

BASHKI TË FORTA

STRONG MUNICIPALITIES - for citizens



EMPOWERING MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

A project of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Agency for Development
and Cooperation SDC

Implemented by



HELVETAS



Empowering Municipal Councils

Municipal councils are key political players in the development of communities and territories, in the quality of life and local economic development. They play a decisive role in the long road of accountability between citizens on the one hand and councils, municipal executive and local public service providers on the other. Councilors represent citizens and have all the necessary powers to discuss policies with citizens, as well as with the municipal executive and to oversee the realization of policies.

Initiated and funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation SDC and implemented by Helvetas, the 'Bashki të Forta' Project provides technical assistance to all municipal councils so that they, the council commissions, the councilors and council secretariats fulfill their constitutional and legal mandates and exercise their roles effectively, comprehensively and transparently.

With technical assistance from the project in the first phase and in cooperation with the Municipal Council presidents and other state stakeholders, the Municipal Councils have embarked on a series of reforms, among which the most significant ones include:

- **1. Development and approval of the main regulatory framework for Municipal Councils:**

 - a) Regulation on the Organization and Functioning of the Council, adopted by all municipal councils of Albania;
 - b) Regulation on Public Consultation and Media Relations, approved by 60 out of 61 municipal councils;
 - c) Regulation on Handling Complaints, Requests, Petitions and Citizen Initiatives, approved by 60 out of 61 municipal councils
 - d) Regulation on the Code of Conduct and Conflict of Interest, adopted by all (61) municipal councils
 - e) Regulation on the Organization and Operation of Community Structures, approved by 60 out of 61 municipal councils.
- **2. Structural reform of the councils and the development of the capacities of the councilors,** as well as the establishment of secretariats in some councils.
- **3. Reformation and modernization of Councils' public relations, transparency and accountability.**
Currently 51 out of 61 councils are equipped with IT equipment, enabling live streaming of council meetings, and 38 councils are currently effective in social media (FB) broadcasting of council meetings. The councils were also supported, during the first phase of the project, for the improvement of their official websites, including electronic registers of complaints, requests, petitions and citizen initiatives.
- **4. Creation and operation of 61 Women Councilors' Local Alliances and MC Gender Committees.**
These structures have contributed to the allocation of more than 3 million euros from local budgets to projects and initiatives that focus on gender equality, women empowerment, and social inclusion.

The Decentralization Strategy (2022-2030) has provided for a series of measures that seek to strengthen municipal councils and increase their capacities.

The BtF2 project supports the implementation of the measures of this strategy and will continue to deliver technical assistance to the councils to help them exercise their legal mandate in developing policies and in their decision-making, as well as in their representative and oversight roles, in pursuance of the regulatory framework on the councils, by strengthening the capacities and effectiveness of the work of councils, commissions, and secretariats, in analyzing the effects of proposed policies as well as those approved by the councils themselves.

The project provides assistance in the effective preparation and organization of Municipal Council regular and other meetings and those of the commissions, as well as in the discussion of the complaints and requests of citizens and interest groups in these meetings. The project also supports the further development and modernization of instruments for the development of representative and open relations between councils and citizens, as well as effective interaction between councils and the municipal executive.

Following the recent local elections, the Project supported the re-establishment of 61 Local Alliances of Women Councilors and 61 Gender and Social Inclusion Committees across the country and empowered them to contribute to gender equality and social inclusion in their communities.