

# Setting Up a New Inclusive, Strategic Planning System

in Kosovo

## New planning for a new society

Ever since the military conflict ended in 1999, Kosovo's cities are facing an unprecedented influx of rural people and the rapid growth of urban areas. Cities in their former boundaries are unable to provide space for new investments, which leads to unplanned and uncontrolled urban development. Informal settlements become a common sight on the city outskirts, illegal constructions mushroom in city centres, the access to services becomes more difficult and the quality of life deteriorates.

Kosovo is also building a new democracy with streamlined institutions. The gradual transfer of responsibilities from the UN Interim Administration in Kosovo to the Provisional



Institutions of Self Government made these structures responsible for many functions that they had not exercised before. One such area is the responsibility for Kosovo-wide and local level planning and development in line with European Union standards and international principles for urban development and good urban governance. The resolution of property issues and incorporation of informal settlements in local development plans is one of the standards that Kosovo is expected to meet before its final status is determined. Inclusive urban planning practices and accompanying legislation are key conditions for regenerating the stalled economy and bringing prosperity to the people of Kosovo.



### **URBAN PLANNING IN A STATE OF FLUX - Towards Sustainable Urbanization**

*Urban planning was traditionally seen as a means to control and regulate the development of towns and cities. In the cities of the developing world, however, traditional planning approaches have failed to address the challenges of rapid urbanisation and the poverty, exclusion, informality and vulnerability it brings in its wake.*

*This series of brochures illustrates how UN-HABITAT has applied urban planning and design in a variety of ways, in very different contexts, to contribute towards sustainable human settlements development in general, as well as prevention, upgrading and integration of unplanned settlements, and the management of post-conflict and post-disaster situations, in particular. Each brochure introduces one thematic area or approach, and illustrates its impact on the built environment, and/or the planning legislation, policy and process. The specific context and programme within which the illustrated UN-HABITAT activities have been developed are mentioned at the end of each brochure, along with contact details for more information.*

UN-HABITAT is assisting the post-conflict transition from the former centralised, top-down planning system towards an inclusive, participatory and multi-disciplinary approach to planning. A planning approach that takes into account specific needs of various social groups and is focussed on participation, transparency and accountability. Working at the same time with the central and local levels, the University, and civil society organisations, and developing adequate legislation, was a unique and comprehensive approach which allowed the anchoring of the process among Kosovo institutions. Planning for a sustainable future of Kosovo requires new planning legislation, institutions and practices. Setting-up this new planning system requires working at several levels and incorporating various aspects of the planning process into one framework.

### Local Planning done by Local Planners

Urban planners from all of Kosovo's 30 municipalities attended an advanced training programme on strategic and spatial planning which offered an opportunity to learn from experiences of other countries in the region and EU. Through an initial series of training workshops with in-service follow-up and practitioners' experience exchange, the planners have been trained in the four-phase and step-by-step approach advocated by the Urban Planning and Management Framework. The workshops and framework were developed and conducted by international and local trainers and experts prepared the municipal planners to deal with these issues in their own municipality. Training materials were developed for these purposes and closely linked to the planning process reflected in the Law on Spatial Planning; the manuals are in the final stage of printing and will be soon available on UN-HABITAT's website. The workshops gave a strong Kosovo-wide



basis for the current phase of capacity building activities strongly oriented on technical, on-the job assistance and learning by doing, being conducted with the 6 secondary cities/municipalities in Kosovo. Municipal planning teams are supported by international and local planning advisors to plan for development and ensure the planning process is participatory, inclusive and action-oriented. It also aims to be able to guide and monitor the work of consultancy offices, and set-up pilot projects deriving from strategic priorities. The initiation of projects with community participation and utilization of remittances from the diaspora abroad is a challenge but of utmost importance to support infrastructure development in Kosovo. UN-HABITAT is also supporting the institutionalisation of the planning teams into mainstream municipal structures.

### The first Kosovo Strategic Spatial Plan

Today, the first Strategic Spatial Plan for the territory of Kosovo has entered the final public review process before approval by the Government and the Parliament. UN-HABITAT helped the new Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning establish the Institute of Spatial Planning and prepare its staff for the development of the first Kosovo Strategic Spatial Plan. Both technical and management staff were trained by UN-HABITAT, with the capacity building programme tailored to a "roadmap" for strategic and inclusive planning at central level. It was developed by the taskforce UN-HABITAT and its partner IHS, and the Ministry. Two-and-a-half years of on-the-job assistance complemented by workshops and training sessions, was aimed at achieving concrete results, such as preparing the 'challenges' documents for public debate, reports on the debates as integral part of the plan, sector impact reports, the creation of a spatial database, the establishment of inter-ministerial working groups and

public consultations. The final draft plan was recently presented in a series of public debates held across Kosovo attended by hundreds of stakeholders, including municipal officials. The Kosovo Spatial Plan is also an important tool to gradually integrate the Kosovo's cities in the polycentric European Urban Network. Therefore, the Kosovo Spatial Plans aims at re-balancing the mono-centric trend towards a balanced polycentric Kosovo city network comprising the capital, Pristina, and six secondary cities. Because of their strategic role in the stabilisation process of Kosovo, and the worsening poverty and unemployment, UN-HABITAT Kosovo is now focusing on spatial and action planning in those secondary cities.

### Engaging Civil Society as Part of the "Roadmap"

"We do not think about big issues, we just want a school, a health centre and a safe playground for our children. This is what we want to lobby for in the municipality", a representative of a women's NGO in Pristina said after a workshop for civil society organisations. The "roadmap" for participatory planning engages civil society in consultations and gives citizens and their organisations the floor as the key stakeholder in the planning process. This remains a big challenge for both central and local level institutions and civil society organisations. Therefore, UN-HABITAT is working together with civil society organisations, decision-makers and municipal planners to build a common understanding of the planning process and prepare civil society organisations, with a focus on NGO's representing ethnic minorities, youth (representing more than 50% of the population) and women, for participation in dialogues and public debates, and engagement as partners in strategic



for projects and major investments. Gender equality in Kosovo still requires work in many areas – access to services, public safety, jobs and education, to mention just a few. UN-HABITAT is helping incorporate a gender approach in planning.

### Legal Basis for Inclusive and Participatory Planning

The involvement of citizens in the decision-making processes is not a privilege, it is their right. The Law on Spatial Planning was prepared with support of UN-HABITAT through a participatory process involving central and local level government bodies, professional associations, and citizens. UN-HABITAT offered substantial assistance to the Ministry in drafting the legal documents and developing policy guidelines in line with international principles and EU standards, and provided training to local planners on the interpretation of the



projects. Understanding strategic planning, being able to advocate for citizens' priorities, learning about budgeting, and how citizens can get involved in it, form the basis of inclusive planning. Inclusion of all relevant stakeholders in the planning process is not only an element of good governance, but also the means for ensuring funding

Law and by-laws. This led to the recent establishment of Council of Planning Experts as an advisory body representing key stakeholders in the planning process. The Council of Planning Experts is part of the current training cycle.



## New Planning System requires a New Generation of Planners

Education and development of human capital is crucial for the continued building of democratic institutions and practices in Kosovo. Through cooperation with European Universities, UN-HABITAT helped the University of Pristina establish a Master's Programme in Urban Planning and Management, the first ever such programme at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture. The curriculum,

developed with assistance of two Danish universities, is focused on the problem-based learning approach. The Master's Programme was approved by the University Senate and created according to the Bologna Declaration, which ensures the highest European standard of higher education and links Kosovo to EU. Earlier, students of the faculty participated in UN-HABITAT training and have recently helped with research on informal settlements following the Government agenda stemming from the Vienna Declaration on Informal Settlements in SEE.

## Inclusive, Strategic and Action-oriented Planning in Kosovo

For many years in Kosovo and the broader region, actually since the end of the war in Kosovo in 1999, UN-HABITAT has been promoting good governance, security of tenure, sustainable human settlements development and inclusive spatial planning. UN-HABITAT's initial interventions were focussed on the establishment of institutions to deal with property issues as the Housing and Property Directorate, the Kosovo Cadastre Agency and on building capacities for efficient management of local governments through LoGo (Local Government Programme) and Municipal Support Programme.

Through the Urban Planning and Management Programme (UPMP, '01-'03), the Governance and Development Planning Programme (GDPP '03-'06) and the Municipal Spatial Planning Support Programme (MuSPP, '05-'07) a new planning system has been developed, anchored and institutionalised. These programmes are funded by respectively the Government of the Netherlands (UPMP, GDPP) and the Swedish Government through Sida (MuSPP).

Building sustainable capacity for inclusive planning is a prerequisite for accession to the European Union. UN-HABITAT has engaged with various countries in the South East European region on urbanisation policy advice and technical cooperation in the past years. To support SEE countries in furthering reforms in the areas of Housing and Urban Development and to assist in the EU integration process, UN-HABITAT, in cooperation with the Stability Pact and in close consultation with the governments in the Western Balkans, is developing a Regional Capacity Building Programme for Housing and Urban Development in SEE.

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