



Non-governmental Organization Emancipimi Civil Ma Ndryshe  
EC MA NDRYSHE

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#### PRESS RELEASE

#### **Kosovo municipalities did not improve the living conditions for PSNs**

According to the Office of the Auditor General (OAG), the four major municipalities of Kosovo, Prishtina, Prizren, Peja and Gjilan, including the central level of government, have not been effective and efficient with their actions in improving the living condition of Persons with Special Needs namely Persons with Disabilities (PD).

The performance report "Access for Persons with Disabilities" of the OAG, where the auditing covers the period 2013-2015 it is confirmed that despite the efforts for improving the access to physical infrastructure and premises for PDs, however the results achieved so far are limited.

The auditor assessed that the measures taken randomly and with the lack of prioritization have not solved the problems, that the objectives set out in the Strategy and Action Plan for PDs have been poorly achieved and that the indicators show that the situation in this regard might be similar in other municipalities.

According to OAG, delays at the local level are related to the fact that most municipalities failed to establish working groups for identifying the needs and assess the situation as a basis for prioritization; that the municipalities have not integrated Accessibility of Persons with Disabilities in their strategic planning; they have not provided sufficiently means of internal or external funding, and during the issuance of permits for new construction (building permits and certificates of housing) they have not taken into account the requirements deriving from the legal framework. Also, the Auditor has found that the central level organizations have not functioned as intended.

According to OAG, accessibility is one of the most problematic fields that require improvement to ensure better access for persons with disabilities in all activities of the society (education, health, work). Currently, these represent major obstacles that hinder PDs from enjoying equal opportunities as other citizens. Such obstacles, according to Auditor are structural barriers in the constructed premises, lack of urban planning, inadequate planning of internal premises, etc. Moreover, municipalities have failed in creating information systems on mobility in the city and on the accessibility of facilities, which is an important element that contributes in improving the lives of PDs.

According to this report, Municipality of Gjilan stands out in one point, because it managed to establish the Working Group for identifying and assessing the needs of PDs, whereas for three other municipalities it is emphasized that they have managed to create a partial accessible environment for PDs, since their activities were realized in *ad-hoc* basis, without a longer term strategic assessment or without conducting the needs assessment for PDs.

OAG also emphasizes that the Kosovo Progress Report for 2015 noted that PDs continue to face inadequate institutional and health support and poor accessibility.

NGO "EC Ma Ndryshe" recalls that Persons with Disabilities face different types of barriers, which hinders their full and effective participation in society, in equal basis with others, thus hindering

them from having an independent, dignified, and self-satisfactory life.

The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities pays particular attention to the right on education, health and employment, as does the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the implementation of which is guaranteed by the Constitution of Kosovo. Some of the general principles of the abovementioned Convention are "respect for dignity, individual autonomy, including the freedom to make personal choices and independence of persons... full and effective participation and involvement in society".

Therefore "EC Ma Ndryshe" recommends to municipalities to undertake actions for implementation and promotion of these values, in addition to non-discrimination, accessibility, equal opportunities for all, etc.

The municipalities and the central level should implement all recommendations given by Office of the Auditor General related to the measures and actions for effective improvement of physical access for PDs.

It is also recommended for municipalities to embrace in their public policies the approach based on human rights, on "twin roads", and to include PDs in decision-making and ensure adequate funding for services for PDs.

The project "Index of Municipal Transparency Index" of "EC Ma Ndryshe" began implementing since May of 2015 thanks to the support of the British Embassy in Prishtina, which is expanded in major municipalities of Kosovo such as: Prishtina, Prizren, Peja, Mitrovica, Gjilan, Ferizaj and Gjakova, as well as in Suhareka, Rahovec, Malisheva, Dragash, Mamusha and Shterpce. The project in question aims to assist municipalities in identifying the major gaps in terms of transparency, as well as provide guidelines for addressing and resolving them. The Transparency Index represents another structured effort to support Kosovo municipalities in meeting the standards of good governance, defined by the local governance reform and European agenda of Kosovo.

Respectfully,

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