Non-governmental Organization Emancipimi Civil Ma Ndryshe
EC MA NDRYSHE

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ANNUAL WORK PLAN 2015

Introduction/Context

In a large number of aspects, the country of Kosovo is a new entity. With its independence achieved in 2008 after years of apartheid, war and UN administration, there are still a large number of problems that burden the new country, especially in relation to the political environment. Political parties and the international community continue to be the main actors in the political sphere, where the international community has suffered a decrease in its role, thus creating room for other actors since supervised independence ended. The war heritage was among the main factors impacting the political parties in Kosovo. The parties continue to have no clear ideological positions, while the majority of their members are comprised of family-related people which see the party mainly as an opportunity for employment or income generation once the party comes in to power. Political parties attempt to grab as much power as they can within the system, whereas this has created dire consequences for the democratic functioning of the country. Actors from the civil society, media and a portion of the political opposition have raised concerns regarding the occupation of the state. And while the country has decided to undertake a road toward stability and democratic policies and practices, the changes are slow to come and the citizens are displaying very low levels of trust toward the political elite. Rule of law is facing serious risks. High levels of clientelism in the process of governmental nominations are threatening the institutions in their country-building efforts and consequently are making progress difficult. As a consequence of this, the state administration remains extremely fragile toward political changes.

Thus far, the largest part of the political debate was directed toward major and general issues, including international recognition of statehood, visa liberalization (Schengen zone), SAA with the European Union, as well as negotiations with Serbia. During the last local elections, a slight change was noticed in the political debate, where the focus shifted more toward concrete issues of public policies, including economy, unemployment, health system, rule of law, tax system, pensions, etc. In example, during the local 2013 elections, the citizens showed an increased interest in debates held on public policies and alternatives. The election results in a number of municipalities showed that the elections were won by mayoral candidates that offered alternatives to public policies instead of calling on the heritage of the past (i.e. the war). The qualitative change in the municipal leadership is having an impact on the quality of political debates, where the agenda of the central government policies is being redefined based on the proposals and the pressure applied by local governments. Currently, there is a lack of profiled organizations within local governments that would supply the municipalities with public policy alternatives. In this regards, EC is positioned in such a way that it is a relevant actor for the municipalities it operates in and because of this, the organization aims to improve the quality of research, information and alternatives that will inform the public, as well as both local and central governments. This is an ideal opportunity to increase civic participation in the policy-making processes of local governance.

EC is an organization with special features on two aspects: one, geographic focus, and two, the approach to issues. Based in both Prizren and Pristina, the organization uses an anthropological approach to research and policy development. As a result, policy products have reached a level of credibility since they more often address the source of problems rather than the symptoms. Furthermore, the organization deals with specific thematic issues such as urban planning, cultural policies and those of similar nature, which very few organizations in Kosovo cover. The research component of EC is successfully combined with activism at grassroots level, thus creating a relation of interdependence. The organization regularly communicates with community groups, through activism at the community level, so as to learn about the priority issues, needs and problems, which, in turn feed the research component. These practices allow the setting of an agenda of action where ideas come from the bottom, while simultaneously ensuring the inclusion of policy-makers in a constructive and well-informed debate. This approach enables greater participation of citizens and a solid and comprehensive

process of policy-making.

The distinguishing value of EC is urban planning. At this time, municipalities of Kosovo are expected to develop plans that require research and broad development of policies. While attempting to be a part of these urban development projects, EC has identified a number of actors that should be involved in these processes. The new Spatial Plan of Kosovo requests that all local governments review their existing local (development/urban) plans or to develop new ones. This will have an impact on the agenda of local economic development as well as local cooperation initiatives. These developments require local governments to be very active and creative in drafting inclusive policies that will integrate urban and spatial planning, economic development, tourism, cultural heritage, etc. On the other hand, the newly approved Strategy of Local Government places additional objectives for municipalities, including: good governance, capacity development, civic participation and economic development. All the documents and relevant political processes as well as those of strategic planning come together in the concept of integrated planning of public policies. The integrated approach toward the development of policies is essential to the success of local government, while EC shall be there to aid the municipalities (main urban hubs) in adapting this approach to policy-making.

The decentralization and the continuous process of local government reform have equipped local governments with a very important responsibility. Lately, the process of legalizing illegal constructions has been entrusted to the local authorities. The expertise of EC in this sphere, and its special approach for inclusion of greater audiences prior to defining alternatives, puts the organization in a rather strategic position toward respective municipalities and the process of legalization.

Cultural heritage is another distinguishing value of EC. Until now, policy-makers have been led by a very narrow perspective toward cultural heritage. Lately, the situation began changing, by creating a new momentum for alternatives to policies for the preservation of cultural heritage. The European Commission also began showing greater interest to receiving inclusive information regarding the latest developments in this sphere. EC may be one of the strategic partners of state institutions and the EU in offering products of policies that would best provide information about cultural heritage policies on the road toward European integration.

Strategy 2015 – 2019
During the second half of 2014, EC was engaged in the process of strategic planning for the work in the years ahead. During strategic planning, it was noticed that, to EC, its general approach was more important than the topic it treats. For this reason alone, EC is seen as more than just an organization that deals with cultural heritage, urban planning or good governance. The process of strategic planning was, in essence, an exercise to bring to light the identity of the organization as well as the establishment of the framework of actions based on this identity. During the entirety of this exercise, which was joined by a considerable number of persons, all aspects of the actions of the organization were analysed. The time in which this strategic document is being drafted represents a new direction of the work of EC, the beginning of a new period in the activities of the organization which aims to turn itself into the best possible example of community organization both in Prizren and Kosovo.

A number of important legal, institutional and political processes have begun within the local government in Kosovo. Among the most important ones are the reform of local government, review of local planning and development documents, regional cooperation and development as well as legalization of illegal construction. All these processes find EC with a new strategic approach that aims to

mobilize and direct current and future resources towards facilitating communications between the community and the local government in Prizren.

According to the new strategic direction, EC will have an entirely community direction, a move this that will place it in the position of a mediator to ensure a true civic participation in decision-making. This document redefines the mission, vision and values of EC, by reflecting on the work undertaken during the past years and the strategic direction for the future years. The mission of the organization shall be: EC is engaged toward active citizenship for shaping the living environment by promoting an appropriate organization of the community, democratization of institutions and enrichment of cultural life in the main centres of Kosovo, with a special focus on Prizren and Prishtina. Whereas the work of the organization is led by the following values: impartiality, activism, result-orientation and the community as the basis for action.

The Strategic Plan of EC is built upon three strategic goals, which, within them contain strategic objectives that in further detail describe how EC will specifically meet and fulfil its mission and vision:
-   Strategic goal 1 – Increasing opportunities and the know-how for interaction with citizens,
-   Strategic goal 2 – Better advocacy and understanding of the needs and alternatives for improving the quality of life of the citizens,
-   Strategic goal 3 – Fulfilling the mission through efficient management of human and technological resources.

Programs
The process of strategic planning also reviewed the programmatic approach of the organization. Starting from January 2015, EC will operate with the three following programs:

1. *Inclusive City (mobilization of the community)*
    Mobilization of the community represents the very essence of the work of EC. The identity of the organization stems from the engagement of the community. Inclusive city will be an important program of the organization and will represent the distinguishing feature of the EC in relation to other civic society organizations. Part of this program will be actions that promote civil activation at the level of community groups (mainly urban quarters).
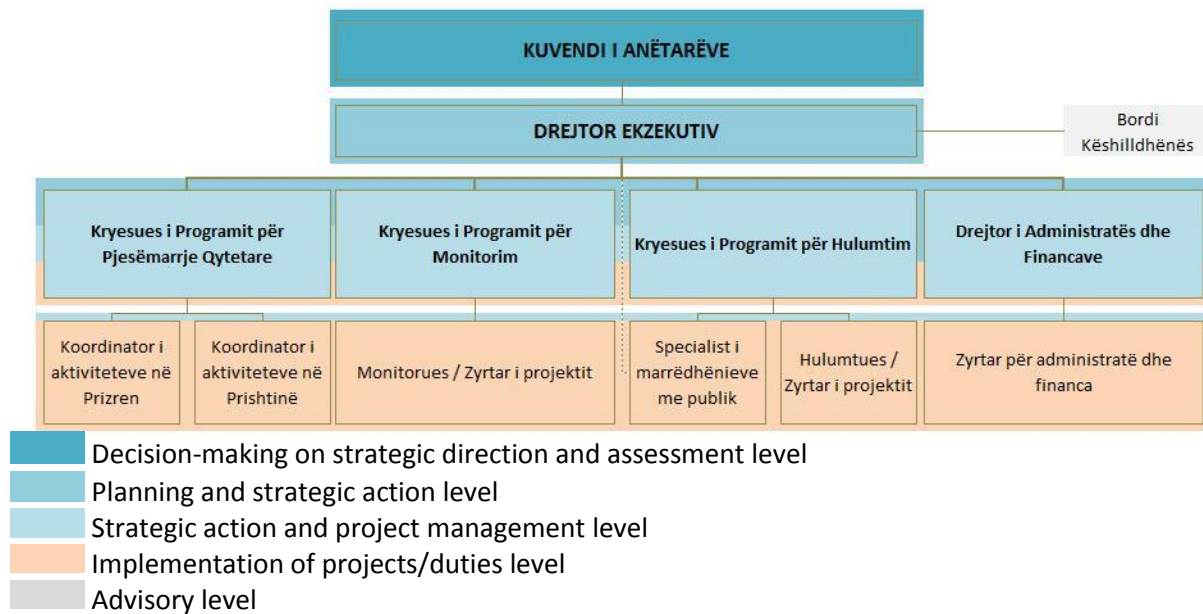
2. *Good governance (monitoring and advocating)*
    To ensure that the local government acts in accordance with the requests and interest of community groups as well as to keep alive public pressure toward authorities, the Program of Good Governance will be structured around monitoring activities and the role of a watchdog of the organization. Monitoring is one of the most prominent features of the work of EC, whereas it is designed in such a manner that it will feed the two other programs of the organization with grounded, swift and credible information.

3. *Research (knowledge production)*
    Knowledge production will be one of the fields of permanent engagement of the organization. By building upon the products of research produced during the last years, the organization will build a well-structured system of research and production of policy documents. The research program will also further strengthen the production capacities of the organization and will improve the professional competences in the narrow fields of engagement.

Organizational structure

Decision-making on strategic direction and assessment level
Planning and strategic action level
Strategic action and project management level
Implementation of projects/duties level
Advisory level

Strategic goals
The strategic document 2015-2019 of the organization has decided on three strategic goals for the upcoming five years of work, each further divided into strategic objectives. Starting from 2015, EC shall engage in meeting the following strategic goals/objectives:

Strategic goal 1 – Increasing opportunities and the know-how on interacting with citizens
> Strategic Objective 1.1 – Increasing the presence of the EC in the community so that we may advance our knowledge, promote civic activism and mobilization
> Strategic Objective 1.2 – Deepening engagements, with a focus on Prizren and Prishtina.

Strategic goal 2 – Better understanding and advocating of the needs and alternatives for improving the quality of life of the citizens
> Strategic Objective 2.1 – Interacting with institutions in order to ensure healthy relations between citizens and institutions.
> Strategic Objective 2.2 – Increasing knowledge on topics that EC addresses to overcome the challenges of lack of materials/literature for those fields
> Strategic Objective 2.3. – Increasing professional competencies and capacities.
> Strategic Objective 2.4 – Increasing impact through efficient communication with various groups/communities to convey the message. (PR)

Strategic goal 3 – Fulfilling the mission through efficient management of human and technological resources
> Strategic Objective 3.1 – Optimization of resources, organizational structure and the extent of responsibilities with the organization.
> Strategic Objective 3.2 – Advancement of programs and engagements, to ensure efficient management of the organization and programs, by successfully fulfilling the mission of the organization.

Strategic Objective 3.3 – Financial management, capacities to raise funds and ensure sustainability.

Work methods

EC utilizes a mixed work methodology. Although it is mostly known as an organization that acts at the community level (grassroots), EC is continuously consolidating its research and analytical capacities. Among the most powerful components of the organization remain the focus toward internal networking (with the civil society) and policy dialogue with the local government for the necessary reforms. Work methods of the EC are as follows:

- Mobilization of the community – the central principle of the engagement of EC is self-organization, which sees community organization beyond the position it advocates and expects solutions only from state institutions. EC is constantly communicating with community groups and it aims, through initiatives, to mobilize these groups around important issues of governance and local development,

- Monitoring local governance – a continuous effort which is not limited to only municipal entities, but touches upon the judiciary, police, central government, etc. Monitoring generates solid information and equips the organization with a number of means and incentives for advocating activities, policy reform and democratic governance,

- Advocating for change – a number of means are used to exercise direct pressure on the local and central government, as well as other state institutions. Advocacy actions of the EC aims for change in the fields of transparency and accountability of local governance, local cultural policies as well as protection and development of Prizren cultural heritage,

- Policy dialogue – the organization is part of a number of processes of dialogue with state institutions for the development and implementation of policies. The dialogue for public policies is achieved through various means (MoU, joint drafting of documents, implementation of public consultation, etc.) and aims to increase the communication between the citizens and state institutions through a more effective implementation of policies,

- Networking – EC has brought about a new dynamic in the civil society of Prizren by creating a synergy between civic actors. Through the Network of Cultural Organizations, Transparency Forum, Initiative for the Protection of Lumbardhi Cinema and similar actions, EC has proved that networking is an effective means of advocacy and change, and for this reason continues to be one of the most important methods of work of the organization,

- Research – EC has produced a considerable number of research papers. During the last two years, the organization has regularly invested in increasing the quality of research, whereas starting from 2015 EC will have a research component as one of the three programs of the organization. To be able to consolidate this capacity, EC has prepared a special plan that will guide the development of research capacities of the organization.

Projects and initiatives

The main projects and capacities of the organization within its three programs for 2015 will be:

1. **Inclusive City – participatory planning for sustainable urban development in Prizren 2013-2015)** – during 2015, the methodology of the project shall also be modified by working with community groups (on identity basis) where we will move on to organizing community units of city's neighbourhoods. The project aims to translate the needs and requests of the citizens into applicable urban plans of the city of Prizren.

2. **Cultural and urban activism in Prizren (2014-2015)** – three artistic interventions in public places shall take place during the first half of 2015, as well as a regional conference and publication of the research report on cultural activism in Prizren. During the second half of 2015, the second part of the project shall begin, with a focus on intervention in public spaces.

3. **Merr Pjesë (Participate) – Online activism platform (2013-2015)** – during 2015, a functionalization of the Merr Pjesë platform will be aimed for, by increasing the number of users. The project aims to promote online activism as one of the means of organizing the community and participation in local decision-making. During 2015, an expansion of the platform to other municipalities of the Prizren region is also aimed for.

4. **Online transparency of Municipalities of Prizren and Prishtina (2012-2016)** – while the monitoring of Prizren will be passed on to Transparency Forum, in Prishtina the work will continue in two fields: illegal construction (and legalization) and cultural heritage with a focus on the Historic Centre of Prishtina. Online Transparency is one of the projects with the longest term of the organization, which aims to open the municipalities and make them accountable towards citizens (voters).

5. **Urbanism Watch 2015 – urbanism of Prizren under constant watch (2013-2016)** – supervision of the urban sector is among the central engagements of the organization in Prizren. During 2015, same as for the last few years, the constant watch of urbanism will continue, with a focus on the Historic Centre of Prizren. Supervision during 2015 will be achieved through a more structured monitoring system (methodology located in the matrix).

6. **Local Transparency Index (2015-2016)** – this is a new project of the organization that shall be implemented in seven of the largest municipalities of Kosovo. Based on an inclusive and professional methodology, the Index shall aim, on annual basis, to assess the level of transparency (including trends) of the respective municipalities.

7. **Cultural heritage as a central pillar of regional development in Prizren (2013-2015)** – after the creation of the regional cultural heritage database (2013) and implementation of the pilot action HAJDE (Come and join us) (2014), the project has entered its most prominent stage and the drafting of a Regional Strategy for Cultural Heritage is expected at the beginning of 2015. From the time of its approval, 2015 and following years shall be years of commitment of the organization to ensure that the strategic document will produce concrete local and regional policies and usage of cultural heritage for the needs of regional economic development.