



**Non-governmental Organization Emancipimi Civil Ma
Ndryshe**

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PRESS RELEASE

Misappropriation and devaluation of public money in Prizren

EC Ma Ndryshe continued with the oversight of the operations of Prizren Municipality's executive branch in August as well. In this period, monitoring was focused on the expenditures of municipal executive of Prizren for the first half of the year 2012 and on residential tower blocks constructed out of urban requirements.

Although repeatedly warned by EC Ma Ndryshe and other NGOs for being attentive with sensitive budgetary categories, local government of Prizren, during the first half of the fiscal year 2012, has not waver in spending about 650.000 EUR under the category of goods and services. Mayor's governing cabinet, for the period concerned, has spent over 112,000 EUR on fuel for automobiles, while for their maintenance and repairs were spent around 32,000 EUR. One of the unacceptable conducts of municipal officials remains the manner of the official phone usage, given that monitoring had revealed that for mobile phone expenses only, in the first half of fiscal year, were spent over 15,000 EUR. For printings and publications were spent over 47,000 EUR, while for official meals and other events around 31,000 EUR. An odd detail, that was unveiled during monitoring the outlays of the first half of the year, is the budgetary code 13670 on ammunition and firearms, for which the local government of Prizren had paid 60 EUR.

Last week EC Ma Ndryshe has asserted information on the enormous costs for the travels of the officials of Prizren Municipality. By this, we do reiterate the appeal from the last week to the Mayor of Municipality: he must be cautious when spending public money, given that he bears legal and moral obligation to responsibly administer the money of Prizren's taxpayers. Fuels for vehicles, mobile phones, official lunches, official travels and other budgetary consumable categories are paid with public money, respectively from the taxes of the citizens of Prizren. Therefore, when bringing decisions on expenditures, the Mayor should adhere to the principles of good governance and proper management of public money. The Mayor, at the same time, should bear in mind that he manages the budget of a municipality with rather poor economic development and with an alarming index of poverty (extreme poverty as well), unemployment, and social cases.

A tangible proof of a great social inequality existing in Prizren and of uncontrolled exhaust of public money by municipal government is the attention this government displays towards ailing patients with difficult economic conditions for proper medical treatment. In occasional terms, the Mayor takes decisions in providing financial assistance for this category of citizens, whereas the upper limit of amount provided to a patient is 300 EUR. Equally turns out with decisions to assist households living on social assistance when the local government intervenes with a fairly small sum. Nonetheless, when it comes to the privileges of municipal officials – such as phones, travels,

fuels, lunches – the principle of humble expenditure of public funds is not adhered to. Despite this, the appropriation and devaluation of public money is not an occurrence attributable to the year 2012 only. For instance, official expenses for trips in 2010 were 110.000 EUR, while in 2011 those have reached close to 75,000 EUR; the expenses for fuels and burning fuels in 2010 were 717.000 EUR, while in 2011 about 713.000 EUR; representation expenses in 2010 were 84.000 EUR, whilst in 2011 – 91.000 EUR.

Heartless governance relative to public money is substantiated on the Auditor General's Report of 2011 for Prizren Municipality, whereas the expenses in the first half of 2012 reveal that the local government is not concerned in improving its financial management. Such spending practice is absolutely awkward with social and economic reality of the citizens of Prizren. As more uncontrolled the expenses of local government officials for feeding their privileges are, the more unbearable becomes the cost of daily consumer basket of Prizren households. We are already living in two different realities in Prizren: the one of local government officials who do enjoy the privileges of power; and the second, the one of the citizens of Prizren where every second resident lives in poverty while every fifth in extreme poverty. What is more, all this inequality deepens at the expense of citizens and their taxes.

EC Ma Ndryshe strongly recommends the Mayor of Municipality to bar such practice of seizing and devaluation of public funds. Such practice is deepening discrimination and social disparity in Prizren, which is totally contrary to his incumbency as the city's development manager. Furthermore, we recommend to Prizren Municipal Assembly and its Chairperson that as soon as possible request financial statements of the Mayor of municipality for the first semi-annual of 2012. The purpose of this reporting should be the review of the budget lines for 2012 and expenditure cuts in the mentioned budgetary categories.

The project of EC Ma Ndryshe for the transparency monitoring of the executive branch shall keep on publicizing monitoring findings through regular press releases and, starting from the following month, through the project's website, where the findings are posted directly from the monitors. By now, all the monitoring findings, including regular press releases and other information relative to local government of Prizren, are published on regular basis on the website of the project: www.online-transparency.org.

Thank you for your cooperation,

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