



**Project: "Further Development of Civil Dialogue between Serbia and Kosovo"
Workshop in Zabalj**

1. Topic: Accelerating the Removal of Barriers Affecting Activities Related to Establishing an Industrial Zone in the Municipality of Zabalj.

Goal:

The goal of the discussion is to remove obstacles in the intention to establish a free zone in the settlement of Zabalj and to determine a roadmap that leads to problem resolution.

Introduction on the Importance of Establishing Free Zones:

- Free zones as a condition for faster economic development.
- Legal regulation as a condition for establishment. The Law on Free Zones was adopted in 2006. Development Strategy of the Municipality of Zabalj 2022-2028.

Market Opportunities:

- The geographical location of the Municipality of Zabalj. Proximity to major economic entities and interest from investors. A good network of roads and connectivity to major economic centers. Identified potential location and part of the infrastructure for the future free zone.

Value Chain Development:

- The free zone offers the possibility of partially relieving the large economic centers nearby. It presents an opportunity for public-private partnership, a higher percentage of employment in the local community, and alleviating internal migration.

Managing the Process of Zone Formation:

- The readiness of the local government to collaborate with relevant institutions (Archive of Vojvodina) to resolve the issue of non-existent documentation regarding legal property relations in the area designated for the future free zone.

Challenges and Limitations:

- There is uncertainty about how and when to resolve the issue of limited capacity in the gas network, which would supply energy to future users of the free zone. The local government remains committed to achieving the strategic goal of introducing a free zone.

Summary:

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- The establishment of a free zone is defined in the Development Strategy of the Municipality of Zabalj 2022-2028. Addressing two key problems related to the free zone is not exclusively within the jurisdiction of the local government. Redefining strategic goals from the current local development strategy is essential.
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2. Topic: The Local Budget Needs to Be More Sensitive to the Female Population and Youth.

Goal:

In accordance with the reform of public finances and the Law on the Budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2024 and projections for 2025 and 2026, integrate the principle of gender-responsive budgeting into the local budget as a mechanism for greater sensitivity to the needs of the female population. Optimize financial support for programmatic activities of public youth policy. Organize sessions on the priorities for supporting the program budget with a focus on the needs of the female population and youth.

Structure of the Debate:

- To what extent is the budget of the Municipality of Zabalj aligned with public finance reform, and have local public finances anticipated the introduction of gender-responsive budgeting?
- The adoption of Local Action Plans as a prerequisite for planning gender-responsive budgets and public youth policies.

Discussion Points:

- The preparation of the budget for the Municipality of Zabalj for 2025 is underway and has characteristics of a gender-responsive budget with established priority uses. The role of the Local Action Plan for gender equality.
- Support for public youth policies is at the level of average annual allocations. The process of adopting the Local Action Plan for Youth is ongoing.

Success Stories:

- The Commission for preparing the local budget for 2025 has allocated resources in accordance with the Assembly's Decision on introducing gender-responsive budgeting (GRB). Last year, a children's kindergarten was opened, significantly addressing the enrollment issues of preschool children in Gospodjinci, where there has been a notable increase in the number of preschool children. The gender-responsive budget in 2025 will focus on improving public lighting as a condition for greater safety for women.

Sustainability:

- Gender-responsive budgeting is an integral part of the program budget and is self-sustaining. The establishment of an Office for Youth will enhance the coordination of public youth policies.

Social Cohesion:

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- Participants in the session noted a low level of social cohesion regarding the younger generation, which indicates the need to take initiative for better coordination in public youth policies.

Challenges and Limitations:

- The Assembly of this local government has a Youth Council, but its members have not submitted any proposals or initiatives to local Assembly members concerning youth.
- In implementing the Decision on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB), the Budget Commission faced the real challenge of determining the criteria that establish priorities for directing local budget funds for the GRB category and establishing indicators for the effects of gender-responsive budgeting.

Recommendations:

- Intensify cooperation between local authorities and state bodies and institutions responsible for implementing public policies in the area of economic development of local communities (relevant ministries, archives)
- Establish ongoing collaboration with the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM), which monitors the gradual implementation of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in local communities at the national level. Address the issues of priorities, indicators, and criteria for the effectiveness of the GRB.
- Activate available capacities and mechanisms to raise awareness and responsibility among youth regarding their position in the community.
- The adoption of the Local Action Plan for Youth (LAP) should institutionalize better coordination in working with youth. Increase the number of formal associations and informal groups that will articulate the interests of the younger generation more strongly in line with the LAP for Youth.
- Seek logistical support from the Umbrella Organization of Youth (KOMS).



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Implemented by:

