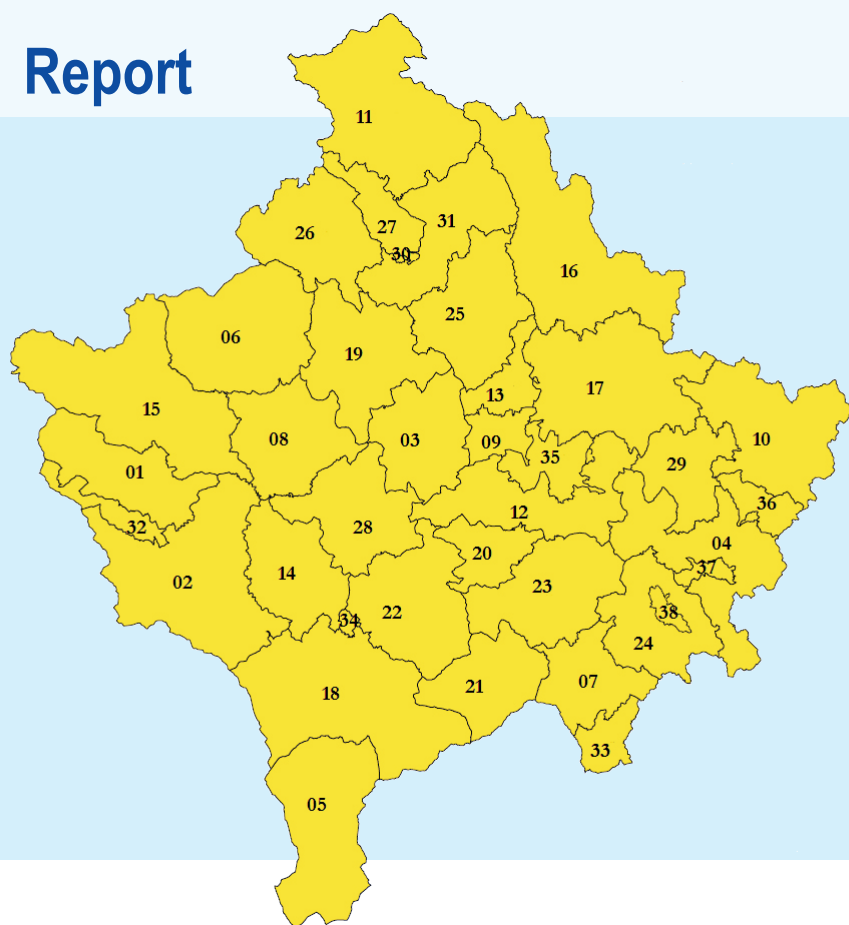




Women NGO Network
"Qeliza" - Gjakovë

European Union Integration at the Local Level

Report





European Union Integration at the Local Level

Report

Project supported by:
FRIEDRICH EBERT STIFTUNG - FES
Prishtina Office

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Introduction

The present Report covers the reporting period from April – September 2011 of the Women NGO Network “Qeliza” involved in the Project EU Integration at the Local Level. Being the first Report of this kind, its content goes beyond mere monitoring of the EPAP implementation.

The Report begins with a brief overview of Kosovo's path to European integration process and its relevant procedures. Then it goes on by presenting those few EU official statements on (non) inclusion of Kosovo into this process alongside with its neighbouring countries, as it was promised in Thessaloniki, accompanied with their assessment. The purpose of this Report is to further expand on the European integration transparency improvement and, more specifically, to present the realistic situation to the public, including the state of play of standard implementation at the local level (beneficiary municipalities: Gjakova, Deçan, Junik, Rahovec and Malisheva) that is considered to be one of the most important processes for giving an impetus to preparations for further European integration phases.

Another part of the Report tackles the situation in beneficiary municipalities, namely in key relevant sectors for the implementation of actions stemming from the EPAP during the reporting period of April – September 2011. This part is chiefly based on various municipal reports covering this period of time. On the other hand, a different section shows measures undertaken by relevant authorities starting from the drafting, entry into force and implementation of the EPAP. The penultimate section presents municipal performance reports on the implementation of actions stemming from the EPAP and its inter-institutional implementation structure, which follows with an overview of the implementation progress achieved over the reporting period. The final part shows the municipal implementation reports for the actions prescribed in the EPAP 2011. Finally, the Report comes with its recommendations.

EU Integration at the Local Level is a Project implemented by Women NGO Network “Qeliza”, and supported by Freidrich Erbert Stiftung (FES). The Project was carried out from April to September 2011. The Project was aimed at increasing the accountability of the local governments, more specifically, that of the beneficiary municipalities in the reporting of actions undertaken within the framework of EPAP 2011, and at the same time



it was focused on the progress assessment of beneficiary municipalities in the implementation of EPAP, process transparency and monitoring of EPAP components and activities.

Background of Kosovo – EU Relations

Short Overview

In the context of EU Schengen visa liberalization with the Western Balkan countries, with the exemption of Croatia, (and Kosovo, at that time being under UNMIK Administration), there are two critical moments that preceded this process. At the political level, in the Thessaloniki Summit held on 21 June 2003, the EU expressed its political commitment to give the visa liberalization perspective to the Western Balkan countries. This Summit provides for the reforms in key areas aimed at meeting the important criteria, such as: strengthening of the rule of law, fight against organized crime, corruption and illegal migration, as well as strengthening of administrative capacities for border control and document security.¹ Further, on 18 September 2007, this political commitment was translated to contractual relation through the signature of visa facilitation agreements and readmission agreements between the EU member states in one hand and Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia, in the other. These agreements facilitate the issuance of the Schengen visa (specifically for those categories of Western Balkan citizens, who need to travel to EU most) and put in place rules and procedures for the management of legal migration and fighting of illegal one.

While the final statement of this Summit implied that visa liberalization perspective was there for all Western Balkan citizens,² until 2009 this was not specified in bilateral documents signed between Kosovo and EU within the Stabilization Association Tracking Mechanism.³ In 2009 Kosovo unilaterally started to meet these criteria. On the other hand, Kosovo side lacks a political pressure towards the EU and its presence in Prishtina, and the diplomatic activities with EU on this issue are lagging far behind. In fact, it seems that even lobbying would not have helped that much in the situation when local authorities still did not enjoy full competencies in visa liberalization relevant sectors, coupled with insufficient legal capacity for entering into bilateral relations with EU member states on visa facilitation and readmission issues. The first step should have been the full transfer of competencies in relevant sectors from UNMIK to local authorities. This was supposed to be

1 EU-Western Balkans Summit – Statement, Item 7, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accesion_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/sap/thessaloniki_summit_en.htm

2 EU-Western Balkans Summit – Statement, Item 7, available at http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/enlargement_process/accesion_process/how_does_a_country_join_the_eu/sap/thessaloniki_summit_en.htm

3 Stabilization Association Process, available at <http://www.delprn.ec.europa.eu/?cid=2,133>, Conclusions of the SAP Dialogue, available at <http://www.delprn.ec.europa.eu/?cid=2,169>

ensued with a complete overhaul of legal framework (specifically the judiciary that is still partially functioning under the socialist era laws) and of the institutional structures (including the full functionalizing of reformed structures), followed by effective inter-institutional cooperation (both domestically and internationally wise). In general, as those EU decisions cannot be withdrawn, it is critical to gain full confidence of the EU member states that all chains of rule of law institutions are functioning effectively. Thus, the full institutional political and legal capacities alone cannot be sufficient, which brings the need to prove full functionality and to come up with results within a short to medium time frame.

In its Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008 for Western Balkans and Turkey, of November 2007, the European Commission (EC) suggests the beginning of visa liberalization dialogue with all Western Balkans countries, with exemption of Kosovo. In its part designated for Kosovo, it only mentions that Kosovo does not have a visa regime for other countries. After summarizing the progress achieved and implementation challenges for visa facilitation agreements and readmission agreements, this Communication provides a clear prospect towards a roadmap on the criteria to be met (around 50), that include the implementation of readmission agreements and other key fields, such as asylum and migration, document security, integrated border management, fighting of organized crime, effective international cooperation (specifically on policing and international legal cooperation).⁴ Therefore, the signing of visa facilitation agreements and readmission agreements is an indispensable prerequisite to enter into such agreements with EU member states (legal and political capacity).

Following the approval of EC proposal by the Council of Europe in January 2008, the visa liberalization dialogue with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia and Macedonia began in June 2008. The next stage was for each country to present the "Readiness Report" to the EC (by September 2008), which was followed by EC reports on the roadmap implementation assessment (end of November 2008), which in turn was ensued with a second round of "Readiness Reports" (mid of 2009), after the sending of assessment missions in the field (composed of EC experts and those from EU member states). In the EU official statement, Enlargement Commissioner, Olli Rehn, stated that the reason for non-inclusion of Kosovo was related to the fact that "Kosovo [...] had not been a party to the current visa dialogue. Due to this reason and also due to security concerns

⁴ Communication from the European Parliament Commission and the Council: Enlargement Strategy and main Challenges", p. 13, original available at: http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2007/nov/strategy_paper_en.pdf



about the identification documents, travel documents and Serbian passports issued to the people living in Kosovo [...], these persons will remain under visa regime. Allow me to highlight that this is simply a technical decision, supported by security concerns and in full compliance with UNSCR 1244. This proposal is completely status neutral.”⁵

Following the Slovenian proposal to lift the Schengen visa regime for the citizens of Montenegro, Macedonia, Serbia, Albania and Bosnia Hercegovina, the European Parliament approved this proposal through a non-obligatory opinion that also asks for the issuance of a roadmap to Kosovo.

Faced by the *fait accompli*, the civil society in Kosovo began its response to these developments.⁶ Several studies and researches were carried out by relevant local and international organizations, such as Forum 2015 and European Stability Initiative (ESI),⁷ coming to conclusion that Kosovo is an isolated country; even more isolated than Afghanistan, as its citizens can travel without visa to only 5 countries of the world.⁸ The

5 Media conference of Vice President Barrot and Commissioner, Rehn, on visa liberalization in Western Balkans, original available at <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/342&format=HTML&aged=0&language=EN&guiLanguage=en>

6 The appeal of the Kosovo civil society to the EU Parliament Members and the European leaders, http://www.iksweb.org/repository/docs/apeli_i_shoqerise_civile_te_kosoves_parlamentareve_te_BE-s_dhe_lidereve_europian.pdf

7 Debate on the roadmap for Kosovo – The White List Schengen Project, original available at <http://www.esiweb.org/index.php?lang=en&id=382>

8 Isolation of Kosovo? Kosovo – Afghanistan: 5:22, p 64, http://www.iksweb.org/repository/docs/izolimi_i_kosoves_alb.pdf



European politicians also came up with their reactions: according to the MP and Special Rapporteur for Kosovo at the European Parliament, Ulrike Launacek, "[...] despite the fact that Kosovo and Serbia do not enjoy good relations; we nevertheless request that these two countries have good relations so that we could speak about the beginning of a dialogue [...]. In addition, Serbia's accession to EU will not be able if it does not accept the fact that occurred three years ago (independence of Kosovo)."⁹

One of the cornerstones for visa liberalization and for Kosovo's path towards European integration is the European Partnership Action Plan (EPAP).

⁹ Interview with European Parliament Member, Ulrike Lunacek, original available at http://seetv.blastmedia.eu/story/index/story_id/15481/media_id/33046

EPAP Background

Kosovo, as other Western Balkans countries, became a part of European integration process at the Zagreb Summit in 2000, when the Stabilization Association Process (SAP) for Western Balkans was launched. This process aims to fast track the stabilization and transition process to the market economy, to promote regional cooperation and EU integration perspective. This process was further elaborated in the Thessaloniki Summit (June 2003) that included Kosovo in the framework of Stabilization and Association Process. The prospect for Kosovo was further specified through the European Commission Communication named European Future for Kosovo of 20 April 2005, showing the European Union commitment for Kosovo.

Amidst efforts to enhance the Stabilization Association Process in Western Balkans, including Kosovo, in June 2004, the Council of Europe approved European Partnership for Kosovo, as a first vehicle determining the key short and mid-term priorities to be tackled by Kosovan institutions in their pursue of European perspective. With the purpose of implementation of these priorities, in January 2004 the Government of Kosovo approved its first Action Plan for the Implementation of European Partnership. From this year onwards, this key EU integration strategic document of the Republic of Kosovo is reviewed on annual basis and the implementation of its priorities is a cornerstone in Kosovo's path to European Union.

Starting from March 2003 through to October 2009, the key instrument for political dialogue between the Government of Kosovo and the European Commission within the Association Stabilization Process framework was the Stabilization-Association Tracking Mechanism. In November 2009, pursuant to EC Communication to the Council and European Parliament "Kosovo-Achieving the European Perspective" the process was advanced by launching the Stabilization – Association Process Dialogue (SAPD), which foresees one plenary annual meeting, eight sectoral meetings (or sub-committee meetings), and two 'horizontal meetings': Dialogue with civil society and Joint Monitoring Committee (responsible to monitor the EU assistance implementation). Amongst other, the Communication paves the way for the beginning of visa liberalization dialogue, signing of a trade agreement between Kosovo and EU, expansion of independent trade measures and enhancement of inter-border cooperation.

On the other hand, in helping Kosovo meeting the European perspective, the European Union ensures the financial support, mainly for institutional capacity building related to EU Acquis approximation and implementation of European standards, but also for boosting socio-economic development and promotion of regional integration. The EU is the largest donor in Kosovo allocating more resources per capita than anywhere else in the world.

Kosovo confirmed its commitment to European integration through the promotion of institutional framework, most important of which was the establishment of the Ministry of European Integrations. In this respect, the Government of Kosovo also strengthened the European Integration Offices in line institutions through their upgrading into Departments, and has further functionalized European integration structures, with special emphasis on the European integration working groups and working committee. Further, the Government of Kosovo successfully organized activities within the Stabilization Association Process Dialogue and monitoring of recommendations from this Dialogue. The coordination between the Assembly and the Government of Kosovo in the European integration has seen considerable progress during 2010.

Regarding the EPAP 2011 implementation, the key political criteria worth of mentioning is the progress marked in the public administration reform by approving the new legal and strategic framework, but also in the judicial reform, with special emphasis to the completion of appointment and reappointment of judges and prosecutors, as well as the adoption of basic legislation for key judicial institutions. A progress has also been marked in the improvement of legal and institutional anti-corruption framework with the approval of the Law on the Funding of Political Parties and the Law on Conflict of Interest, as well as with the establishment of the Agency for Management of Seized and Confiscated Assets. A considerable improvement was also seen in the decentralization process with the establishment and functionalizing of 4 new municipalities. Despite numerous challenges and problems, in its pursue of regional cooperation, Kosovo continued its participation in various regional cooperation initiatives, and during this year Kosovo is at the helm of the CEFTA.

In the economic criteria domain, the Government of Kosovo continued to maintain the economic stability through stabile fiscal policies, further progress in market economy strengthening and long term sustainability of public finances, including the Mid Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) and adoption of relevant legislation in compliance with IMF recommendations. The regulatory authorities have also continued with their

contribution in creation of preconditions for a competitive market through strengthening of regulatory mechanisms and boosting of human capital.

When it comes to European standards, including sector policies, Kosovo continued its further approximation with EU through harmonization of policies and legal framework with EU standards. It is critical to mention that Kosovo marked a considerable progress in the field of justice, human rights and freedoms and security. With the focus on criteria implementation for EU visa liberalization process, the legal framework and institutional reforms on visa, border, asylum and migration issues have been completed, including the legal, policy and institutional framework on readmission and reintegration of repatriated persons, which is a priority field. The improvement of legal framework, institutional building and reform in policing also saw progress. This is aimed at fighting of all forms of crime, but also at the protection of personal data.

Nevertheless, Kosovo still continues to face numerous challenges in the above fields, and this Plan provides for concrete actions aimed at overcoming them. To this end, the priorities of the Government of Kosovo, which are also the priorities of the European Union, are the following:

- 1) Strengthening of public administration reform,
- 2) Strengthening the fight against corruption,
- 3) Fight against organized crime and money laundering,
- 4) Efficient management of public money – improvement of public procurement system, strengthening of mechanisms for budget revenues collection, efficient budget spending,
- 5) Strengthening of judicial reform,
- 6) Implementation of Visa Liberalization Strategy,
- 7) Negotiating trade agreement with EU and development of legislation, internal market policies and development of competition in concordance with the *Acquis*,
- 8) Maintaining good neighborly relations and constructive participation to regional meetings,
- 9) Infrastructure – energy and transportation,
- 10) Development of agriculture sector.

European Partnership Action Plan-Approximation of Kosovo with EU

As the European integration remains key priority of the Government of Kosovo, European Partnership Action Plan is the key mid term planning document aimed at addressing the main short and mid term challenges and priorities identified at European Partnership 2008. Further progress of the country shall be measured against the implementation of key short and midterm priorities identified by the European Partnership through the annual Progress Report issued by the European Commission. In this context, the EPAP should be used for the planning of Government activities regarding its political agenda and priorities, the legislative agenda of the Government and Assembly, employment needs, institutional building and training of personnel, as well as for the necessary investments.

EPAP should also be used for internal communication of the Government with the aim of harmonizing the objectives, actions and their timelines; for communication between the Government, business community and social partners as informing and early warning mechanism for the changes to come; for communication with civil society being a foundation for partnership building; and for communication with the public, so that the citizens are aware at any time of the Government's work in the European integration process.

The Plan follows the European Partnership structure for Kosovo 2008, and complies with Copenhagen and Madrid criteria, with its three main chapters: Political Criteria, Economic Criteria and European Standards. Each Chapter, depending on the progress achieved in these fields and the needs to improve the situation, foresees actions dealing with improvement of strategic and legislation policies, namely further harmonization of legal framework with the Acquis, drafting and approval of new legislation and actions focused at the implementation of applicable legislation, institutional reform, development and building of capacities, capital investments, etc.

EPAP 2011 entails around 400 actions, out of which 60 actions are foreseen for the field of political criteria, 50 actions in the field of economic criteria and 290 actions are related to European standards. With the aim for EPAP to be a measurable and more practical document, this year saw the setting of measurable indicators at the action level. As this is a

new element of this Plan, a very critical one for the measurement of EPAP implementation and as first step in this direction, this year only saw the contribution/input indicators (actions and budget), while product/output indicators will be set, to continue in the future with setting of priority indicators, namely outcome indicators and impact indicators. It is worth of mentioning that cost estimation for EPAP 2011 and its budget implications have seen a progress. The total cost of EPAP is estimated to be around € 1,284,092,652.57 €, where € 919,389,065.81 are envisaged to be covered by the Kosovo budget and € 82,977,585.09 from donors, while the amount of € 281,726,001.67 has not been allocated as yet.

Considering the importance of the European Partnership Action Plan, as key governmental document on European integration, this Plan's review took into account the Government priorities and its program (draft), draft budget and Medium Term Expenditure Framework, various sector strategies and action plans, European Commission Progress Report recommendations and recommendations of the Stabilization Association Process Dialogue. the recommendations and challenges identified by the European Commission in its EPAP 2011 tackle the challenges of Progress Report 2010 and recommendations of all sectoral meetings and the plenary meeting of SAPD. With the aim of proper monitoring and tackling of the recommendations in question, following the approval of conclusions of every SAPD meeting, the Government of Kosovo will immediately envisage concrete actions in tackling these recommendations and in their inclusion in the EPAP monitoring and reporting system.

Aiming to maintaining the coherence in addressing priorities originating from different EU documents on Kosovo, in its EPAP review, the Government of Kosovo foresaw actions that would take into account all priorities stemming from the European integration process. During the review, it has been noticed that a certain number of priorities or a part of them have already been implemented, and may be considered as outdated. Consequently, certain fields provide for priorities that do not address directly the European Partnership priorities, but rather tackle certain challenges identified by the Progress Report or Stabilization Association Process Dialogue - both these instruments very important for Kosovo's approximation to European Union. One may encounter some priorities with no actions at all foreseen because those priorities have already been implemented, are less relevant or have been addressed through other short or mid-term priorities. The need to update the European Partnership priorities is critical for preserving of their coherence with EU priorities for Kosovo and for Kosovo's more coherent planning in addressing them.

With respect to monitoring of EPAP implementation, during 2010 the Ministry of European Integration launched the electronic system for EPAP monitoring and reporting. In 2010, this system was used for obtaining quarterly reports from every institution responsible for actions under the EPAP 2010. The same system will be used in 2011, and it also includes monitoring the implementation of recommendations from the Stabilization Association Process Dialogue.

The role of working groups on European integration was also important, and despite numerous difficulties they gave an important contribution in monitoring, review and approval of EPAP. Moreover, the Ministry of European Integration in close cooperation with European Commission Twinning Project began the functional review of these groups. With the purpose of improving their efficiency and performance, the operational manual was drafted for these working groups and relevant trainings on this manual were held for all stakeholders. In addition, very soon a meaningful harmonization of these groups with the structure of SAPD meeting will be carried out with the purpose of improved efficiency and contribution to the implementation European Union priorities for Kosovo.

Project Description

With the purpose of informing and capacity building of municipal European integration officials, the Women NGO Network "Qeliza" worked in cooperation with relevant experts in training them to draft quarterly reports on municipal European integration achievements and facilitating their work in EPAP 2011 reporting.

Aim of the project:

Taking into consideration the priority that most Kosovo policymakers give to the implementation of European integration standards and the realization of Kosovo's path to European Union integration, the Women NGO Network "Qeliza" has launched an information campaign for the municipal officials, stakeholders, and citizens with the topic of European integration process and the funds that the Municipal Assemblies may absorb.

The project activities are focused on the needs of municipalities and the preparation of recommendations leading to the improvement of practices that are in compliance to the European Union requirements for local authorities. These recommendations will include the design of concrete measures aimed at implementing the recommendations for the decision-making process that would lead to an accelerated path of Kosovo towards European integration whereby all Kosovo citizens would benefit.

The aim of the European Partnership Action Plan (EPAP) is the establishment of adequate structures responsible for the EU integration process. EPAP has foreseen approximately 60 actions to be implemented by municipalities in cooperation with the government institutions or agencies, the Ministry of Local Government Administration, and other bodies.

Currently there is a need to intervene in the European integration area and to work closer with Kosovo municipalities in order for the process to be implemented in accordance with the timeframes foreseen by EPAP 2011. In addition, this project aims at establishing a working group composed of representatives from Municipal Assemblies, NGOs, communities, media, businesses and different experts from the field, where the main objective in the early phase is to raise the awareness on the integration process.

Project Objectives:

Establishment and implementation of a Local Action Plan;

Community information and awareness raising on the integration process, in particular, the clarification of municipalities' needs and actions to be undertaken;

Increase of cooperation between the Municipal Assemblies, NGOs, business community, and different stakeholders in expanding knowledge on the integration process and capacity building; and

Establishment of a coherent strategy with the purpose of promoting the integration process by applying EPAP at local government, always aiming the EU integration of Kosovo.

Specific activities undertaken by the project for reaching all the objectives set:

- Information campaign on the project implementation objectives and activities;
- Training for municipal officials in reporting EPAP 2011 achievements;
- Workshop for identifying priorities and actions stemming from EPAP 2011 for the local level;
- Three-day workshop for unifying the reports of beneficiary municipality on EPAP 2011 achievements.

Information Campaign

On 05 April 2011 the NGO Network "Qeliza" in Gjakova held an information campaign and informed the participants of the Project program and the steps to be undertaken in the latter stages of the Project.

The participants included: European integration municipal officials, community and returns officials from the municipal offices of Gjakova, Rahovec, Deçan, Malisheva and Junik, Directorate for Economic Development of Gjakova and Deçan, Directorate for Urban Planning and Cadastre of Gjakova, Rahovec and Malisheva, civil society representatives, and representatives from other organizations active in the beneficiary municipalities, including CBDC, OSCE, Koha Ditore Newspaper, TV Syri, etc.

The information campaign was launched by Vjollca Kuqi, coordinator of European Union Integration at the Local Level Project, whereby the participants were informed that the Project was supported by the German organization Friedrich Ebert Stiftung. The participants were also informed about the future stages of the Project implementation that include:

- a. A one-day training to be held in Gjakova on 15 April 2011 with European integration municipal officials, community and returns officials, various municipal directorates and civil society representatives from Gjakova, Deçan, Malisheva, Rahovec and Junik municipalities, with discussions on the following topics:
 1. European integration process and the Kosovo's relations to this process;
 2. Presentation of the European Partnership Action Plan/Role of municipalities in this process; and
 3. Role and importance of municipalities in the inter-municipal cooperation in Kosovo.
- b. A one-day workshop to be held on 20 April 2011 with a working group composed of 7 to 10 officials from the municipalities in question aimed at identifying concrete actions of the 2011 European Partnership Action Plan that relate to the local level – municipalities.
- c. The working group monitoring of Gjakova, Deçan, Malisheva, Rahovec and Junik municipalities in May and June 2011 regarding the implementation of EPAP 2011 actions and the evaluation of municipalities' achievements, shortcomings, and implementations based on the EPAP 2011 timeframe.
- d. A summary monitoring report, whereby the monitoring team will present the municipalities' achievements, shortcomings, and actions according to the EPAP 2011 timeframe. Based on possibilities and funding from donors, there is an objective to organize a three-day workshop with the relevant officials from the municipalities in question in order to discuss the report and to evaluate the implementation of the EPAP 2011.

Following the presentation of the work by NGO Network "Qeliza", the other representatives presented topics discussed in the training held on 15 April 2011 that included the implementation of the European Partnership Action Plan 2011 by the municipalities of the Republic of Kosovo, and the role of municipalities on the inter-municipal and cross-border cooperation process.

Following these activities, upon the request of Women NGO Network Qeliza, the funding organization for this project (FES) agreed to have another training starting from 9 September 2011 through to 11 September 2011 in the following six municipalities: Pejë, Istog, Klinë, Prizren, Dragash and Suhareka.

Training

The training was held on 15 April 2011 in Gjakova, at the premises of restaurant "Çarshia e Jupave", with the presence of the following participants:

Fatmir Berisha	MA Gjakova
Bashkim Krasniqi	MA Malisheva
Nezir Balaj	MA Deçan
Zoje Sejfiqaj	MA Deçan
Bashkim Kurti	MA Gjakova
Hysen Imeri	MA Junik
Beqë Gacaferi	MA Junik
Saban Pejcinovic	MA Deçan
Florije Zhubi	MA Gjakova
Habibe Haxhimustafa	MA Rahovec
Urim Fazlija	MA Gjakova
Besnik Shala	MA Gjakova
Drita Hasimja	MA Gjakova
Lumnije Shllaku	MA Gjakova
Florije Zhubi	MA Gjakova
Emine Islomaj	MA Deçan
Bjondina Rama	MA Rahovec
Iliriana Pylla	TV Syri
Gazmend Doli	Koha Ditore
Qendresa doli	TV Syri
Have Lajqi	OSCE
Ricardo Cava	OSCE

During the training the participants addressed the following topics:

1. European integration process and the Kosovo's relation to this process, starting with the history of the European Union and the steps Kosovo undertook in the area of European integration that include the Stabilization Association Dialogue and the working groups for European integration;
2. A presentation of the European Partnership Action Plan 2011, namely the adopted priorities and actions, mandatory actions for the municipalities and the relevant directorates, the role of municipalities in this process and the reporting methods;
3. The role and importance of municipalities in the inter-municipal cooperation in Kosovo; including a presentation on the current stage of Kosovo, cross-border cooperation programs, determination of areas for cross-border cooperation and who is entitled to apply for cross-border cooperation programs;
4. The role of municipalities in the reintegration and repatriation process, the concrete obligations and actions stemming from the European Partnership Action Plan that touch upon this field, the role of municipalities in this process as a criterion for the municipalities to benefit from the repatriation fund.

Meeting Conclusions:

- a. To convene a one-day workshop on 20 April 2011 with a group of 7 – 10 persons in order to identify the priorities and actions that relate to the municipal level;
- b. To clarify role of municipalities in implementing priorities and actions stemming from EPAP 2011;
- c. To organize similar trainings in the future;
- d. A more active role of the civil society in monitoring the implementation of EPAP 2011 from the relevant institutions.

One-day Workshop/Working Group

On 20 April 2011 a workshop was held with the topic on identifying priorities and actions stemming from EPAP 2011 for the local level, with the following participants:

Habibe Haxhimustafa	MA Rahovec
Floriye Zhubi	MA Gjakova
Beqë Gacaferi	MA Junik
Hysen Imeri	MA Junik
Bashkim Kurti	MA Gjakova
Zoje Sejfijaj	MA Deçan
Nezir Balaj	MA Deçan

Bashkim Krasniqi

MA Malisheva

Fatmir Berisha

MA Gjakova

The following activities were carried out during the workshop:

- a. Preparation of a draft matrix with the priorities and actions pertaining to municipalities;
- b. Determination of every action of the EPAP 2011 and clarification as to which directorate or municipal office is responsible for implementing which action;
- c. Identification of the actions to be implemented by the end of June 2011 based on K2 – 2011 EPAP timeframe.

Workshop in Albania

On 17, 18 and 19 of June a workshop was held for unifying EPAP reports to be submitted by the beneficiary municipalities. The following persons participated:

Hysen Ymeri	Economic Development Official	MA Junik
Beqë Gacaferri	European Integration Official	MA Junik
Ali Tahirsylaj	Municipal Administration Official	MA Deçan
Nezir Balaj	Municipal Community Official	MA Deçan
Bashkim Krasniqi	European Integration Official	MA Malishevë
Habibe Haxhimustafa	European Integration Official	MA Rahovec
Floriye Boshnjaku	Director for Health and Social Welfare	MA Rahovec
Bashkim Kurti	Communities and NGO Official	MA Gjakova
Fatmir Berisha	European Integration Official	MA Gjakova
Floriye Zhubi	Communities Official	MA Gjakova

The performed activities and actions were discussed during the workshop.

The activities of the monitoring team included the following:

1. The reporting matrix has been sent to the beneficiary municipalities in order to report on the actions they have implemented or completed, on the actions that are under way and on the actions that will remain to be a challenge unable to be overcome.
2. By means of such reports, the monitoring team got a clear image of the implemented actions.
3. The monitoring team has assisted the beneficiary municipalities (by means of in person visits to municipalities) with filling in the matrixes and adding the inputs.

4. In case the monitoring team noticed any lack of information after collecting the reports and analysis, it required additional information proving that the concrete actions foreseen by the EPAP 2011 were implemented.
5. After collecting the reports, the monitoring team prepared a final report on the progress of the entire project and on the EPAP monitoring in the beneficiary municipalities.

Training in Additional Municipalities

From 9 September 2011 through to 11 September 2011, training was held to identify the local priorities and actions stemming from EPAP 2011 that was attended by:

Shyqyri Kuçi	ZKKK	Suharekë
Kymete Bajraktari	ZKIE	Suharekë
Habibe Bytyqi	ZBGJ	Suharekë
Have Thaçi	ZKIE	Klinë
Grishe Gashi	ShSh	Klinë
Remzije Maloku	ZBGJ	Klinë
Sevdije Ismaili	ZKK	Klinë
Rrust Kabashi	ZKK	Klinë
Sanije Mavraj	NJKDNJBGJ	Istog
Zekije Sutaj	KL	Istog
Rasim Mamutoviq	OKZP	Istog
Kamber Boqolli	ZKIE	Pejë
Pandeli Rugova	SHL	Pejë
Mehmet Hamza	OKZE	Dragash
Uzair Hamza	ZKIE	Dragash

Even though the invitation was sent to the officials of Prizren Municipality, they did not participate in the training.

Beneficiary Municipalities EPAP Matrix Reporting

Gjakova

In the meetings we had with the municipal official for European integration, Mr. Berisha, we were informed about the EPAP implementation in the Municipality of Gjakova and how the directors of Directorates were asked to develop cooperation for a smoother path to obtaining information on the implementation of EPAP actions or to appoint a special official in charge.

Mr. Berisha also informed us that the Education Plan Strategies were being drafted and soon the Municipal Assembly of Gjakova would have them ready and implement them..

The documentation required to be in two languages for use by non-Albanian communities is currently not being issued because there has been no request for receiving such documents in any other language apart from the Albanian. The municipality has a vacuum in this area because they do not have a translator, but they hope that the issue would soon be fixed.

Actions Completed

- The Municipal Assembly of Gjakova has established a Municipal Community Safety Council that meets on a regular basis and discusses on the safety and security issues of the Municipality of Gjakova.
- The human resources sector has established the unit that reports on a quarterly basis. It employs four staff members from the communities.
- The Regulation for the Use of Official Languages has been approved and is applied since 2009.
- The Office for Communities and Returns is functioning and performs its daily duties.
- The municipality has its community official who deals with the daily issues of members of non-majority communities.
- The municipality has its staff for projects and cross-border cooperation and soon expects to apply for grants planned for this area.
- The procurement office is functioning and is transparent for all those that require information.

Deçan

In the meetings we had with the officials of the Municipality of Deçan we were informed that their specifics were almost similar to the ones of other municipalities.

An ongoing problem at the Municipality of Deçan is related to the Forestry Inspectorate, where they stated that there were difficulties in implementing the actions foreseen by EPAP on this area.

Actions Completed

- This municipality has four repatriation cases and has a problem with finding a place to settle them.
- The dispute over the sewage water system is a huge impediment to applying for European Commission funds.
- The municipality has established the business registration centre within the decentralization process to provide such services to the citizens of the Municipality of Deçan.

Junik

In the meetings with the municipal officials they stated that the Municipal Assembly of Junik was a rather new municipality established as a pilot municipal unit, and it was evident they have shortcomings in many areas and expect assistance from the central level and also from various organizations active in the municipality.

The businesses are not yet being registered in Junik but rather in Prishtina and this poses a problem for the inspectors.

They stated that they have difficulties due to lack of inspectors with one inspector covering multiple areas, this has been a result of the lack of municipal finances/budget for hiring more staff.

Another problem is the forestry.

Waste management is still a problem. In the Municipality of Junik there is a sanitation company from the Municipality of Deçan but the waste is not collected on a regular basis.

The river bank of Erenik is still being degraded due to the extraction of gravel. The municipality has no competences for prohibiting the operations of illegal operators in the municipality.

The municipality has a European integration official, but in the past the municipality has had a problem with this position because of frequent staff rotation causing difficulties in following up the actions and cooperation with the central level and with the various organizations active in the area.

Actions Completed

- This municipality has four repatriation cases and has a problem with finding a place to settle them.

Rahovec

The Municipality of Rahovec has a new government and it is an advantage that the municipality has a young staff familiar with the new technology and modern means of communication.

Every Director of Municipal Directorate will receive explanation about their actions stemming from EPAP 2011.

The Municipality of Rahovec has difficulties with repatriation. The municipality is asking whether there is any possibility to have a collective building for the repatriated and whether such an initiative would be funded by the central level or any donor organization.

Regarding the area of social services, some competencies which the municipality is unable to meet have been delegated. Thus, the municipality is unable to work with the non-governmental organizations because of lack of adequate budget for action.

The medical waste management is a big challenge, as the municipality has not yet regulated the management of such waste. This activity entails budget expenditures that are not yet defined.

Actions Completed

- The Municipality of Rahovec has established the Municipal Community Safety Council.
- It would be nice for the European integration officials to be present in Municipal Community Safety Council meetings so that they could get the latest information on the current developments.

Malisheva

- The use of languages is functioning properly in this municipality and there are cases when people ask for documents to be issued in two languages.
- For the time being, the Municipal Assembly of Malisheva has had six repatriation cases.

- The municipality has many obstacles, with most of them relating to the lack of budget for implementing many activities.
- Another problem is the issue of quarries operating in the municipality with the consent of the Ministry. Same is with patrol stations.
- Also land privatization is a problem because it comes out that socially-owned lands were privately-owned lands, and thus there are disputes.
- The tick bite presents a health concern, and the central level should undertake some measures.
- The municipality has a lack of subsidies for agriculture development. The ministry allocates the funds but they are not transparent, thus the municipality is asking for the entire procedure to be more transparent.

Peja

In the meeting with Municipal Officer on European Integrations, Mr. Kamber Boqolli, from the Municipality of Peja, he informed us on the achievements and shortcomings of this municipality in the implementation of actions stemming from the EPAP 2011.

Concerning the actions completed by Peja Municipal Assembly it was reported that the Municipal Regulation for the Use of Official Languages was approved in December 2008, and is applied on daily basis.

- In respect of border cooperation, the Municipality of Peja held several meetings with the representatives of the Republic of Montenegro, whereby several projects have been identified and are expected to be approved and implemented.
- The Municipal Assembly of Peja built the capacities of staff that would be responsible to manage the funds dealing with inter-border projects.
- In compliance with the request from the Office of Prime Minister sent to the municipal administration, 19 civil servants from minority communities have been recruited. In addition, the Municipal Assembly organizes language courses with the aim of improving the bilingualism of its staff members.
- Concerning the inclusion of marginalized groups, women, non-majority communities and repatriated persons in the economic development activities, the Municipal Assembly of Peja did not have any activities, and there no data can be provided.

- Amidst measures of preventing the illegal woodcutting and quarry activities, there is still some confusion due to the lack competence division between the local and central authorities, namely the Kosovo Forestry Agency.
- Following the approval of relevant legislation at the central level, Peja Municipality has put in place its waste management plan, which is currently being implemented.
- The monitoring of equal access to public services for all communities, and breaking down of ethnic and gender background data for the users of these services is being carried out. This will assure that the public services are present in all official languages, that all communities have equal access in all state institutions and are trained equally, as well as that correspondence is given to them in their mother tongue.
- All communities have equal access to health care and social services and receive professional treatment, while the shelter cannot be provided for the repatriated persons as the municipality does not have collective residential buildings.
- Amidst awareness raising efforts primarily foreseen for the vulnerable groups of returnees and non-majority communities on how they should get the best access to social assistance, the Municipal Assembly of Peja embarked on numerous activities aimed both at the majority and non-majority communities that were chiefly explaining the criteria for social assistance eligibility.
- The Municipal Assembly of Peja hired teaching and academic staff for Bosniac language, and the teaching process is underway. Moreover, there are attempts to organize catch-up classes in Roma language, too.

Klina – procedural problems with returnees

In the meeting with Municipal Integration Officer of the Municipal Assembly of Klina, Mrs. Have Thaqi, she reported on the implementation of actions stemming from EPAP 2011.

Regulation No. 02/2010 of the Republic of Kosovo Government has been fully implemented. In addition, the Decision on reappointment and organization of ORC was also implemented. The Civil Service of Klina Municipality employs (5) civil servants from amongst the minority communities.

Municipal Regulation on the Use of Official Languages in Institutions (01-07-72/07) was adopted on 27 April 2007. The Law on Use of Languages prescribes conditions for equal use of languages and alphabets and ensures for their equal implementation in municipal institutions.

Due to the election-related delays, the establishment of Municipal Working Group on Returns was also late. As a consequence, the Municipal Strategy on Returns for 2011 was not drafted. The Office of Returns and Communities (ORC) works according to the Government of Kosovo Strategy on Returns 2009-2011; Action Strategy for the Return of Serbs 2011-2013; and Action Strategy for the Return of RAE Community 2009-2011. Office of Returns and Communities is specifically focused on the implementation of Reintegration Strategy, thus facilitating the integration of repatriated persons.

ORC works in compliance to the Strategy and Action Plan for Repatriated Persons. By obtaining information from the MIA and the Office located at the Airport, as well as by establishing personal contacts with repatriated persons. To this end, the responsible officer enlists them in the ORC Register, gives them guidelines, informs them on their rights and fills out the request (with the specified requirements of the person in question) that is sent to the MIA. So far, the Municipal Assembly of Klina has not implemented any request.

Head of Personnel (Human Resources) works pursuant to following regulations: 02/10-Regulation on Recruitment; 04/10-Regulation on Fair and Proportional Representation of Non-Majority Communities; 06/11 – Regulation on the Holidays of Civil Servants; 02/10-Regulation on the Municipal Office of Returns and Communities; 03/10 – Regulation on the Job Descriptions; 05/10 Regulation on the Working Hours; 07/10-Regulation on the Appointment of Civil Servants (recruitment-employment forms are applied); 06/10-Regulation on the Transfer of Civil Servants.

Full implementation of recommendations by the Office of Prime Minister on the proportional representation of non-majority communities at the Civil Service – Regulation of the Government of Republic of Kosovo No. 02/2010 has been adhered to in its entirety. The Decision on Reappointment and Organization of ORC was also implemented, as well as Regulation No. 04/2010 on the Equal and Proportional Representation of Non-Majority Communities in the Kosovo Civil Society. The Civil Service of Klina Municipality employs five (5) civil servants from amongst the non-majority communities.

Amidst measures to prevent the destruction of forests and lands as a result of quarry activities – the registration of quarry businesses is subject to the following procedure: firstly, a licence should be obtained from the Independent Commission on Mines and Minerals (ICMM). The Department of Mines at the Ministry of Economic Development, amongst others, has the following responsibilities; promotes activities aimed at decreasing the mining related environmental pollution; monitors the issuance of licenses and permits for mining activities in Kosovo by the Independent Commission on Mines and Minerals

(ICMM); cooperates and supports the establishment of a business-friendly environment in the mining sector; and drafts the plan for development and participation of communities (population) affected by mining activities. Oversight of quarry businesses in the municipality of Klina is carried out by the Klina Office of Inspectorate of Mines and Minerals.

Health care services provided by the municipal health institutions give equal access to all residents irrespective of their ethnic, gender and other backgrounds. The Centre for Social Work currently provides social assistance to the following: 1128 Albanians; 28 Ashkalis; 13 Roma; 3 Serbs and 2 others.

So far no repatriation requests were registered. Access to health care services and other services at the municipal institutions was enabled to all citizens regardless of their background.

School infrastructure in the municipality of Klina enables good access to education system, both to the elementary level and to the secondary one. The construction of the secondary technical school is in its final stage, which will provide improved access to education. Out of 17 elementary schools, 8 of them are also attended by pupils of RAE community (in elementary school of Budisalc village 40% of pupils belong to RAE community). During the previous academic year, 281 RAE community pupils attended the education.

Istog – returnee procedures are not clear

- In the meetings with municipal officials of the Municipal assembly of Istog, they reported on the implemented activities and difficulties in the implementation of EPAP 2011.
- Out of 143 civil servants at the municipal administration, 16 belong to non-majority community; while from 627 education staff, 17 are minorities; and health sector employs 2 members of non-majority community, totalling to 121 staff members. The Municipal Court does not have employees from non-majority community.
- The Returns Strategy was not drafted for this year, due to the introduction of concept documents (concept-document based organized returns). According to the most recent Manual on returns, there is no organized but only individual return. In this respect, our municipality established a Task Force that replaces the MWG, which is composed of all stakeholders. Three “Go-and-See visits” were organized for 2 RAE members and 1 Serb member. There are 17 persons who have been voluntarily

repatriated from the third countries starting from 1 January 2011 through to 1 June 2011. Seven Serb returnees came back from Serbia. The Multiethnic Traditional Summer School involving RAE community was held in Durrës-Albania. Event called "Peace Games" was organized in the Cultural Centre "Adem Jashari" in ISTOG by the NGO "Vizion 02"; while the MIA held two trainings on repatriation procedures for the ZKKK staff.

- The Municipal Community Safety Council (MCSC) is operational, and it includes representatives of communities living in the municipality, of religious communities (muslim, catholic and orthodox), KFOR, Kosovo Police, KSF, Dubrava Prison, Forestry authorities, civil society, etc. This body meets on monthly basis, whereby important safety, security and other issues are raised. MCSC has also approved its annual work plan.
- Efforts are undertaken to prevent the deterioration of forests and highlands due to quarry operations. Pursuant to the new Law on Kosovo Forests and after the transfer of competencies from the central to local level, only forest protection is foreseen, while the management still remains within the central level remit. In cooperation with Kosovo Forestry Agency and the Municipal Employment Office, forestation exercise is undertaken on yearly basis. This year some 10 ha of land will be forested. It is worth of mentioning that illegal woodcutting dropped for 60% since this responsibility was handed over to municipal authorities.
- In case of the lack of shelter for the repatriated persons, the Municipal returns and Community Office (MCRO) is responsible to find it be it in private accommodations or in socially-owned apartments under the management of the Kosovo Property Agency, and their accommodation expenses are covered by the Government, namely MIA funds. The repatriated persons have access to all health care services including those under the primary health care.
- The Municipal Assembly of Istog continued its efforts in awareness rising on access to social assistance, specifically for vulnerable groups, such as returnees and non-majority communities. Our municipality organizes informative meetings with RAE returnees, such as the one held in Llukafci i Thatë. In addition, all people who approach to the Centre for Social Work are informed one legally prescribed criteria for social assistance eligibility and are treated equally.

- In our municipality, Roma children learn together with Albanian pupils and attend teaching in Albanian as they do not have any problems with the language, since they speak Albanian in their homes. The teaching staff has been hired for Bosniac language, and provides teaching to the students of this community.

Dragash

In our meetings with Municipal Officer on European Integration, Mr. Hamza, he reported that Dragash municipality has the following situation when it comes to the implementation of EPAP 2011 .

Dragash municipality established and trained the Human Rights Unit. This Unit is composed of three members: Shaban Shabani, Lindita Piraj and Uzair Hamza - Bosniac-Gorani.

- The proportional representation of non-majority communities at the civil service and socially-owned enterprises is always performed based on the number of citizens registered in the census, which gives the figure of 41.3 % belonging to minority communities of 41.3%. An impediment to the enjoyment of this right is the lack of professional staff amongst the minorities.
- The Regulation No. 01/90-109 on the Use of Official Languages was adopted on 22 June 2009, and is fully implemented.
- On 3 May 2011, Municipal Assembly adopted Decision No. 01/06-967/1 to merge the Office of Communities and Office of Returns establishing the Office on Communities and Returns. Its officers received training and working materials (leaflets, brochures and CDs) by Ministry of European Integrations and Ministry of Local Government Administration).
- Dragash municipality has still not approved Strategy on Returns and Reintegration 2011, but they are closely working with Ministry of European Integration (MEI) and Ministry of Local Government Administration (MLGA) to overcome these issues.
- The Municipality of Dragash established a group composed of municipal officers, who received trainings on inter-border projects and fund application procedures for these projects.
- The Municipality of Dragash has still not drafted the job descriptions for its staff members, who are working according to earlier placing and rightsizing.



- Dragash municipality fully adheres to recommendations of the office of Prime Minister on the proportional minority representation of 41.3% as per the census.
- The municipal staff in Dragash municipality did not receive any bilingualism courses.
- One of the shortcomings in Dragash municipality is the inclusion of marginalized groups, such as women, non-majority communities and repatriated persons in the local economic development activities.
- Hiring of teaching and academic staff for Roma and other community languages – in the fulfilment of its education actions stemming from EPAP, Municipality of Dragash hired only teachers for Bosniac language, namely only a small number of them who support the curricula of the state of Kosovo.
- The Municipal officer on European Integrations made a request for the Government of Kosovo to invest more in this municipality so that the life quality of its citizens can be improved.

Suharekë

- During the monitoring activities for the implementation of EPAP 2011 in the municipality of Suhareka meetings were held with Mrs. Kymete Bajraktari and other municipal officials.
- Three persons from non-majority community are currently working in the civil service of Suhareka municipality.
- The municipality of Suhareka also adopted the Returns Strategy, and its implementation has started. Returns Officer helps in drafting the assessment reports. By now, 12 reports for repatriated persons in our municipality have been drafted.
- The participation of non-majority communities in our civil service is proportional, and is compliant with requests and documents coming from the central level.
- We have repatriated persons who run across difficulties in finding appropriate accommodation, while the access to primary health care and other services for them is fully operational.
- Hiring of teaching and academic staff for Roma and other community languages – our municipality does not have any request for teaching in other languages.

Summary and Recommendations

The idea of this project was to make a scanning of the current situation in the area of EPAP implementation in the Project beneficiary municipalities and to help them meeting the municipal obligations stemming from the document.

As implementers of this project, we believe that the recommendations are applicable and will help in improving the EPAP reporting process at the central level. We are also convinced that the municipal leadership will take the project recommendations into account.

The Women NGO Network "Qeliza" would like to thank all those who have helped in implementing the Project, starting with the municipal officials of beneficiary municipalities, members of various organizations and experts directly or indirectly involved in the Project implementation.

During the reporting period on the European Union Integration at the Local Level Project, the monitoring team has achieved to draw some recommendations and requirements that the European integration municipal officials have presented in the joint meetings held during the reporting period.

Recommendations:

- To strengthen the position of European integration officials in municipalities;
- To strengthen the cooperation between European integration officials, directors of directorates and mayors for a more adequate reporting of achievements related to EPAP actions implementation;
- To organize workshops for strengthening the position, knowledge level and capacity building of European integration municipal officials of all municipalities of Kosovo;
- To invite the European integration officials to meetings with international organizations/institutions and to make it possible for the European integration officials to be the first contact points for organizations/institutions that come to municipalities for discussing various issues of interest to the citizens and the municipalities; and
- For the civil society to have a more active role in monitoring the implementation of EPAP 2011 from the responsible institutions.

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