

19 March 2015, Prizren

PUBLIC LETTER

Municipal Information Strategy was Non-Inclusively Drafted

Municipality of Prizren initiated the drafting of Municipal Information, Communication and Civic Participation Strategy. In its pre-final version that was distributed by Prizren Municipality Information Office, the part where the Methodology is described, page 15, says “Strategy was drafted through a wide inclusion process, involving representatives of relevant municipal authorities, civil society organizations and media”.

While page 14 explains that “a workshop was initially held with the participation of all stakeholders, where the fields to be addressed within the Strategy were identified. In addition, a comprehensive analysis of relevant problems was made”. Further on, it says that “a working group is established to draft the strategy and action plan for the Municipality of Prizren, which is composed of municipality representatives, CSOs, NGOs and relevant field experts, as well as relevant municipal authorities, such as ZIP, Legal Office and European Integration Office”. In addition, it should also be mentioned that “representatives of information offices from other municipalities were also consulted...”.

It is also highlighted that “round tables and workshops held during the preparatory stage have successfully served the objective of inclusion of as many stakeholders as possible from the local government and NGOs” and that this approach “provides guarantees that the Strategy will be successfully implemented and will receive support from society”. This draft also points out that “methodology employed in Strategy and Action Plan drafting is based on wide participatory planning, namely on the logical framework methodology and its planning tools”.

The Transparency Forum through this letter would like to inform the public that the majority of its members, specifically the community of journalists, have not been included at all in the consultation process related to the drafting of this Strategy.

This is the reason why the Transparency Forum considers that Strategy for Information, Communication and Civic Participation of Prizren Municipality was drafted in a non-inclusive approach, specifically aimed at the community of journalists, but also at civil society activists who have long lasting experience in municipal authorities monitoring, as well as citizen groups who are key stakeholders concerning the information, communication and civic participation.

The transparency Forum would like to bring to the attention that the decision by the Mayor approving the Strategy drafting was issued on 3 February, and the first draft was presented in a press conference to the journalists and monitors from the civil society in three weeks’ time, namely on 25 February. After the comments made, the invitations for a round table were sent to NGOs, but not to journalists.

Transparency Forum thinks that Prizren journalists have not deserves to be ignored when it comes to the drafting of this strategic document, and that they had to be involved since its inception; same as the civil society activists who have long experience in the monitoring of the work of municipal authorities.

The transparency Forum would like to raise the grounded suspicions of its members that the Strategy drafting was not done with a wide participation, and as such it is based on narrow assessments without taking into account the needs of all stakeholders.

Transparency Forum was established in March 2014, as a coordinated effort of civil society actors and media in Prizren that aim to improve the level of transparency and accountability of local government in Prizren. This informal body is composed of civil society activists and journalists from Prizren, who are actively involved in the field of democratic governance.

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