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PRESS RELEASE

Prizren Municipality continues with the devaluation of public money

Within the project of transparency oversight of Prizren municipal executive, EC Ma Ndryshe, during October, has looked into the issue of expenditures in the first six months of 2013.

The Expenditure Report of the Directorate of Economy and Finance reveals that in the first half of this year, from Prizren's municipal budget were spent over EUR 113,000 for fuel for vehicles and almost EUR 35,000 for their maintenance and repair.

Mobile phone expenditures for the six month period were over EUR 21,000. As for the official meals over EUR 46,000 were spent, while over EUR 10,000 were outlaid for different events. For travels abroad were spent over EUR 25,000 from the municipal budget, whereas expenses for travels within the country cost the municipal budget over EUR 22,000 in six months.

The monitoring, after weighting against with the expenditures of the previous year, found that the Municipality has failed to take into account the recommendations of civil society that were aimed at a more responsive demeanour and better budget management by municipal officials. Instead, similar practices found to be persistent. In the first six months of 2012, the Municipality of Prizren has spent EUR 112,000 on fuel for vehicles, while only for maintenance and repairs were spent around EUR 32,000. Mobile phone costs in the first 6 months of 2012 were over EUR 15,000, while for the official meals and other events were spent EUR 31,000. Also, the expenditures abroad for the year gone have cost around EUR 18,000.

Last year 'EC Ma Ndryshe' has determined that such manners of money expenditure of the municipal budget are in contradiction with financial and social reality of the citizens of Prizren. It is noted that the municipality has continued with the same spending logic, despite a clear recommendation from the last year's monitoring for greater attention.

By this we remind the municipal government that it must apply good governance standards, which are: focus on the outcomes beneficial to the citizens; ensuring that citizens receive better services, value-added services in return to their taxes; accountability; promotion of the values of the institution by leading by example through responsible behaviour and good budget management and transparent decision-making.

The explanation provided by the municipal officials is that these expenses include also the settled liabilities from the year 2012. According to them, EUR 37,500 was the debt paid for fuel and EUR 4,000 for official meals. They have claimed that in the six months of 2013, EUR 80,000 were spent on fuel, from which over EUR 55,000 are fuel for vehicles and up to EUR 25,000 are fuel for power generators.

Nonetheless, 'EC Ma Ndryshe' finds that the municipal government, in the first 6 months of the year 2013, have failed to apply the standard of good governance for adequate budget

management and did not take into account that it manages the budget of a municipality with a quite low level of economic growth, and with alarming indicators of the poverty, unemployment and social case rates.

For the reasons mentioned above, 'EC Ma Ndryshe' recommends the Municipality of Prizren:

- To render adequate measures to put a stop to current practices of appropriation and devaluation of public money;
- To review the budgetary lines for the current and the next year and to cut costs in the categories listed above, and
- To produce to us the invoices rather than summary reports in order to prove the transparency and accountability.

EC Ma Ndryshe's project for the transparency oversight of the executive branch will continue on publicizing monitoring findings through regular press releases and the project's website, where the findings will be posted directly by the monitors. So far, all monitoring findings, including regular press releases and other information relative to local governments of Prizren and Mamuşa/Mamushë, are being regularly published on the project's website: www.online-transparency.org.

Thank you for your cooperation,

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