

URBANISM WATCH

Urbanism of Prizren under
Constant Watch

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Communiqué #7

PRESS RELEASE

HISTORIC CENTRE WITHOUT NECESSARY FUNDS

'EC Ma Ndryshe' within the "Urbanism of Prizren under Constant Watch" project has sought from the local government of Prizren to publicize the amount of funds which the Municipality has received for its enhanced competencies related to the protection and promotion of cultural and religious heritage as required by the Law on Historic Centre, as well as for information related to the provision of regular funds for restoration and maintenance of this Centre, including all its integral components.

The only reply 'EC Ma Ndryshe' received was that from the Directorate of Urbanism and Spatial Planning, in which letter states that the Municipality of Prizren had mainly spent funds from its own budget for various projects in this zone, while it did not manage to get significant funds from government sources and external donors to intervene in the preservation and development of this special area and neither for the operation of the Office of Historic Centre and the Council for Cultural Heritage of the Historic Centre of Prizren. Contrariwise, the Directorate of Economy and Finance did not respond at all within foreseen legal timeframe hence violating the provisions of the Law on Access to Public Documents.

In the DUSP's response it is said that the Municipality has allocated 20,000 EUR on the implementation strategy of the Conservation Plan, 30,000 EUR for the treatment of structures with values and 50,000 EUR for the restoration of the house of Ymer Prizreni and also participation in three other projects. DUSP has revealed that it has no competence or knowledge regarding the amounts allocated for the Office of Historic Centre of Prizren and for the Council for Cultural Heritage of Historic Centre of Prizren.

On the other side CCH representatives informed that for the year 2013 the MESP has allocated around 4,400 EUR for the administrative needs of this body, while they reported for not having yet received any notice for the year 2014.

According to these findings, 'EC Ma Ndryshe' finds that the institutions of central and local level have not fulfilled the duties for the Historic Centre of Prizren as outlined in the relevant law, which entered into force nearly one and half year ago. For more, institutions have not adhered to the commitments nor the promises presented to the public in the period before the adoption of the law.

Therefore, 'EC Ma Ndryshe' considers that institutions have failed to fulfill the purpose of this law which "is to determine the rules on protection, administration and contemporary sustainable development of the Historic Centre of Prizren as a property of cultural and historic heritage under permanent protection and classified as a special protected Zone with values of local, national and international interest." This purpose remains an idle statement, while local and central institutions do not display high commitment to the rule of law.

The argument of the civil society in Prizren that there is no need for the new laws prior to the enforcement of the laws in force once again is being confirmed as correct since the mechanisms were just multiplied to the current situation in the Historic Centre of Prizren while there are no specific actions for protection nor for proper development of this zone, which could be used as a potential for strengthening of the local economy.

In support of this, EC Ma Ndryshe recalls that Article 21 of the Law on Historic Centre of Prizren foresees that the Municipality of Prizren shall establish an Office for the Historic Centre of Prizren, for the following purpose of “coordination of actions related to the protection, development and promotion of the Historic Centre of Prizren, including the international assistance” and, “promoting and developing the Historic Centre of Prizren as a touristic destination with a wealthy cultural heritage”, which also remains only at the declarative level almost a year and a half since the municipality nor other institutions have produced tangible results in this respect.

Article 22 also provides that the Municipality shall “receive necessary funds for its enhanced competencies related to the protection and promotion of the cultural and religious heritage as required by this Law.” But, according to the letter of the DUSP and information obtained from the CCH, it emerges that there were no corresponding actions in this regard.

Based on these findings ‘EC Ma Ndryshe recommends that instead of declarations local and central institutions should engage on concrete actions and by enforcement of the laws to ensure adequate protection of the assets of the Historic Centre and develop it as a proper tourist destination.

We call on the responsible institutions to consider the possibility of launching the process of the reviewing and amending of the Law on the Historic Centre of Prizren so that numerous mechanisms overlaying one another are eliminated thus to set stricter punitive measures against private and institutional violators.

‘EC Ma Ndryshe’, in July, began with the implementation of the project “Urbanism of Prizren under Constant Watch”, financially supported by the Kosovo Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). The need for overseeing developments in the sector of urbanism has naturally emerged as a result of a numerous adverse developments during the post-war and transition period that were manifested in urban degradation and lopsided spatial planning. The project will continue to monitor and publish findings from the field of urbanism and spatial planning, as well as in addressing institutional responsibility.

With regards,

Valon Xhabali, Project Coordinator

NGO EC Ma Ndryshe

Saraçët Street, No. 5 – Prizren & Zeki Shulemaja Street, Nr. 2 – Prishtina

www.ecmandryshe.org & info@ecmandryshe.org

+381 38 224 967 & +381 29 222 771

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