



**Non Governmental Organization Emancipimi Civil Ma
Ndryshe, EC MA NDRYSHE**

18 February 2015, Prishtina

PRESS RELEASE

Public Parking Places in Prishtina Continue to Pose Problem for the City

Within “Online Transparency” Project, EC Ma Ndryshe over the period of several months followed the developments related to widely promoted project of public parking spaces. Its designing aimed at resolving the heavy traffic in the Prishtina city was introduced to the public by the Municipality of Prishtina in August last year. Back then Municipality hired experts from the Traffic Department of Mechanical Engineering Faculty to make an inventory of existing parking places, both public and private, at the city center area. Public company “Prishtina Parking” is expected to manage this parking space, the establishment of which was voted in the Prishtina Municipal Assembly meeting held on 29 September 2014.

The establishment of this company was disputed by the Ministry of Local Government Administration stating that “decision on the establishment of Public Enterprise ‘Prishtina Parking’, with its headquarters in Prishtinë, is not in full compliance with Article 6 of the Law on Amendments and Supplements of Law on Public Enterprises, and with Article 6.3 and 6.4 of the Government Regulation on the Criteria for the Establishment of Local Public Companies and Municipal Participation at the Board of Directors of Regional Enterprises. MLGA, in their rationale sent to the Municipality of Prishtina, also pointed out that “based on Article 40 of the Law on Local Self-Government, Municipal Assembly may issue a decision for the initiation of establishment of a municipal public company, authorizing the Mayor to take concrete actions with the purpose of meeting the criteria determined in Article 5 of the Government Regulation 2/2013 on the Criteria for the Establishment of Local Public Companies and Municipal Participation at the Board of Directors of Regional Water Enterprises.” Pursuant to Article 84 of the Law on Local Self-Government, it requested from Prishtina Municipal Assembly to take concrete actions in reviewing the decision within 30 days after receiving the request.

On the other hand, according to Dardan Sejdiu, the above answer to MLGA authorities, who invoked Article 40 of the Law on Local Self-Government, is not relevant since that Article regulates something else. Sejdiu also mentioned the Law on Amending and Supplementing Law on Public Enterprises, which prescribes that municipalities are eligible to establish local public enterprises in compliance with criteria provided for in Government secondary legislation, and that Municipality met all criteria for the establishment of this enterprise. After this, Municipality of Prishtina intended to send the request for the establishment of the enterprise to the Ministry of Economic Development. In the meantime, at some locations in city center the drawing of lines in existing parking places began, but it was not ended.

EC Ma Ndryshe requested from the Information Office of Prishtina Municipality most recent updates on whether this request was sent to MED and have they received any answer from the Ministry. We were also trying to obtain information on whether any public debates were held on the parking places that will fill in the residential building areas where they live. However, despite our persistence, we have not received any answer.

Concerning the space designing of city parking places, EC Ma Ndryshe managed to contact officials from the Urban Planning Directorate of Prishtina Municipality, who are involved in this process. They told us that the parking space project in the city of Prishtina is being drafted by traffic, urban planning and environmental experts of the Directorate of Public Services and Directorate of Urban Planning of Prishtina Municipality. According to them, designing stage for the city center area has been already completed, its implementation began, but it is not finished yet. Very soon the designing stage for the area of Dardania, Ulpiana and Sunny Hill is expected to start.

When it comes to public debates with the residents of neighborhoods where new parking places will fill in the free space between the buildings where they reside, according to Directorate of Urban Planning, meetings with citizens are expected to be organized when the projects are ready for debate, since they would like to have the discussions started when the plans are ready.

On our question whether there are other alternatives in resolving the issue of parking space in Prishtina except for the existing ones, officials from DUNMM stated that considering the current situation in Prishtina, the parking structure of which was inexistent, the existing solution is the best one. In their opinion, this is a good start for the establishment of a structure, which in the future could be improved and enriched with new solutions.

Based on the short research on occupied public spaces that EC Ma Ndryshe did in December last year, it came out that alongside other impediments, the vehicles parked in sidewalks are the most common obstacle for the movement of people in the streets of Prishtina. This is the reason why an urgent solution needs to be found to initially avoid the traffic congestion in the city center and to vacate the sidewalks and other public spaces for an unimpeded movement of citizens. On the other hand, we hope that the solutions provided through the municipal project not have the opposite effect in the public space, by creating dissatisfaction amongst the citizens by extremely narrowing the space around their residential buildings after the parking space will get denser and occupy each of their corner. Such a planning and designing process should include close consultation with inhabitants during all its stages.

Considering all the above mentioned, EC Ma Ndryshe recommends the following:

- Alongside with the existing parking space project that is aimed to accommodate vehicles parked in places determined by the Municipality, prior to resolving the issue of heavy traffic, Municipality needs to find sustainable and long term solution not only to vacate the sidewalks from parked vehicles, but also to ease the entire traffic in the city.
- With the purpose of ensuring that planning and designing projects for parking space in the city meet the needs of people, we would like to recommend the Directorate of Urban Planning in Prishtina to include the residents of neighborhoods where the parking space is planned throughout all project development stages, starting from the initial tackling of problems, finding of problem solution ideas through to the project development stages, assessment of suggested solutions, etc. Any other way of public consultations that is not aimed at direct involvement of citizens in decision making on projects closely related to their living environment are “cosmetic” consultations made for the sake of meeting the legal requirement.

Last but not least:

- In the meantime, while waiting to resolve the above shortcomings, as well as the end of the designing process for city parking space, the public space in Prishtina continues to be occupied by parked vehicles, and pedestrian roads are extremely narrowed. Therefore, the inspectorate of Prishtina Municipality, in cooperation with the Kosovo Police, should prevent the parking of vehicles in sidewalks and other spaces dedicated for the movement of pedestrians.

EC Ma Ndryshe Project on Transparency Monitoring for Prishtina Municipality will continue to publish monitoring findings through regular press releases and Project website, where the findings are directly posted by the monitors. All findings from the monitoring, including regular press releases and many other information on Prishtina local government will be published on the Project website, www.online-transparency.org.

Thank you,

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British Embassy
Pristina

Project "Online Transparency of Prizren, Mamusha and Prishtina Municipality" is funded by the British Embassy in Prishtina