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LINK4
COOPERATION PROJECT

ACTIVITY REPORT 2021 LINK 4 COOPERATION PROJECT



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*“Strengthening local participation and cooperation through partnership
of Public Authorities and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina”*

February, 2022

ABOUT US

For the conception of the [“LINK 4 Cooperation” project](#), Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Mostar, together with the project partners LDA Prijedor, LDA Zavidovici, Center for Development of Herzegovina, European Association for Local Democracy - ALDA, and ALDA Skopje, has formed a diversified and complementary consortium in order to maximize the impact of the action in each component.

This valuable network has been shaped through various ties and relations built throughout the years: LDAs and ALDA are linked by a crossed and long term partnership and cooperation on different projects and initiatives from more than 20 years. LDAs from Bosnia and the Center for Development of Herzegovina have joint contacts and previous work in different spheres, from local development, local communities initiatives, activities related to youth and other groups in the civil society, culture activities, and many others. The project has been co-constructed by the consortium taking into account the specific expertise of each partner focusing on promoting good governance at local level in Europe and in Western Balkans. The Local Democracy Agencies have been established in the Western Balkans by the Congress of the Council of Europe since 1992, as a support program to strengthen local democracy, foster respect for human rights and further sustainable development. Today there are 15 active Local Democracy Agencies based in Western Balkans, South Caucasus and North Africa coordinated by ALDA, and three Agencies – Operational partners, based in Croatia. The Agencies function as self-sustaining, locally registered NGOs, but they are different from other local NGOs because of the international framework they operate in. Indeed, the Local Democracy Agencies develop partnerships with local authorities and NGOs from all over Europe giving to the whole network direct access to an international framework through the support of ALDA, the Council of Europe and the European Union.

LINK4Cooperation is a three year project funded by [European union](#).

OBJECTIVES

Overall objective: to strengthen the capacities of CSOs engaged in public policy processes to become skilled and reliable partners in policy-making and reform processes in B&H.

Specific Objectives:

- Create stronger links to citizens by engaging in public policy process, reaching out to society as a whole including marginalized groups and grass root communities and encouraging civic activism and public participation in policy-making;
- Capable, transparent and accountable LAs;
- Effective CSOs;
- LAs have enabling policies and rules for grass root organizations and civic initiatives;
- CSOs create Network for coalition-building for increased impact in campaigning and advocacy.

VISION

- To strengthen the capacities of CSOs engaged in public policy processes to become skilled and reliable partners in policy-making and reform processes in BiH.

ACTIVITIES IN 2021

The 1st half of the Year

In January 2021, the first online meeting of the project team was held and the Project Management Committee was appointed. Also a preliminary plan of activities was presented, with an emphasis on organizational aspects of future work. After the meeting, contracts were signed with project partners and all preparatory steps for the official start of project implementation were performed. At the very beginning of the implementation, the project was promoted through a web platform EU Resurs for supporting CSOs.

A meeting with the donor was held in February. The Delegation of the European Union BiH organized a meeting for all beneficiaries of funds approved through the same call in order to provide basic information and guidelines on how to implement the project, in accordance with EU rules and procedures.

In April, the official pages on social networks, Facebook and Instagram, were launched, through which the project was promoted by informing the public about the project activities and goals. Also, partner organizations were presented, as well as 12 local governments from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the project beneficiaries.

In May, the second meeting of the Project Management Committee was held. At the meeting, the Local Democracy Agency Mostar, as the project leader, presented the implemented activities. The Committee also selected the official logo of the project. Also, work was done on defining the prepared plan for project monitoring and evaluation.

The third and fourth meetings of the Project Management Committee were held on 14th and 17th of June. These meetings were primarily dedicated to the organization of the initial conference of the project, but also to a more detailed definition of the Action Plan, budget and financial reporting, as well as the Communication Plan of the project. Also, ELoGE program of the Council of Europe (the European Label of Governance Excellence) and LAP (Leadership Academy Program) were presented in more detail. The importance of establishing good cooperation with the involved local communities from the very beginning of the project implementation was emphasized.





The Opening Conference

With the support of the European Union, the Opening Conference of the project “Strengthening local participation and cooperation through partnership of Public Authorities and CSOs in Bosnia and Herzegovina – LINK 4 Cooperation” was held in Mostar on June 18, 2021.

The Conference was attended by Mayors and political representatives of Berkovići, Jablanica, Kostajnica, Maglaj, Mostar, Nevesinje, Novi Grad, Prijedor, Ravno, Trebinje, Zavidović and Žepče who expressed their readiness to participate in the implementation of participatory processes to jointly identify specific community problems and find optimal solutions.



On the occasion of the project conference and given its specificity and importance in the context of future development and growth of local communities, Mr Nicolas Bizel, Head of the Section of Operations for Justice, Home Affairs and Public Administration Reform of the EU Delegation to BiH, confirmed the importance of such a project for citizens and emphasized that: "Efficient, quality, responsible and transparent public administration is a prerequisite for economic progress and stability. Only together, in partnership, can we build a high-quality public administration that serves the citizens and continuously creates conditions for socio-economic development." Ms Bojana Urumova, Head of the Council of Europe / Europe Office in BiH, and Ms Alina Tatarenko, Head of the Center of Expertise for Good Governance of the Council of Europe also addressed the participants of this conference by video link. Both emphasized the importance of applying the principles of the ELoGE methodology for good governance, and that it is crucial to ensure better public services and solutions.



Ms Dženana Dedić, director of the Local Democracy Agency Mostar, especially pointed out that only joint action of active citizens of transparent and responsible government leads to a modern democratic and prosperous community of comfortable living and called on civil society organizations to get information about the project.



Introductory Meetings with Representatives of Local Governments

In the first half of 2021, the project team organized introductory meetings with representatives of 12 local governments. The goal of the meetings was closer cooperation at the local level as a precondition for further good action and creating an environment favorable for the involvement of citizens in community development processes. During the meeting with the representatives of the local governments of Prijedor, Novi Grad and Kostajnica, which were organized by the representatives of the partner organization LDA Prijedor, the desire for cooperation on the "Link 4 Cooperation" project was expressed, which was confirmed by the presence of deputy mayor of Prijedor Zarko Kovacevic and mayors of Novi Grad and Kostajnica, Miroslav Drljaca and Nikola Janjetovic. In these local communities, the activation of citizens through informal groups in the process of solving specific problems with the aim of improving living conditions in their communities is noticeable, because in this way the best solution to specific problems of citizens is concluded.



The project team of the partner organization LDA Zavidovići met with representatives of municipalities from the Zenica-Doboj Canton - Zavidovići, Žepče and Maglaj. In the area of these municipalities, significant activism of citizens and civil society organizations that are engaged in the processes of public advocacy and the implementation of various activities to improve living conditions in their communities is noticeable.

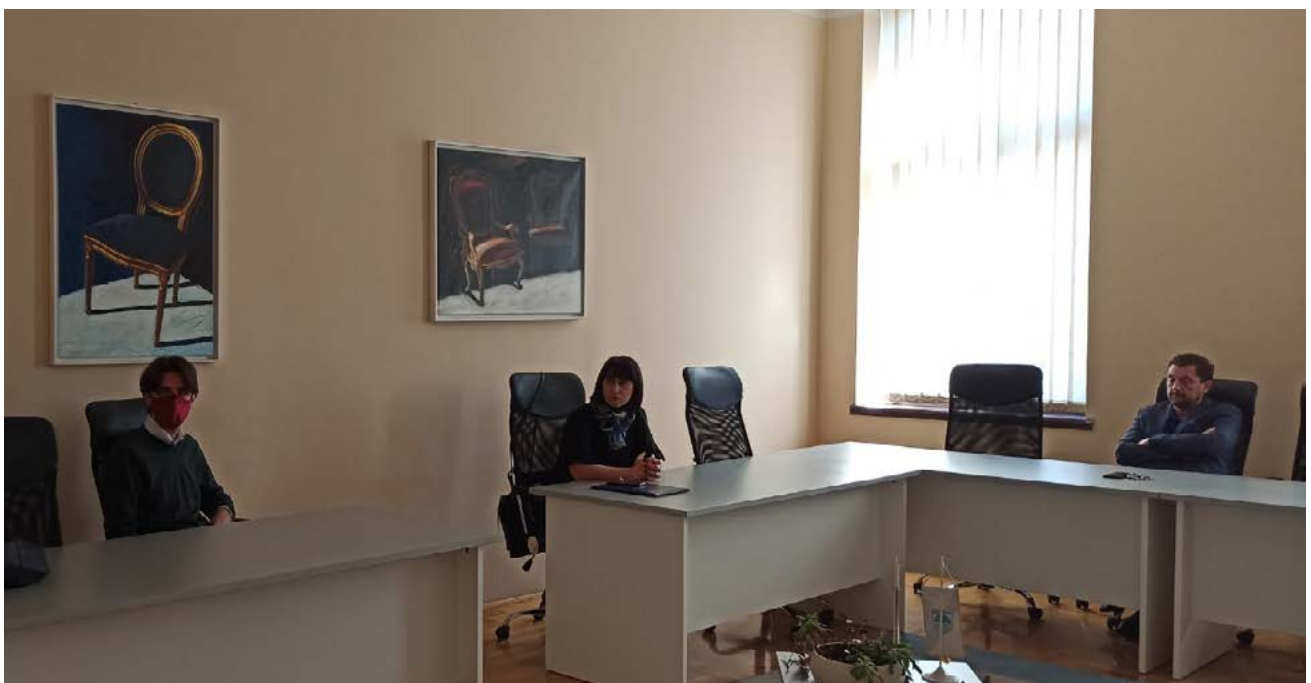


The project also includes Municipality Trebinje, which has a developed non-governmental sector, and the municipalities of Ravno and Berkovići, which have yet to work on creating a more favorable environment for the development of civil society. The City of Trebinje and the Municipality of Ravno have been long-term partners of the "Center for Development of Herzegovina (CRH)" in the implementation of a large number of projects. On the other hand, CRH has not cooperated more intensively with the Municipality of Berkovići so far, and this local community has imposed itself as a challenge both for the processes that will take place through this project and for building a stronger partnership between government and the civil sector in general.



Three cities from the south of our country, Mostar, Jablanica and Nevesinje, are involved in the "LINK 4 Cooperation" project, funded by the EU, where the project activities will be coordinated by the Local Democracy Agency Mostar.

A project such as "LINK 4 Cooperation" with all its activities is especially important for the City of Mostar, because it comes at a time when this City gained local government in the elections held in December, 2020, after 12 years since the last election. LDA Mostar sincerely believes that the "Link4Cooperation" project will significantly contribute to the quality of services provided by local authorities to their citizens, and the active participation of citizens in all processes important for the City of Mostar. LDA Mostar team used this project as an opportunity for the first meeting with the new Mayor of the City of Mostar, held at the City Hall on March 19, 2021. At this meeting, the Mayor Mario Kordić expressed his readiness for cooperation and gave his full support to its realization.



Representatives of the LDA Mostar presented the "LINK4Cooperation" project at a meeting in the mayor's office held on June 9, 2021. At this meeting, mayor expressed great satisfaction that the Municipality of Jablanica will be part of this project, and promised to contribute to the quality implementation of all project activities, which showed that his participation in the opening conference of the project held in Mostar in May, 2021, as well as on other activities of our organization that are aimed at building the local community and good relations between local authorities and civil society.

LDA Mostar will have the opportunity during this project to actively cooperate with another local community from the south of Herzegovina, and that is the Municipality of Nevesinje. Both sides pointed out that they are looking forward to the continuation of traditionally good cooperation, and full support was given in the implementation of all activities of the LINK project for cooperation.

The 2nd half of the Year

In August, as a precursor to the presentation of the project's official website, a [project leaflet](#) with basic information about the project was published.

6 partnerških organizacija radi na stvaranju kvalitetne saradnje između opština/opština, građana i lokalnih organizacija civilnog društva (NGO-ova) u BiH

12 opština/opština i građana u BiH stvarajući mrežicu u procesu gradnje i uspostavljanja javnih usluga

40 lokalnih organizacija civilnog društva koje pružaju usluge u svakoj od opština/opština

40 lokalnih NGO-ova pružaju usluge kapaciteta za otkrivanje problema i zajednički koristeći participativne metode od državljanima i njihovim organizacijama

Zadatak nam je...

- Omogućiti stvaranje novih partnerstava
 - Potaknuti umrežavanja
- Izgraditi nove i ojačati postojeće kapacitete
 - Educirati i proširiti znanja
 - Osvijestiti građanstvo i lokalne vlasti
 - Osnažiti organizacije civilnog društva
- Potaknuti direktno učešće građana u procesu odlučivanja u lokalnoj zajednici, odnosno razvoj participativne demokratije/demokracije tokom implementacije projekta od 01.01.2021. do 31.12.2023. godine.

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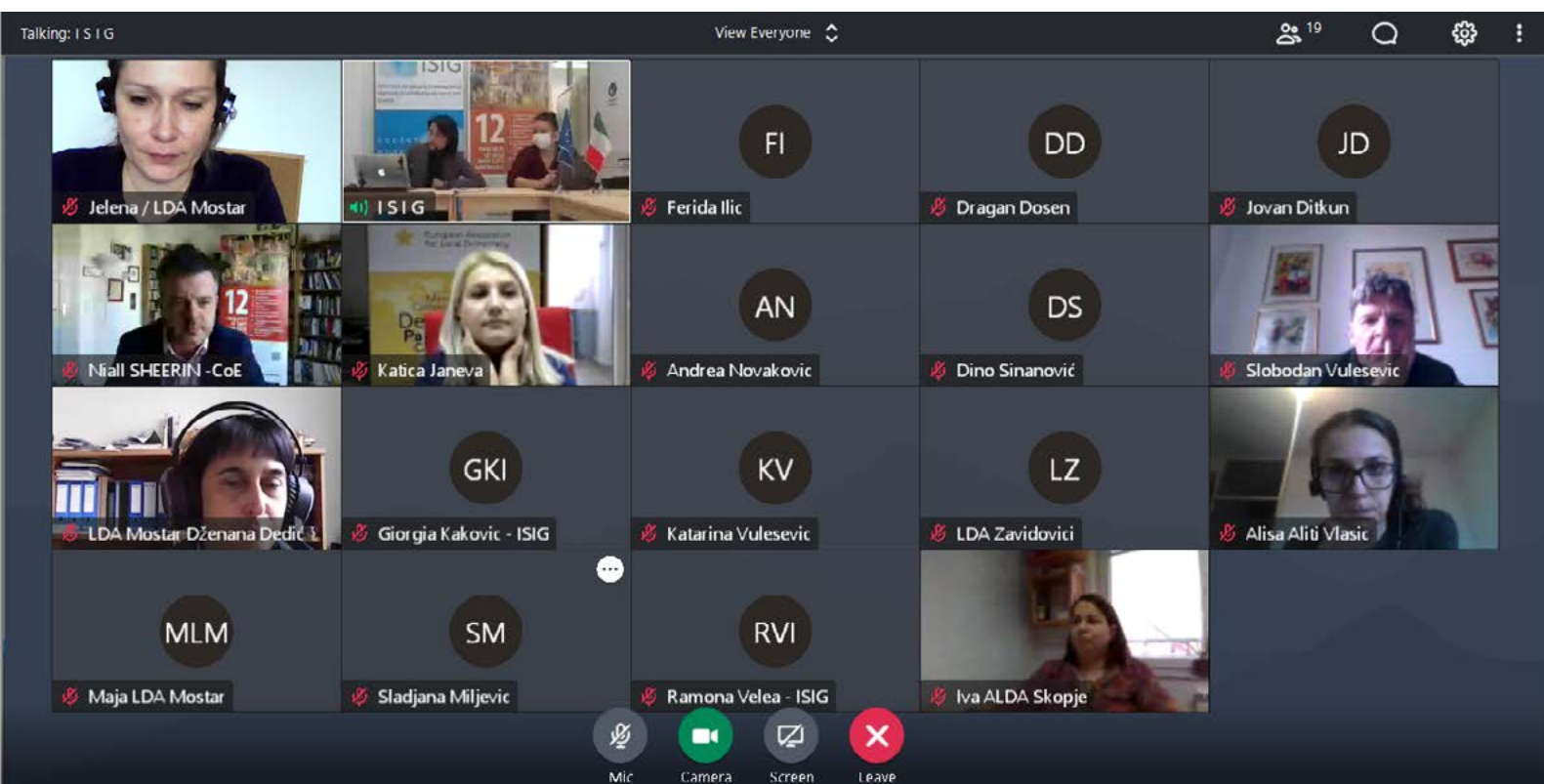
Ova publikacija je urađena uz finansijsku pomoć Evropske unije. Sadržaj ove publikacije je isključivo odgovornost Agencije lokalne demokratije Mostar i ne predstavlja nužno stanovište Evropske unije.

Na Međunarodni dan demokratije, 15. septembra/rujna, premijerno je predstavljena web platforma projekta na poveznici <https://www.link4cooperation.ba/>, finansirana sredstvima Evropske unije, a čiji sadržaj promovira suštinu demokratije na lokalnom nivou, upravo ondje gdje počinju sve promjene. Web platforma referentna je tačka za sve informacije vezane za projekt i njegove aktivnosti, te kontinuirano promovira ciljeve projekta i njegovih korisnika.

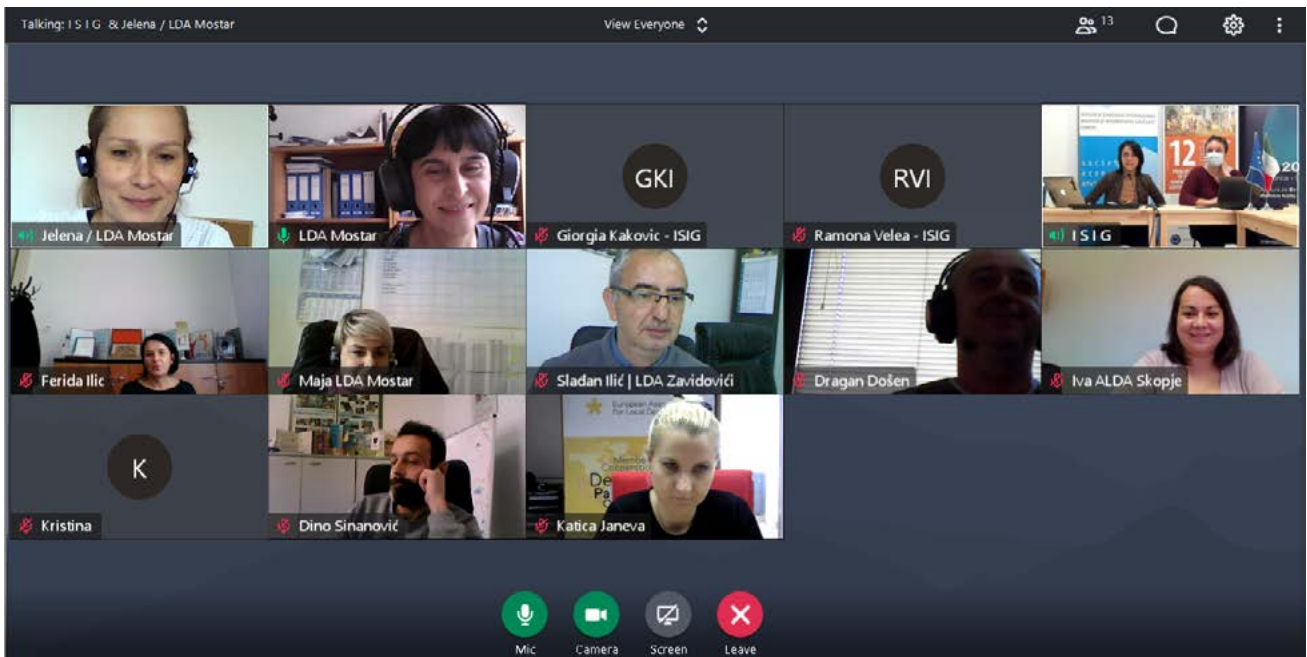
Trainings for Trainers on the methodology implementation of the CoE ELoGE Programme in BiH

In mid-September, representatives of the leading partners of LDA Mostar, held a preparatory meeting with the trainers of the ELOGE program of the Council of Europe (European Label of Excellence in Management).

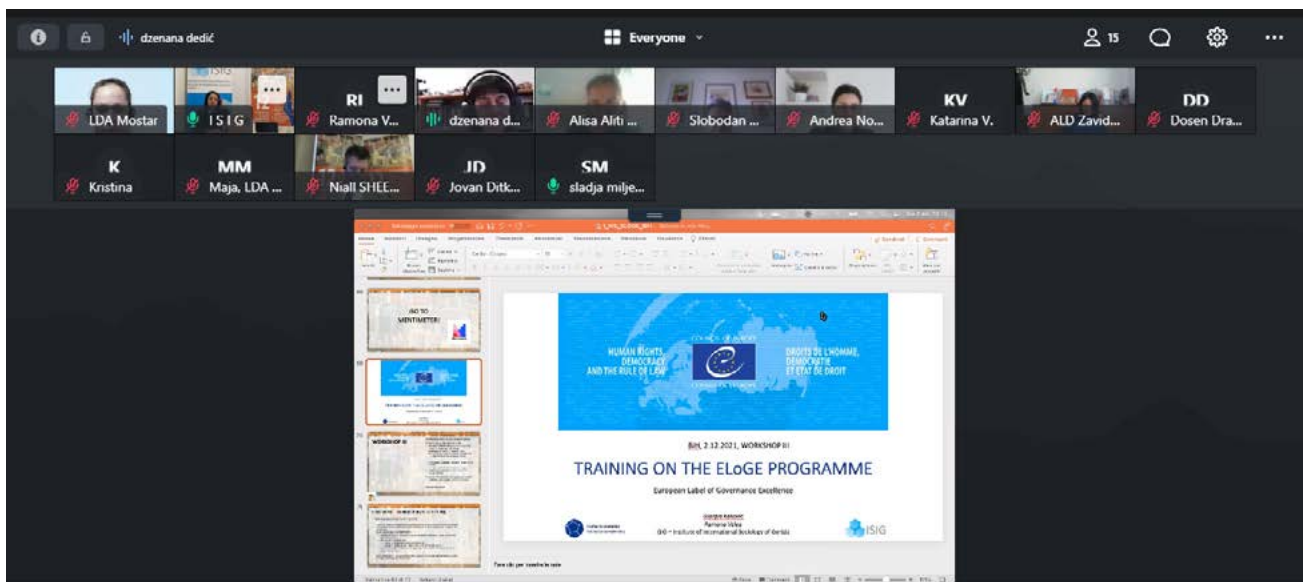
On 13 October, the first online training for trainers on the methodology implementation of the Council of Europe programme ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence was held, with the participation of sixteen representatives of the project's partner organizations. It was the first in a series of trainings that will empower representatives of partner organizations for the implementation of ELOGE methodology in Bosnia and Herzegovina, based on the assessment of 12 principles of good local government, and will be conducted in 12 local governments included in this project. During the training, basic information was given about the methodology itself, the implementation process and the importance of the basic principles of good local government.



On October 27, the second online training for the methodology implementation of the Council of Europe programme - ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence was held. In the previous period, sixteen representatives of the partner organizations of the project worked intensively on the preparation of the plan with concrete steps for the implementation of the ELoGE methodology in 12 local governments. The plan was presented in detail and adapted in cooperation with the trainers, and the next steps of training and preparation for implementation in the field are planned.



On December 2, the third session of online training for trainers on the application of the methodology of the Council of Europe programme - ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence was held. Work was done on the translation and adaptation of the Benchmark for good governance and questionnaires intended for local authorities and civil society. The materials will be used during the implementation phase of the information gathering and the assessment itself, in order to be maximally adapted to the local context and the specific situation and needs.



On December 23, the fourth and last online training for trainers on the application of the methodology of the Council of Europe programme - ELoGE - European Label of Governance Excellence was held.

The training for trainers was held by external experts delegated by the Council of Europe, and the participants will also receive a trainer Certificate for the ELoGE program. The twelve principles of good democratic governance cover issues such as participation, advocacy and fair conduct of elections, reactivity - timely and adequate response, efficiency and effectiveness, openness and transparency, rule of law, ethical behavior, competence and capacity, innovation and openness to change, sustainability and long-term orientation, sound financial management, human rights, cultural diversity and social cohesion and responsibility. For each principle, there is an elaborate method, with specific benchmarks and indicators, that allow impact assessment to be assessed in an objective and participatory way.

Experts from the Center of Expertise of the Council of Europe will be assisting ELoGE trainers with advice and support during the implementation of the entire process in 12 local governments in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the periods between the mentioned online sessions with the educators of the Council of Europe, the participants, as an integral part of the training, held a total of 7 online workshops with the aim of preparing and improving the necessary skills and tools.

External Project Promotion

Global Exchange on Religion in Society (GERIS)

On October 11, in Sarajevo, the representatives of the Local Democracy Agency in Mostar were invited by the European Union in BiH, within the Global Exchange on Religion in Society (GERIS) project. They had the opportunity to present the organisation and their projects, especially focusing on the "LINK 4 Cooperation" project. The gathering was attended by representatives of numerous partner organizations / institutions cooperating on the GERIS project, coming from Asia, Africa, Australia, Europe, and North and South America.

The GERIS project is a two-year project funded by the EU, and deals with the issue of networking, social capacity building and engagement on social media. The aim of the project is to contribute to social inclusion and social resilience by setting up a global community-based exchange initiative, which was an ideal opportunity to promote this project.



Academy of Social Participation

As an added value to the “LINK 4 Cooperation” project, outside the framework of regular project activities, representatives of the project consortium together with representatives of the City of Prijedor and the Municipalities of Novi Grad, Kostajnica and Maglaj, passed a three-day training organized by the Council of Europe, which was held from 17th till 19th of November, 2021 in Sarajevo.

The Academy on Civil Participation was realized in cooperation with our project partner, the European Association for Local Democracy – ALDA, and promotes the standards of social participation of the Council of Europe and informs about key concepts and tools of participatory democracy, while strengthening interaction between local authorities and civil society organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.



The aim of the Academy was to raise awareness of dialogue with citizens and decision makers, offering suggestions and guidance on how to achieve more effective civic engagement during the political decision-making process.

In the context of the “LINK 4 Cooperation” project, the Academy provided project beneficiaries (primarily local government representatives) with an improved understanding of the concept of participatory democracy, and transferred knowledge and skills to overcome participatory challenges at the local level. The training encouraged the strengthening of mutual understanding and cooperation between CSOs and local public officials, as well as the creation of a platform for exchange and networking.

Please find the CoE Academy on Civil Participation Report on the following [LINK](#).

The First E-Newsletter

On October 26, the first semi-annual e-newsletter of the "LINK 4 Cooperation" project was published, which informed the public in more detail about the project and project activities carried out in the previous period. The newsletter was sent to 500 stakeholder addresses.

On November 2, the e-newsletter was also published in English and sent to 100 stakeholder and beneficiaries addresses.



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LINK 4 Cooperation

**"Strengthening local participation and cooperation
through partnership of Public Authorities and CSOs in
Bosnia and Herzegovina- LINK 4 Cooperation"**



CENTAR
ZA RAZVOJ
HERCEGOVINE



CENTER FOR
DEVELOPMENT
OF HERCEGOVINA



Official Meetings with Representatives of Local Governments

As part of the project, a series of meetings with representatives of local governments have been scheduled. The meetings were informative and primarily referred to the education on the ELoGE program of the Council of Europe, the Academy for Leaders (LAP), and the concrete activities that will follow during the next year, and will intensively include representatives of local self-governments. In addition, other important segments of the project were discussed, such as involving civil society using a web platform and “grant” schemes for the civil sector, ways to improve cooperation between all project participants, as well as joint promotion on social networks and project portal. Also, there were talks about the next steps and concrete activities of local communities within the LINK 4 Cooperation.

Representatives of LDA Prijedor, a partner organization in the LINK 4 Cooperation project, visited three local governments on October 26 and 28. These are the municipalities of Novi Grad and Kostajnica, as well as the city administration of the City of Prijedor, which are three of the 12 local governments covered by the project. The visit was informal and was the introduction to the official visit of the representative of the project coordinator, LDA Mostar, which took place on November 5, 2021.



On November 10 and 11, representatives of the project coordinator, the Local Democracy Agency Mostar and representatives of the partner organization, the Local Democracy Agency Zavidovići, visited the municipalities of Zavidovići, Maglaj and Žepče.



On November 24, representatives of the project coordinator, the Local Democracy Agency Mostar and a representative of the partner organization, the Center for Development of Herzegovina - CRH Trebinje, visited the City of Trebinje.



On November 29, meetings were held in Berkovići and Nevesinje with the representatives of these municipalities in order to agree on the next steps in the process of implementing this project. Also, on this date, the two-month online campaign of 12 Principles of good Democratic Governance began.



On December 16, the project team representatives met with representatives of the Municipality of Ravno.



On December 28, a meeting was held with representatives of the City of Mostar. The meeting presented the current activities of the project as well as those that follow with a focus on the European Label of Governance Excellence - ELoGE and the Academy for Leaders - LAP, and the "grant" scheme for the civil sector in the project area.



The representatives of the local governance involved in the project also appointed "LINK 4 Cooperation" project coordinators as well as ELoGE teams. They will work on the assessment of 12 Principles of good Democratic Governance according to the methodology of the Council of Europe under the guidance of ELoGE experts.

On December 28, the fifth meeting of the Project Management Committee was held. The topic of the meeting was the definition of the annual report on project activities and the second e-newsletter that will present the activities implemented in the second half of the first year of project implementation. Also, the preparation of the first periodic narrative and financial report is planned. The Action Plan for 2022, the second year of the project implementation, was presented.

A ELoGE Communication plan has been defined, and preliminary plans for the first Forum have been presented. The first Forum will be held in Zavidovići, at the end of February 2022.

Regular communication and dissemination in accordance with the adopted Communication strategy and the Communication plan were implemented regularly by using the official project web portal and online tools.

For more information, please follow us on the official project [web platform](#) as well as on the official social media accounts [FB](#) and [Instagram](#).



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