

URBANISM WATCH

Urbanism of Prizren under
Constant Watch

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PRESS RELEASE

Municipality of Prizren to not initiate works without being equipped with construction permits

'EC Ma Ndryshe', within the "Urbanism of Prizren under Constant Watch" project, has looked at the progress of the commencement of works on the revitalization of Sheshi i Lidhjes (*The League Square*), which has sparked a debate within Prizren's general public in relation to the preservation of natural and urban heritage values in this important part of the city's Historic Centre.

Based on information provided by the respective departments of the Municipality of Prizren, turns out that, despite following the majority of the necessary procedures for the execution of a capital investment of a particular relevance, the executive branch of Prizren Municipality however has launched the works without being provided with the construction permit in due course.

In information obtained from the Directorate of Urbanism and Spatial Planning (DUSP) in regard to this project says, "The League Square project is in its final procedures for equipment with a permit..." On the other hand, from the Directorate of Public Services (DPS), which is the bearer of the said project, it was explained that when designing the revitalization project a public debate with the citizens was held, while in the planning process were included international experts as well in order that revitalization project be carried out according to proper urban standards.

The works at this Square (*plaza*) have stirred a reaction among the citizens due to the removal of a number of trees from this area. In addition, the community has also reacted in October of 2012 during the planning stage of the project, whereby it was requested for the cobblestones be retained, as it was also urged that the runlets (brooks) to have appropriate dimensions.

Explanations provided from the bearers of the project are that as a substitute of cobblestone will be using another local material (stone slabs) because of the cost, while the planners committed themselves to reconsider dimensions of the runlets (brooks). Regarding the trees, DPS revealed that UN Habitat has fetched an international expert, who has compiled a report on their state and the steps to be undertaken during the project.

In the report of international expertise it says that some trees are punk, ailing or inconsistent with the infrastructure to be set thus it is foreseen those to be replaced according to the general guidelines that were provided for the entire zone. It was also requested to have written guidelines drawn up on the greenery preservation standards prior starting the works on the ground, as well as overseeing of greenery by a responsible municipal official for the environment.

According to these findings, EC Ma Ndryshe recommends the Municipality of Prizren to not initiate works in any constructional project without being equipped with proper permit.

It also requires that following every public debate, the minutes of the meeting be disseminated to the participants so as to have the opportunity for additional comments and actual inclusion of citizens in decision making.

In cases when construction material affects the overall cost then to consider prorogation of the realization of the project until provision with the needed funds.

Furthermore, the Municipality must ensure that the area will be re-greened according to the expert's report guidelines.

EC Ma Ndryshe also suggests that following the findings of the Evaluating Commissions regarding infrastructural and environmental issues to have greater transparency thus to start the debate with the community, and the decisions deriving from such assessments be disclosed to the public, in order to have the debate exhausted prior starting of any works.

'EC Ma Ndryshe', in July of 2013, began with the implementation of the "Urbanism of Prizren under Constant Watch" project, 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,

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