

Fair shares in funding give new life to local community engagement

Democracy can function well at national level only if it functions well at local level too. The EU is helping to build up local democracy in the enlargement countries through support to municipalities. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, local civil society organisations and citizens themselves have benefited from a new degree of cooperation with local authorities.

TRANSPARENCY IN TEŠANJ

Tešanj municipality has been one of the pioneers of an effective methodology introduced by the EU to support public administration reform. The methodology is designed to ensure transparency in disbursing funds to organisations working for the community, helping people with disabilities, the elderly, the unemployed, or dealing with minority rights, gender issues, poverty reduction, social inclusion, youth and environment.

A key aspect of this new approach is selection: local authorities have to demonstrate that they are committed to using the transparent methodology when allocating the funds, and civil society organisations have to compete for local funding through open calls for proposals. This helps to align the work of local government with local needs. Permanent partnerships are being built between civil society organisations and local authorities as they become more aware of the mutual benefits of closer cooperation.

STRENGTHENING DEMOCRACY

At the same time, training has improved local capacities for planning, monitoring and management, and civil society organisations have increased their own focus. The local community and general public are informed about the whole process in a transparent way, decision-making is inclusive, and civil society organisations become accountable for their funding.

The results include better targeting and delivery of local services, and strengthening of local democracy.

The methodology, with its project-based approach to financing, brings additional clarity to the allocation of funds to civil society organisations. It uses more precise criteria and open tendering procedures, and imposes tighter obligations to report on spending and to conduct audits. Creating these conditions motivates organisations to become more professional, and to focus their services on the aims of local development strategies.

TWO HUNDRED PROJECTS ACROSS FORTY MUNICIPALITIES

So far, this new approach has led to the funding of more than 200 civil society organisations projects co-financed by 40 of the local authorities across Bosnia and Herzegovina during the last 4 years - covering nearly a third of the country. And thousands of citizens are benefiting.

The mayor of Tešanj, Suad Huskic, says "Our municipality has been developing transparent mechanisms over the last few years, and we have achieved significant progress in the way we finance civil society organisations projects. This EU



Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)

Bosnia and Herzegovina

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programme boosted our determination and active involvement, and the result has been improving mutual trust between citizens, local government and the organisations. It has also obtained better value for money, and strengthened civil society organisations."

One of the projects brought marketing and business skills to local producers of traditional souvenirs and garments, with training and support for a handicraft festival. Almir Ramic, the manager of Sebara, the

organisation that ran the project, said: "Cooperation between the local administration and civil society organisations in Tešanj is becoming a real two-way dialogue. Step by step, local administrations are transferring responsibilities to civil society organisations that are capable of delivering local services, while the organisations are strengthening their role in community development."

PROJECT DETAILS –

Reinforcement of Local Democracy Project

Partners: United Nations
Development Programme Mission
to Bosnia and Herzegovina

Total cost in €:

Phase I: 1.5 million (14 municipalities/cities participated)
Phase II: 1.5 million (15 municipalities/cities participated)
Phase III: 2 million (11 +4 municipalities/cities participated)

All partner municipalities/cities co-financed the projects with a minimum of 10 % of the value of each project.

EU Contribution in €: 4 million (80%)

Duration:

Phase I: 2009 – 2011
Phase II: 2011 – 2012
Phase III: June 2012 – May 2014

Results: Closer links between local government units and civil society organisations, transparent mechanisms for disbursing funding, providing services to citizens in different areas through NGOs, strengthening of civil society organisations and increased partnership among them

Techniques: Training and procedures for institutionalised cooperation between the governmental and non-governmental sector; new methodologies for allocation of public funds

