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PRESS RELEASE

Public discussions about urban plans in Prishtina to be all-embracing

As of June of this year, the Municipality of Prishtina has started with organizing public hearings on the design/revision of the regulatory plans of Prishtina neighbourhoods. To date, several such public discussions have been organized. EC Ma Ndryshe, within the "Online Transparency" project, has participated in several of these public hearings in the attribute of monitoring organization.

EC Ma Ndryshe has noted some shortcomings in relation to the organization of these discussions. The manner of information of citizens and incomprehensive targeting of community groups has produced for these public hearings to be attended by over 90% of male participants. That said, at these meetings were articulated remarks, by the citizens themselves, about the manner of organization and inclusion of groups.

Inclusion of all community groups in the process of development of urban plans is a basic precondition of democratic governance. This process, in particular, should generate space for community groups living deprived of adequate infrastructure and public services. Urban planning should be an inclusive process, where the municipality needs to find ways to ensure that community groups, especially those underrepresented, become part at all stages of the development of urban plans.

Therefore, given this, as well as the irregularities that have accompanied public discussions so far, EC Ma Ndryshe, in order to increase the quality of civic participation in the development of urban plans, recommends the following:

- Municipality to collaborate with civil society organizations (especially community organizations) for organizing and facilitating public discussions about the urban plans, although that in the Law on Spatial Planning of Kosovo, responsibility for organizing public discussions in relation to spatial plans belongs to the authorities (local and central),
- Special emphasis to be given to targeting of community groups for ensuring the widest possible and equal participation in the drafting process of urban plans. Public discussions to be held in small groups (15–20 people) within specific community groups (women, youth, persons with special needs, senior citizens, informal neighbourhoods, environmentalists, artists, etc.). Within such groups, components of gender equality and accessibility for people with special needs to be regarded as primary priorities,
- To ensure that invitations are disseminated at least 8 days before the public discussion (by adhering to the deadline set by the Law on Spatial Planning),
- Calls to these communities will be done through ways the municipalities already use (hard copies to the doors of the dwelling houses, A4 or A3 paper size formats placed at the

entrance of the residential buildings; announcements in the media), but also invitations through SMS and e-mails; through the outreach of community organizations to their members and social media platforms,

- Along with the call for public discussion, to disseminate a textual and graphical summary (1 page of A4) about the urban plan in question. Prior to the discussion, to publish graphical and textual summary of the neighbourhood and the proposal for it on the official website of the municipality (depending on the phase of the planning that is to be discussed),
- Before the discussion, in addition to graphical and textual format, to also present the plans through reader-friendly templates and layouts (depending on the phase of the planning that is to be discussed),
- Selection of the company/studio/architects–urban planners, who will assume a spatial planning of the neighbourhood/zone, to be transparent. The process should be accessible to the public (through the exhibition of proposals or similar), for citizens to have the opportunity of expressing their opinion on these proposals,
- Public discussions to be held in two forms: plenary discussion (one at the beginning of the planning stage and one at the end) and, secondly, the discussion in a form of a roundtable (divided into community groups). While organizing the discussion, all participants should be regarded equally in the discussion,
- In addition to direct meetings with citizens, the urban plan designs (graphical and textual part) should be placed on the website of the municipality in order to provide possibilities to comment for citizens who are not able to be physically present in public discussions.

All these actions are basic prerequisites for ensuring inclusive and democratic process of urban planning in the Municipality of Prishtina. Urban planning is recognized as the most sensitive process of municipal decision–making directly affecting the quality of life of citizens.

EC Ma Ndryshe’s project for overseeing transparency of the Municipality of Prishtina shall continue with publicizing monitoring findings through regular press releases and the project’s website, where the findings will be posted directly by the monitors. All monitoring findings, including regular press releases and other information in relation to the local government of Prishtina will be regularly published on the project’s website: www.online-transparency.org.

Thank you,
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