



Funded by
the European Union

Project: "Further Development of Civil Dialogue Between Serbia and Kosovo"

Workshop in Bujanovac, November 31, 2024

Topic 1: Ensure Greater Allocations for Women's Needs in the Local Community

Objective

To assess the willingness of the local government to introduce gender budgeting in accordance with the Budget Planning Law by 2026 and to plan larger allocations for the needs of the female population. Through surveys, identify the priority needs of women and define the institutional framework for addressing the identified issues.

Opportunities – Local Budget's Readiness to Allocate More Financial Resources for Women's Support

- The municipal budget has consistently financed four programs for women in recent years and will continue to support them in the future.
- There is no data on the effects of the supported projects.
- The local budget for 2025 is planned in accordance with the law and will have a gender-responsive budget character. However, no priorities have been established for the allocation of funds from this budget.
- Due to the limited scope of the local budget, it will not be possible to plan larger financial allocations for women's support in 2025.

Value Chain

- A balanced gender structure in employment is an important condition for the faster development of the local community. In the studied municipality, women make up 40% of total registered employment, which is a result of the poorer educational structure of the female population.
- Women's exclusion from the economic sphere is also a result of the lack of adequate new job opportunities.
- Discriminatory attitudes toward women in rural areas and the absence of special support for their economic empowerment.
- Traditional views on the role of women are a strong limiting factor for their emancipation.

Process Management

- Through the local development strategy and local action plans, plan stronger support for women in areas where they represent the majority of the workforce.
- Strengthen Gender Equality Councils.
- Introduce new professions into the education system and provide retraining for acquired professions.
- Develop and support cooperatives in rural areas.
- Involve the capacities of the Municipal Development Agency and the Labor Market in the process of education and empowerment of women.

Challenges and Limitations

- Traditional patriarchal attitudes toward women and the underdevelopment of the local community are obstacles that slow down the socio-economic emancipation of women. While education is equally accessible, it is less utilized by women than by men.

- Only 10% of women are holders of agricultural households, while they perform two-thirds of the work in agricultural households.
- Only 20% of women apply for subsidies in the announced competitions.
- The significant migration of male population creates additional burdens on women to maintain households, especially in rural areas.

Sustainability

Strategic documents of the Republic of Serbia call for greater support for women's overall emancipation. The Budget Planning Law introduces gender-responsive budgeting. This is a prerequisite for the sustainability of the program. Underdeveloped local communities already indicate limitations in their budgets and the inability to allocate additional funds for women's needs, with the caveat that it is unknown what percentage of the budget should be allocated for this purpose.

Social Cohesion

Women's emancipation requires appropriate legal frameworks and continuous engagement of the institutional system in achieving planned goals. Developed societies base their stability to a significant extent on the emancipation of women.

Recommendation

For the realization of the gender-responsive budget program and larger allocations from the local budget to address the issues of the female population, it is necessary to synchronize the planning of the national budget and the budgets of local communities.

Topic 2: Activate the Work and Visibility of the Council for Interethnic Relations

Objective

To ensure that the Council for Interethnic Relations becomes more active in decision-making processes that affect the rights and status of national minorities. Ensure a stable annual budget for their work and activities.

Process Management

- The Bujanovac Municipal Assembly has not yet constituted the new composition of the Council for Interethnic Relations.
- Consultations are currently underway to determine candidates for the future composition of the Council, proposed by the parliamentary groups.
- The constitution of the new Council will be completed by the end of 2024.
- There are no obstacles to supporting the Council's work through the allocation of funds from the local budget.

Value Chain

- The rights and obligations of the Council for Interethnic Relations in local communities are mechanisms that contribute to harmonized relations in multi-ethnic environments, especially in the public sphere.
- The rights and obligations of the Council, as regulated by law, have not been fully utilized in past practice.

Challenges and Limitations

- The inactivity of the Council for Interethnic Relations is a result of the lack of continuous communication between the Municipal Assembly and the Council members.
- Underdeveloped awareness among Council members about the importance of their role.

Positive Story

- The Council for Interethnic Relations of the Bujanovac Municipality acted as a mediator in resolving an issue at a primary school in 2023, where classes were held in

Serbian, while the school building was under renovation for six months. The problem was solved by using the school building where classes are taught in Albanian.

Recommendation

- Every newly elected composition of the Council for Interethnic Relations should be educated about their rights and obligations. Awareness of the importance and role of Council members is a fundamental condition for their greater activity. A request should be made to the Municipal Assembly to allocate funds that would enable more diverse activities of the Council.



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