

About CRPRC Studiorum

Centre for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation “Studiorum” (CRPRC Studiorum) is a non-governmental think-tank working on economic and social aspects of EU integration and globalization processes that are of essential importance for our country and the countries of Southeast Europe. This mission is accomplished through different policy-oriented programs and research projects, which contribute to and complement the attempts of policy-makers in policy design and implementation, and support central and local governments, business and nongovernmental sectors in their communication and cooperation.

CRPRC Studiorum was established in February 2002, as independent research NGO. Its structure consists of 4 departments: Department of Public Health and environmental considerations, Department of Decentralization and Active Citizenship, Department of Social Inclusion and Department of New Media and the Society.

Decentralization/ Active Citizenship

With the ongoing decentralization in our country, at this stage, the local government is expected to show high levels of capacity to perform the new 26 authorities transferred from the central government; much activity is needed on the ground to support the local self-government units (LSGU) in performing the new duties, as well as to monitor their work in the response to service delivery and needs of the citizens. CRPRC Studiorum engages mostly in the activities of monitoring of budget planning and public spending in pilot municipalities, as well as on empowering citizens to become equal partner and active voice in the society.

Recent Projects/Policy Papers:

1. Active Citizenship training for Municipalities of Bitola and Prilep (2009)
2. “Fighting corruption to improve governance” - Conference on mapping of existing initiatives and programmes for fighting corruption in the country.
In cooperation with FPD, Romania and UNDP Mission in the country. (2009)
3. Program for Anticorruption Practitioners – analysis of the situation in the local government, in cooperation with FPD, Romania and the World Bank Institute (2009)
4. Analysis of the regulation and implementation of spatial and urban planning on local level in Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Republika Srpska and Turkey in comparative analysis to Denmark (2009)
5. Active Citizenship training for Municipalities of Veles and Probistip (2008-2009)

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ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP, LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND CIVIL SOCIETY

The relevant and quick changes of the European Union make it more and more necessary to involve citizens in a process fostering the exchange and the debate on the future of Europe. Through the promotion of this process at the local level, local authorities and civil society play a key role and their joint commitment represent the condition sine qua non for the development of the local communities.

The pilot training action on active citizenship is mainly addressed to local authorities – municipalities, provinces, unions and consortia of municipalities, etc. – and civil society organizations – associations, youth organizations, gender groups, economic sector, trade unions, voluntary organizations, etc.

The cooperation between local authorities and civil society allows the growth of synergies and the promotion of “multiplier effects” which ensure a remarkable impetus for the local community, for its development and for the setting up of participative and democratic processes.



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Pilot Training on Active Citizenship

[Module A]

After successful first round of implementation, the Centre for Regional Policy Research and Cooperation 'Studiorum' with support of the Association for Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA) implemented the second round of the Pilot Training on Active Citizenship in our country. In this second cycle, the pilot training was implemented in the municipalities of Bitola and Prilep. According to the standardized structure of the pilot trainings, participants were the representatives from the local self-government and the civil society organizations (CSOs). The first module was held on the 6th and 7th of November 2009 in Bitola. The participants from the two municipalities had an opportunity to exchange experiences with the other participants in two sessions - one session with participants from the local self-government and the other with representatives from the CSOs. While scanning the local context, the participants exchanged practices for enhancing the cooperation of the local government with the citizens and the CSOs. In view of this, the participants from the Municipality of Prilep presented their good practice with the so-called "urban communities", while the participants from the Municipality of Bitola presented their examples of cooperation in the fields of culture, environment, etc. The session with the representatives of the CSOs was focused on identifying the ethics, values and morale that should characterize the model-citizen, as well as on barriers for citizens' participation. In both sessions A-1 and A-2 the key features of "Europe for Citizens" programme were presented, triggering huge interest among the participants from both the local self-government and the CSOs.



Main skills to be acquired

The trainings aim at giving the participants the opportunity to develop their knowledge, skills and competencies on:

- knowledge of the Europe for Citizens Programme
- understanding of the concept of informal learning for active European citizenship
- knowledge of participatory issues in different European countries
- intercultural competencies
- skills to gather, select and give information
- skills to present the specific relevant information and ideas to others
- skills to discover, analyse and adequately address needs of potential Programme users
- skills to motivate others
- skills to plan, run and evaluate multiplying projects
- knowledge of lobbying and networking mechanisms
- development of negotiation skills

Prerequisites for active citizen participation:

- Freedom of information
- No discrimination
- Sustainability
- Resources
- Transparency
- "Sense for differences"
- Freedom of expression
- Two-ways communication (information, public discussion)

[Module B]

The Module B was the joint session for the participants from the local self-government and the CSOs. The Municipality of Prilep hosted this event, which was held in the premises of the Foundation for Support and Development. Accenting the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding was part of the first session of this module, followed by another discussion on the barriers for citizens' participation which were identified in the Module A. The participants had a chance to present their views from a local government and from a CSO perspective. Through work in groups, the participants worked on a case of solving a specific local problem. During this active citizenship exercise, participants exchanged their roles as either local self-government representatives or CSO representatives. This meeting enabled exchange of experiences and initiated a dialogue aiming towards a creative solution of some of the issues raised during the module discussions and surmounting of the barriers for citizens participation, as one of the first steps towards European citizenship.

Participant views and comments on the Training

"...The active citizens' participation means active involvement in the solving of all problems which stem from living together in the same space and time (information flow, ideas, programmes for solving of certain problems, participation of various actions from joint interest)..."

"...The topics for the training were ideally chosen, educational and each one of them represented a story of its own..."

"...Active participation means participation of the citizens outside of political parties or state institutions in the democratic processes of decision making, initiating of solutions and insight in the government decisions. That is, it means that the citizens should have a "corrective" role and a feeling that they are asked and consulted regarding various issues in political and in everyday life..."

"...The training was an excellent opportunity for exchange of views on identification of the current situation and on the various opinions..."

"...There should be regular meetings of this kind between the representatives from the local government and the CSOs where these issues will be discussed..."

"...The training helped me to expand my views on the concept of active citizen participation..."

"...A joint commission of CSOs and local government representatives should be created that will be tasked to give suggestions and opinions on all relevant activities in the municipality..."