

Open Assembly Meetings

Meetings of municipal assemblies and its committees are open to the public, including NGO representatives. Assemblies should publish the date and time of meetings 7 days in advance.

Right of Petition

Citizens have the right to submit petitions to the municipal assemblies on public interest matters. NGOs play an important role in encouraging a lively public debate on the issues raised and mobilising citizens to participate.

The functioning of the formal mechanisms is, however, limited in Northern Kosovo, due to the incomplete establishment of the Kosovo municipalities. NGOs must therefore rely on informal practices in their advocacy efforts towards public institutions.

Consultative Committees

Municipal assemblies can establish consultative committees in which NGOs are able to make proposals on specific issues of local concern.

Citizens' Initiative

15% of voters in the given municipality can propose a new regulation to be adopted by the municipal assembly or by a citizen vote. NGOs can be a source of valuable information and data, contributing to optimal decisions made.

Maximising NGO Impact

NGO initiatives have been most successful in establishing cooperation with public institutions and effecting positive change when:

- Coordinating their efforts with other organisations, initiatives or groups of citizens on particular issues, and implementing joint actions
- Addressing problems that are of concern to most citizens in the municipality
- Being consistent in raising the issues with the municipal representatives even when repeatedly faced with refusal
- Utilising social media platforms and traditional media followed by local communities to raise public awareness of the issue and increase pressure on public officials
- Galvanising support of local actors wielding respect in the community
- Being inclusive of all actors with interest in the particular issue (e.g. institutions, teachers, parents, police etc.)
- Basing their policy proposals on evidence and data gathered through rigorous field research
- Turning to the Ombudsperson in justified cases

Guidelines for the cooperation of non-governmental organisations with public institutions in Northern Kosovo

Lessons from advocacy initiatives of NGOs in Leposavić and Zubin Potok



The “Guidelines for the cooperation of non-governmental organisations with public institutions in Northern Kosovo” are based on the experience of NGOs who participated in the project “Building Civil Society Capacities to Improve Decision-Making Processes in Kosovo’s Public Institutions”, implemented by the Slovak Foreign Policy Association (SFPA) and the Institute for Development of Civil Society ‘Innovate’ (IDCSI) from April 2016 until September 2017.



Challenging NGO Environment in Northern Kosovo

Non-governmental organisations in the North of Kosovo operate in a complex political, institutional and social environment, characterised by:

- Lack of fully established and functioning public institutions
- Legal and institutional insecurity as a result of the unfinished transition from Serbian to Kosovo municipal administration
- Absence of publicly available information on the functioning of municipalities, municipal bodies and individual departments
- Lack of will among political representatives to establish regular communication with external actors such as NGOs, the media, and the citizens
- Underdevelopment of municipal mechanisms for citizen engagement
- Scepticism among citizens towards government institutions and political parties
- Reluctance of citizens to become engaged in matters of public interest due to political pressures and safety concerns

- Distrust towards non-governmental organisations and limited tradition of participation in their activities, as well as other forms of public action

However, there is a number of formal mechanisms as well as informal ways that can be employed by non-governmental organisations in order to effect positive change and shape policy-making in their municipalities.



Formal Mechanisms of NGO Participation in Local Governance

Access to Public Information and Official Documents

NGOs can request access to public information and official documents held by municipalities, who are required by law to respond within 7 days (unless exceptions apply).

Municipal Meetings and Public Consultations

NGOs can attend the municipal meetings and public consultations organised by municipalities. At least 2 meetings and consultations should be held each year.