by staff.

Table 5. Staff behavior and professionalism for service 1

Was the staff polite and professional?		
No	0%	
At some point	16%	■
Yes	84%	■






Next, citizens were asked to indicate whether they encountered any problems during the service and whether the staff helped in solving them. The majority, 70%, reported that they received the necessary assistance from the staff to solve the problems they encountered during the procedure. Another part, 12%, said that the assistance from the staff was somewhat sufficient, suggesting that there were situations where the staff's intervention was not fully effective. Despite this, 14% of citizens emphasized that they did not receive assistance from the staff in cases where they encountered difficulties, thus identifying an important space for improvement in the assistance to citizens during the service.

Table 6. Provision of assistance by the staff for Service 1

If you had a problem while receiving the service, did the staff help you resolve it?		
No	14%	■
At some point	12%	■
Yes	70%	■
I refuse to answer	4%	■





At this stage, citizens were asked to indicate the number of institutions they had contact with during the child registration process. For a significant proportion, 33%, the service was completed without the need to contact any other institution, suggesting a simplified process without major complications. A similar percentage, 34%, had contact with only one institution, indicating that for them, the process was also clear and straightforward. Meanwhile, 27% of citizens had to contact two other institutions to complete the procedure, while a small percentage, 4%, were involved in communication with three other institutions. Only 1% reported that four institutions were contacted during the performance of this service, suggesting rare cases of complications or additional requests.

Table 7. Number of institutions contacted before providing the service 1

How many other institutions have you had contact with before you performed this service?		
0	33%	
1	34%	
2	27%	
3	4%	
4	1%	





Next, citizens were asked to indicate whether they completed the service in a single visit or whether they had to return multiple times to complete the child registration requirements. The majority of them, 73%, reported that they were able to complete the service in a single visit, indicating a relatively easy and efficient process for most citizens. Another percentage, 19%, had to return a second time due to lack of documents or due to incomplete information about the procedure. A very small number, only 1%, reported that they had returned three or more times to complete the service, while 7% of citizens failed to complete the service during the monitoring period.

Table 8. Number of visits to perform the service 1

Did you complete the service in one visit, or did you have to return several times?		
1 visit	73%	
2 visits	19%	
3+ visits	1%	
I haven't finished it yet.	7%	





Next, citizens were asked if they had completed any documents or forms before the child registration procedure began. The majority of them, 78%, reported that they had completed documents or forms before the process began, indicating that requesting documentation before starting the procedure is common practice.

Table 9. Documents completed before performing the service 1

Have you completed any documents before the registration procedure begins?		
No	8%	
At some point	8%	
Yes	78%	
I refuse to answer	5%	




Citizens were also asked to indicate whether they had received sufficient information from the hospital regarding the obligation to register their child. The majority of them, 71%, reported that they had received sufficient information. Another 18% said that the information received was somewhat sufficient, suggesting that there were cases where the information was unclear or incomplete. Meanwhile, 8% of respondents reported that they had not received any information regarding the obligation to register their child.

Table 10. Preliminary information on the obligation to perform the service 1

Did the hospital provide you with sufficient information about your obligation to register your child?		
No	8%	
At some point	18%	
Yes	71%	
I refuse to answer	3%	




Citizens were asked about the time they completed the child registration procedure, and the responses show an even split. For 49% of them, the registration was completed immediately after birth, suggesting a high awareness of the importance of immediate registration and perhaps a facilitated process for this group. At the same time, 49% of citizens completed the registration later, indicating that for a considerable portion, the registration process does not occur immediately after birth—sometimes due to births taking place in private hospitals, where there are no child registration centers.

Table 11. Service 1 completion time

When did you complete the child registration procedure?		
Immediately after birth	49%	
Later	49%	
I refuse to answer	1%	




In this question, citizens were asked whether they were aware of the costs and fees before coming to perform the child registration service. The majority of them, 63%, stated that they were informed about the costs before the visit. On the other hand, 22% reported that they had no information about the costs and fees of the service, while 15% of respondents stated that they had only some knowledge about them.

Table 12. Knowledge of service 1 charges

Did you know the costs and taxes (if any) before you came to perform the service?		
No	22%	
At some point	15%	
Yes	63%	




Regarding payment, 85% of citizens confirmed that they paid for the service, indicating that in most cases, the service is not free. A small percentage, 10%, reported that they did not pay, while 5% preferred not to answer this question.

Table 13. Payment for service 11

Did you pay for the service?		
No	10%	
Yes	85%	
I refuse to answer	5%	

Of those who paid, the vast majority, 89%, made the payment in cash, highlighting the reliance on traditional forms of payment and the lack of digital alternatives. No cases of electronic payment were reported, suggesting that this option is not available to citizens who perform this service. For 3% of citizens, the payment was still pending at the time of the interview, while 8% did not make a payment or preferred not to answer.

Table 14. Payment method for service 1

If so, how was the payment made?		
Still unfinished	3%	
In cash	89%	
Electronically	0%	
I refuse to answer/ not made the payment	8%	

In the overall assessment of the child registration process, the majority of citizens, 55%, rated their experience as very good, indicating a high level of satisfaction with the service provided. Another percentage, 32%, rated the process as good, confirming a generally positive perception of this service. A smaller percentage, 12%, reported that their experience was average, suggesting that for this group there may have been challenges or delays that affected their satisfaction. Only 1% of citizens rated the process as poor.

Table 15. Overall assessment of the service 1 delivery process

Based on your experience, how would you overall evaluate the process of providing this service?		
Poor	1%	
Average	12%	
Good	32%	
Very good	55%	

Other perceptions of the parties

During the monitoring of the civil registration service for children, several patterns of experiences shared in the form of comments by service users were identified. A large number of them emphasized the efficiency and positive behavior of the staff, assessing that “the process went quickly and very well” and that “the staff was very polite”.

However, for some users, the process was confusing due to a lack of prior information. One of them stated: “As a young mother, I found this process difficult because I had no general knowledge of how it works.”

Another recurring issue was the overlapping of documents and the request to fill in data that was already in the system. One user noted: “They are asking to fill out a form where the data is the same as what is in the personal documents that the staff has access to. A bit tedious as a process to rewrite the data that they have on the certificate.” Also, some users raised concerns about the lack of coordination between private hospitals and public centers for child registration. As one of them noted: “The woman gave birth in a private hospital and had to go to the center located in the public hospital, although these documents should have been in the system.”

Recommendations

Based on assessments of the legal basis and observations from Mystery Shopping, we provide these recommendations:

1. Amend the legal basis to enable the registration of newborn children to be carried out ex officio without the need for the party to bring documents that are already in the possession of public administration bodies, such as a copy of the valid identification document of the person declaring the birth, the original medical report from the health institution, the marriage certificate of the parents, if they are married. The current provisions are not in accordance with Article 86 of the LPPA.⁹
2. Remove forms and the need to fill them out,
3. Remove fees for registering newborn children,
4. Functionalize the “childbirth” service on the e-Kosova portal as soon as possible so that child registration can be done in a digitalized and faster manner..

⁹ Law No. 04/L-003 on Civil Status, Law No. 02/L-118 on Personal Name, Administrative Instruction (MoIA) No. 17/2015 on the General Procedure for the Registration of Birth, Marriage and Death, Administrative Instruction (MoIA) No. 06/2016 on Personal Number, Administrative Instruction (MoIA) No. 12/2016 on Determining the Procedure for the Digitalization of Scanned Basic Civil Status Registers, Municipal Regulations on Taxes, Fees and Fines.

Service 2: Extension of maternity leave

According to the Labor Law, employed women are entitled to 12 months of maternity leave, of which the first 6 months of maternity leave are paid by the employer with a compensation of 70% of the basic salary, while the following 3 months, maternity leave is paid by the Government of Kosovo with a compensation of 50% of the average salary in Kosovo.¹⁰

This service is under the jurisdiction and administered by the Employment Agency of the Republic of Kosovo (APRK).

The legal basis for this service is Law No. 03/L-212 on Labor and Administrative Instruction No. (MLSW) NO. 01/2018 on regulating the administrative procedures for compensation for maternity leave paid by the government.¹¹

The procedure begins with the submission of the request in physical form, which is structured as a form and can be submitted to the EARK or its local offices where the woman resides. The request is structured as a form to which the following documents must be attached:

- Decision on granting maternity leave by the employer (original), (document on self-confirmation of the decision for self-employed women who use maternity leave paid by the Government of Kosovo)
- Child's birth certificate or extract (original)
- Photocopy of ID card
- Bank confirmation of the bank account
- Copy of passport (for foreign citizens)
- Account statement from the Pension Savings Fund
- Business certificate for self-employed women
- Decision issued by the employer (in cases of transfer of child custody from mother to father under the agreement for the use of maternity leave)
- Decision on the right to adopt the child issued by the competent court, according to the place of residence - the relevant municipality (Adopter of the child)¹²

Of the above-mentioned documents, with the exception of those that only the party has (when the employer is private or when the mother is self-employed), most are in the possession of the EARK or other public bodies.¹³ However, they are still required to be brought by the party. Such a regulation is contrary to the principle of conducting administrative proceedings ex officio as set out in Article 86, paragraph 3 of the LPPA.¹⁴

This service is free of charge.

The service is provided only physically and there is still no initiative to digitize it. Such a way of providing this service is a burden for women in labor because benefiting from this service requires the provision of several documents that are provided by several public bodies separately, causing a loss of time for the party and unnecessary costs.

¹⁰ Law No. 03/L-212 on Labor; Article 49 Maternity Leave. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-ov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=2735>

¹¹ Administrative Instruction (MLSW) No. 01/2018 on regulating the administrative procedures for compensation for maternity leave paid by the government. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=16253>

¹² Administrative Instruction (MLSW) No. 01/2018 on regulating the administrative procedures for compensation for maternity leave paid by the government, Article 5. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=16253>




¹³ Documents/data such as: 1) The child's birth certificate or extract (original), copy of the ID card are held by the Civil Registration Agency and are also available in the electronic civil registry; 2) Pension savings account statement held by the Pension Savings Fund and e-Kosova; 3) Business certificate for self-employed women held by the Business Registration Agency (ARBK) and available in the public registry of ARBK; 4) Decision on the right to adopt a child issued by the competent court, based on residence – respective municipality, held by the court.

¹⁴ Law No. 05/L-031 on General Administrative Procedure; Article 86 paragraph 3. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=12559>

Data from questionnaires



For the maternity leave extension procedure, only 15% of citizens reported waiting less than 5 minutes to receive the service, while for 38% of them the wait lasted from 5 to 10 minutes. For the majority, 46%, the wait lasted from 10 to 20 minutes, suggesting a longer procedure compared to other monitored services.

Table 16. Waiting time for service 2

How long did you wait to perform the service?		
Less than 5 minutes	15%	
5-10 minutes	38%	
10-20 minutes	46%	
More than 20 minutes	0%	




Regarding the clarity of information, 46% of citizens reported that the information was very clear, while the majority, 54%, considered it to be moderately clear. No cases were reported where the information was considered not at all clear.

Table 17. Clarity of information about service 2

How clear was your information regarding the location, necessary documents, etc. before coming to perform this service?		
Not at all	0%	
A little	0%	
Moderately	54%	
A lot	46%	



Regarding the information provided by staff regarding the procedure for extending maternity leave, 85% of citizens reported that the information was somewhat accurate, indicating a high level of uncertainty and lack of clarity on the part of staff. Only 15% of respondents stated that the information was completely accurate and understandable.

Table 18. Provision of information by staff about service 2

Did the staff provide you with accurate and understandable information about the service?		
No	0%	
At some point	85%	
Yes	15%	
I refuse to answer	3%	



In line with this, only 31% of citizens assessed the behavior and professionalism of the staff as very good, while for 69% of them, the behavior of the staff was somewhat professional, highlighting the room for improvement in the way the staff communicates and assists citizens in this service.

Table 19. Staff behavior and professionalism for service 2

Was the staff polite and professional?		
No	0%	
At some point	69%	
Yes	31%	





The staff's assistance in solving problems was positively assessed by 85% of citizens, who reported that they received the necessary help to overcome difficulties. For a smaller percentage, 15%, the assistance was somewhat sufficient.

Table 20. Providing assistance from staff for service 2

If you had a problem while receiving the service, did the staff help you resolve it?		
No	0%	
At some point	15%	
Yes	85%	




Next, citizens were asked about the number of institutions they had contact with during the procedure. 77% of them had to contact two other institutions, indicating that the process for extending maternity leave involves more institutions and requires more coordination. For 8% of citizens, the service was provided without the need for contact with any other institution, while another 8% had to contact three other institutions.

Table 21. Number of institutions contacted before providing the service 2

How many other institutions have you had contact with before you performed this service?		
0	8%	
1	8%	
2	77%	
3	8%	



Regarding the number of visits required to complete the service, 62% of citizens managed to complete it in a single visit. Another 31%, returned a second time due to document requests or misunderstandings in the procedure, while 8% reported returning three or more times to complete the process.

Table 22. Number of visits to perform the service 2

Did you complete the service in one visit, or did you have to return several times?		
1 visit	62%	
2 visits	31%	
3+ visits	8%	



When citizens were asked to indicate whether they had filled out any documents or forms, 92% of them reported that they had filled out documents before the procedure began.

Table 23. Documents completed before performing service 2

Have you completed any documents before the registration procedure began?		
No	0%	
Yes	92%	
I refuse to answer	8%	




Regarding information from the employer about the extension of paid maternity leave, 85% of citizens stated that they received sufficient information about this right, while for 15% the information was somewhat sufficient.

Table 24. Preliminary information on the obligation to perform service 2**Did your employer provide you with sufficient information to exercise your right to paid maternity leave (50%) after 6 months?**

No	0%	
At some point	15%	
Yes	85%	

In the overall assessment of the process for extending maternity leave, the majority of citizens, 62%, rated their experience as average, suggesting that there were more challenges and complications for this service compared to other services. A smaller percentage, 31%, reported that their experience was good, while only 8% rated the process as very good.

Table 25. Overall assessment of the service 2 delivery process**Based on your experience, how would you overall evaluate the process of providing this service?**

Poor	0%	
Average	62%	
Good	31%	
Very good	8%	

Other perceptions of the parties

Regarding the request for documents during the registration process, some users reported significant challenges. For some users, the procedure required more than one visit to the center, resulting in additional time and inconvenience. "I came twice since I came to get information on how the procedure works the first time," one user noted. Additionally, in certain cases, users were required to provide medical reports or additional documents from the employer, making the process longer and more complicated. This also indicates that information about the service is not easily accessible to all users. "I had to come twice because of some doctor's reports that I had to bring," another participant stated.

Recommendations

Based on the assessments of the legal basis and the observations from this Mystery Shopping, we provide these recommendations:

1. For employees in the public sector, maternity payments after the 6th to 9th month are made automatically by creating an electronic system and linking it to the payroll system and the human resources information system,
2. For employees outside the public sector, an electronic system should be created that enables the uploading of necessary documents that are not available to public bodies for the purposes of providing this service. The use of forms should only be an exception for parties who insist on applying physically. Even in these cases, their simplification should be made.
3. EARK should play a proactive role by informing citizens through clear and simple instructions on the realization of maternity pay after the 6th month until the 9th month.

Service 3: Confirmation of pension extension

Confirmation of pension extension for persons receiving pensions is not a service in itself but only a legal requirement for the provision of pension services related to the condition of being alive to receive the pension.

This legal requirement is set out in Law No. 04/L-131 on State-Funded Pension Schemes. According to Article 24, paragraph 2 of this law, "Beneficiaries of the basic old-age pension and beneficiaries of early pensions must report to the offices designated by the Ministry once every six months with the relevant identification documents."¹⁵

This provision causes many problems in practice by forcing pensioners to appear to confirm the fact that they are alive.

The physical appearance of pensioners every 6 months is a burden for both pensioners and public bodies. Moreover, if the pensioner does not appear every 6 months, the right to pension may be suspended by the ministry according to Article 24, paragraph 3 of Law No. 04/L-131 on state-financed pension schemes.¹⁶

Law No. 04/L-131 on state-funded pension schemes does not provide for any other means of verifying that they are alive, other than by physically appearing at the municipal offices for pension matters. At this point, there is a lack of regulation and infrastructure for this verification to be done in any digital form.

On the other hand, there is also a lack of any connection that would enable this verification through information held by other institutions involved in the fact of a person's death, such as hospitals or religious communities.

Data from questionnaires

The majority of citizens, 67%, reported waiting less than 5 minutes to complete the pension extension confirmation service, suggesting a relatively quick process for most. Another 24% waited between 5 and 10 minutes, while only 1% reported waiting longer than 20 minutes.

Table 26. Waiting time for service 3

How long did you wait to perform the service?		
Less than 5 minutes	67%	
5-10 minutes	24%	
10-20 minutes	6%	
More than 20 minutes	1%	
I refuse to answer	1%	

Short wait times are also associated with a high level of information clarity, as 77% of citizens said they had very clear information about the location, documents and procedures required. For 17% of citizens, the information was moderately clear, while 3% said they had little knowledge of the procedures before coming to the office.

¹⁵ Law No. 04/L-131 on State-Funded Pension Schemes, Article 24, Paragraph 2. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=80425>

¹⁶ Law No. 04/L-131 on State-Funded Pension Schemes, Article 24, Paragraph 3. Available at: <https://gzk.rks-gov.net/ActDetail.aspx?ActID=80425>

Table 27. Clarity of information about the service 3

How clear was your information regarding the location, necessary documents, etc. before coming to perform this service?

Not at all	0%	
A little	3%	■
Moderately	17%	■
A lot	77%	■
I refuse to answer	3%	■

The vast majority of citizens, 84%, reported that the staff provided them with accurate and understandable information regarding the service, demonstrating a high level of professionalism in communication. A small percentage, 10%, stated that the information was somewhat accurate, while only 1% of citizens reported that they did not receive accurate information from the staff. In line with this, 89% of respondents rated the behavior and professionalism of the staff as very good, while 10% said that they were somewhat satisfied with the staff's approach.

Table 28. Provision of information by staff about service 3

Did the staff provide you with accurate and understandable information about the service?

No	1%	■
At some point	10%	■
Yes	84%	■
I refuse to answer	5%	■

Table 29. Behavior and professionalism of the staff for service 3

Was the staff polite and professional?

No	0%	
At some point	10%	■
Yes	89%	■
I refuse to answer	1%	■

Staff assistance in solving problems was positively assessed by 83% of citizens, who reported that the staff helped them overcome difficulties while providing the service. For 8% of them, the assistance was somewhat sufficient, while only 3% of citizens said that they did not receive any assistance from the staff.

Table 30. Providing assistance from staff for service 3

If you had a problem while receiving the service, did the staff help you resolve it?

No	3%	■
At some point	8%	■
Yes	83%	■
I refuse to answer	6%	■

A large percentage of citizens, 95%, reported that they were informed in advance about the obligation to appear physically for confirmation of the extension of their pension, indicating a high level of awareness among citizens regarding this procedure. Only 2% of citizens were not informed about this obligation.

Table 31. Preliminary information on the obligation to perform the service 3

Were you notified in advance that you were required to appear physically?		
No	2%	■
Yes	95%	■
I refuse to answer	3%	■

In the end, 61% of citizens rated the service as very good and 32% as good. Only 2% of citizens reported a poor experience while receiving the service.

Table 32. Overall assessment of the service 3 delivery process

Based on your experience, how would you overall evaluate the process of providing this service?		
Poor	2%	■
Average	5%	■
Good	32%	■
Very Good	61%	■

Other perceptions of the parties

A recurring issue reported by participants is the suspension of pension payments in cases where they cannot appear for verification. As one respondent noted: "When I couldn't come, the money stopped," indicating that failure to appear for verification immediately results in the suspension of payments. This policy creates additional stress for elderly individuals who may face health challenges in having to appear physically every 6 months at the respective centers. Furthermore, the process for reinstating payments appears to be complicated. Users report that if they fail to report by the deadline, they are required to resubmit all documents from the beginning. One of them said: "If you can't report two or three months after the deadline, you have to come and bring all the documents; they ask for everything from the beginning." This requirement not only increases the administrative burden, but also places additional pressure on pensioners.

There is also a perception of a lack of communication regarding missed deadlines and steps to follow. One respondent highlighted: "There are times when they don't tell us anything. Today they didn't tell me anything even though I haven't been able to come for a month," suggesting that the flow of information between the administration and beneficiaries is not consistent, increasing the risk of losing payments without any prior notice.

On the other hand, a concern raised by respondents is the impact of health problems and age on their ability to meet the verification requirements. Some participants expressed fears about how they would cope with these obligations if their health deteriorated. One said: "I am afraid of the time when they will not be in full health and how they will be able to meet the obligation." The requirement to appear physically is particularly burdensome for those with mobility problems, chronic illnesses or those who live far from the verification centres.

Recommendations

Based on the assessments of the legal basis and the observations from this Mystery Shopping, we provide the following recommendations:

1. Amend the legal basis, namely Law No. 04/L-131 on state-funded pension schemes. The determination of whether the pensioner is alive should be made by the public body itself through official duty, without the obligation for the pensioner to appear physically. This could include verification through data from the registry of the dead and cooperation with institutions such as hospitals, municipalities and religious communities, as well as any other body that is aware of the fact of death.
2. Until recommendation 1 is implemented, the following options may be considered:
 - a. Verification of the fact that the pensioner is alive should be done through information technology solutions including biometric identification or verified video calls,
 - b. Withholding the pension benefits as a result of non-appearance should be the last resort and should only occur in cases where the public body has attempted and proves that it was unable to verify whether the pensioner is alive. Even in these cases, a grace period may be considered, followed by the application of pension suspension.
 - c. If the pension withholding system is applied, the method of pension reinstatement should be simplified and retroactive when the pensioner proves that he or she is alive.



Funded by
the European Union

*Second Round of Mystery Shopping
in Three Selected Public Services:
Birth Registration, Maternity Leave Extension,
and Pension Verification*



Group for Legal
and Political
Studies