

Survey on Participatory Budgeting

In cooperation with NALAS Knowledge Managers, the Secretariat conducted a survey on the roles of the LGA's in SEE in promoting Participatory Budgeting practices and Policies.

The following questions were posted:

1. Does your association implement activities in the area of participatory budgeting? Can you list three of those practices? [for example: projects, workshops, trainings, guides, brochures, etc.]
2. Has your association established any activity (as part of the regular operations) that promotes participatory budgeting among member local governments? If yes, can you give a short description of this activity/practice?
3. Has your association initiated/published policy recommendations or actions directed towards including participatory policy standards in the legislation in your country? Please send us links to such documents.
4. Is there a specific success story or lesson learned on participatory budgeting among the members of your association?

11 associations replied to this survey and based on their analysis we post the following

CONCLUSIONS:

A. General:

- The legislation in all countries prescribes principles of participatory budgeting. The challenges are in effective implementation and mainstreaming of the same.
- Methodologies for participatory budgeting are usually set-up at the local level, based on the legislation or developed in cooperation with donors/projects. There is no report that methodologies and guidelines have been put on the agenda of the associations.

B. Efforts at the association level:

- Five (5) associations reported projects or activities in the area;
- The activities and projects are donor-driven, and the associations are co-implementers;
- Activities focused directly on participatory budgeting are difficult to find. Participatory budgeting is treated within activities dealing with the general budget process;
- Typical activities are delivering trainings, manuals, guides, article in the association bulletins;
- Two (2) associations have dealt with this issue from the policy perspective: ALVRS has performed a formal analysis of the legislative framework for local governance and proposed legislative changes. NAMRB is including citizen participation in budgeting as part of their regular policy activities;

C. Good practices for activities at the association level:

“Community Forums”: ZELS is co-implementing a project specialized in participatory development with a component on participatory budgeting. The FORUM process is comprised of two main stages. In the first stage (session stage) forum participants - citizens of the municipality are involved in six to eight structured discussions within which they create project ideas and recommendations. The second stage is the practical implementation of selected projects. A special component of this programme is the BUDGET FORUM focused on preparation of the budget of the municipality for the upcoming year.

Forum sessions: The Budget forums are delivered in six forum sessions:

1. Session for constitution of the forum where the priorities for the budget of the municipalities are to be discussed
2. Session where the revenues of the municipalities are to be discussed
3. Session where the priority expenditures of the budget of the municipality are to be discussed
4. Session where the priority expenditures of the budget of the municipality are to be discussed
5. Session where the budget line (capital investments) that will be co-financed by SDC is to be selected
6. Subsequent session for the purpose of reporting on the methods of implementing projects financed with the budget of the municipality

The Municipality participates in the Project fund, where the funds will be spent locally in accordance with the decisions adopted at the Forum. The Project fund for each Forum (each municipality) is comprised of financial assets allocated by SDC and participation provided by the municipality. Civil Society organizations are in charge of the practical implementation of the activities.

The projects selected to be financed becomes part of the budget of the municipality .

The association as a partner has the following roles in the project: participation in programme design and management, coordination with partner municipalities, assistance in selection of partner municipalities.

D. Good practices at the municipal level:

-**Municipality of Troyan** in Bulgaria promotes citizen participation through financing projects initiated by citizens in specific areas, for example for renovation of green city areas;

-**Municipality of Lovech** in Bulgaria forms so called “public councils” in different parts of the municipality- villages, residential areas.

-**Municipality of Strumica** in Macedonia reserves an amount during the budget planning for the main neighbourhoods and villages. In a public forum, the municipality tells the amount allocated to the neighbourhood and the citizens decide themselves how they want the funds to be used (for which purpose). The results of these discussions are then included in the annual programme and budget of the municipality for the following year.

-In Republika Srpska, the city of Banja Luka in 2010 worked on improving systems for high quality and a more timely provision of information to citizens. In this sense, in the last few years, Banja Luka successfully conducted public hearings in local communities when adopting the budget for next year, and thus provided an opportunity for all interested citizens, both legal and natural persons to take part in creating the budget. This form of communication was supported both by authorities and citizens in local communities. The draft of the budget of the City of Banja Luka gets published in newspapers and on the official website of the City of Banja Luka. Upon completion of the public hearing, the competent authorities prepare a report on a conducted public hearing and, with the budget proposal, provide the City Council with the responses to the proposals set out in the public

hearing. This mode has a high degree of transparency with the participation of citizens, and therefore the budget of the City of Banja Luka in recent years, has been adopted by the Assembly of the city of Banja Luka in the form as it was proposed.

-Participatory budgeting is present in each Slovenian municipality. The process of participation works in steps:

- First the municipality announces a draft version of the municipal budget (via internet and municipal bulletin board): now can interested public, such as inhabitants, local communities and public corporation give their feedback and make propositions about what's important for their work
- The local communities work in a kind of workgroup together; they also usually get suggestions from inhabitants (rare it happens that inhabitant send their remarks and propositions directly to the municipality)
- in the next step the municipality gathers the propositions, looks it through and sets a list of priorities, considering the budget possibilities
- once priorities are set, a new draft plan of municipal budget is set to these groups
- in the last stage a coordinated proposal of the municipal budgeting plan is presented to the municipal council
- If the municipal council agrees, it approves the local budget.