



**Project: "City of Nis - towards a gender responsive program budget"**

At the local level, gender equality policies are not defined by local acts, as one of the principles of local self-government. Based on the data we had on strategic and development documents in the City, they were not gender sensitive, nor was the obligation to introduce a gender perspective in their development, implementation and evaluation defined. Also, gender analysis of local projects and the city budget has never been conducted so far. Regarding gender-responsive budgeting, apart from a few trainings received by local government employees, there was no plan and procedure for introducing ROB in the budget process at the local level.

In order to strengthen / establish the local mechanism, but also contribute to its visibility and improve activities, it is necessary to: strengthen the internal capacities of the Commission / Council bodies, sensitize local government employees and decision makers, define the work plan of the local mechanism and define action procedures. It is necessary to strengthen the cooperation of various actors and to establish mutual coordination and gender mechanisms at the local level, and to provide additional support to the finance departments responsible for these issues. Therefore, one of the goals of the project was to, in cooperation with the existing Commission for Gender Equality at the level of the City of Nis, define a plan for the introduction of gender responsive budgeting in the budget process; and to develop a set of recommendations, programs and priorities for the introduction of gender budgeting, in one word The main goal of this project was to create preconditions for the use of gender responsive budgeting tools in the city of Nis.

*Achieved results:*

1. *identified problems in the process of introducing gender responsive budgeting at the local level;*
2. *Cooperation with the representatives of the city authorities and the Council for Gender Equality*
3. *Realized research on the topic of women's entrepreneurship in the City of Nis*
4. *prepared recommendations for the introduction of GOODS*

**What was done in the previous period in the City of Nis on the topic of RR:**

In 2011, the Safe House was opened, whose work is financed from the city budget. The first Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities was established at the Municipal Assembly of Nis in 2012, which is defined by the Statute and the Rules of Procedure of the City Assembly of Nis. She was a permanent working body of the city parliament and monitored the implementation and application of the Law on Gender Equality, proposed decisions that are in line with this law, measures and activities to implement the policy of equal opportunities and gender equality. In 2013, the Commission for Gender Equality and Equal Opportunities launched an initiative to adopt the European Charter for Gender Equality, which was adopted by the City Assembly in December 2013. For the first time, the Commission managed to obtain a position in the city budget. the position of women and the promotion of gender equality, we had trainings, as well as joint activities with representatives of the civil sector. The commission gave a positive opinion on the Declaration on Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and proposed its adoption to the City Assembly. An initiative has been launched to finance the SOS hotline for women victims of violence from the budget. Cooperation has been established with bodies for gender equality from the municipalities of Nis, and several joint activities have been successfully implemented with them. In May 2014, a Protocol on the

Conduct of All Those Organizations and Institutions Dealing with Gender-Based and Domestic Violence was signed.

The Commission for Gender Equality should, starting in 2016, prepare an operational plan, defined in the annual work plan of the Commission, as well as funds needed from the city budget for the implementation of LAP activities in a given year. Starting in 2015, the operational plan will be prepared for the next year, in accordance with the budget calendar, in order to ensure timely planning of budget funds. The local self-government of the city of Nis was supposed to be a partner in all activities that are implemented and financed with donor funds and to make available its resources in order to implement the activities. The process of implementing the plan would actively involve consultants for professional support in certain segments, informal groups of citizens and all other stakeholders, depending on the projects that will be implemented to improve the security situation in the city.

Therefore, it was planned to include all competent institutions and agencies, line ministries, public companies, associations dealing with gender equality issues, international organizations, depending on the interests and individual activities.

The period 2016-2017 is the time frame in which the implementation of the Local Action Plan for the implementation of the UN Resolution in the area of the City of Nis (LAP UNR 1325) was planned. The bearers of activities were, above all, local government and local institutions, but also local associations of citizens and other organizations, in cooperation and partnership with local self-government. The Commission for Gender Equality of the City of Nis was responsible for monitoring the implementation of activities defined by the LAP, except for the holders of activities. The Commission was also responsible for monitoring the achievement of LAP objectives, based on defined indicators and for the coordination of other stakeholders and cooperation of local government with other institutions and organizations.

The Action Plan envisaged three main priorities: 1. Action Plan: Creating an institutional framework for the implementation of gender equality policies in the city of Nis; 2. Action Plan: Increasing the participation of women in decision-making in the executive and legislative bodies, as well as at the local level; 3. Action Plan: Improving the system of protection of women victims of gender-based, partnership and domestic violence.

Unfortunately, after the expiration of the old, new LAP, there was none, and the Commission was dissolved in 2020. The Council for Gender Equality was formed instead. It has 9 members, however, regardless of the date of its formation, this Council has not yet had a single meeting. Currently, the city parliament consists of 61 councilors, a total of 21 councilors, which satisfies the positive legal provision on the representation of 30% of women. As for the City Council, in 2015, out of 10 councilors, there was not a single woman, in 2020, out of 9, women make up a third. In March 2021, of the 6 newly formed administrations, all were women chiefs.

What is new is the project that officially started in 2021. Strengthening the mechanism for gender equality in the Nisava district, which is being implemented by the City of Nis, with the help of the Swiss Government, which is the work of an individual, not the Council or Team. This empowerment refers only to the improvement of the operational capacities of the Council in the Nisava district. The project is funded exclusively by donor funds.

In March 2022, the Mayor of Nis signed the Charter of Women's Solidarity, which pledged that, regardless of her party affiliation, she would cooperate and act together in order to achieve full gender equality.

On our initiative, ROB was included in the Development Plan of the City of Nis 2021-2027. , through measure 4.3.8. Strengthening the mechanism for gender equality ([https://www.gu.ni.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021\\_62-02.pdf](https://www.gu.ni.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021_62-02.pdf)). This measure refers to the improvement of operational capacities of local MRR for active dealing with gender equality

policies and gender issues in the community by strengthening the capacity of gender equality mechanisms in the City of Nis through education of members of the Council and Commission for Gender Equality in the City of Nis and its municipalities. in the field of good governance, gender policies and international standards in the field of gender equality and other areas that will contribute to efficient and effective action in the local community, support networking and cooperation with gender equality mechanisms outside the City of Nis, support activities and initiatives that will increase visibility and the availability of mechanisms for gender equality to the citizens of Nis, the promotion and advocacy of gender equality in all segments of socio-political engagement, and above all in political action and leadership positions. Organizational unit responsible for the implementation (coordination of implementation) of the measure: the City of Nis, the Council for Gender Equality of the City of Nis and measure 4.3.5. Title of the measure: Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of public finances

Activities within this measure are primarily related to strengthening the capacity of the Finance Administration, but also all other bodies of the city administration system and direct and indirect users. Also, this measure includes a series of steps that will strengthen the institutional, managerial and organizational capacities of the City of Nis and the City Administrations of the City of Nis in the field of gender responsive budgeting, in accordance with the Law on Budget System of the Republic of Serbia and the Law on Gender Equality. for gender responsive budgeting, preparation of a plan for gradual introduction of gender responsive budgeting and initial instructions for users, informing and educating employees in all organizational units of the City of Nis on changes in working methods in the field of gender responsive budgeting and their implementation, implementation of gender responsive budgeting in the program budget City of Nis.

### **Women's Entrepreneurship Nis**

Women as owners of companies are most represented in Nis. Observed by municipalities, the municipality of Mediana in Nis stands out, in which the percentage of companies run by women is the highest in percentage of companies run by men, 32 to 62 percent. In other municipalities, the ratio ranges from 21 to 75 percent, to 27 to 69 percent of firms in favor of male owners. There are about 2,300 "women's" companies in Mediana, 4,431 companies are owned by men, and 495 companies have shared ownership, which is a relationship in favor of women managers and owners, as in no other municipality.

According to the legal structure, out of all companies in which women are the absolute owners, 77 percent are in the entrepreneurship sector, most women's companies are engaged in entrepreneurship, 13.6 percent are limited liability companies, and 8.2 percent are associations.

### **Support for women's entrepreneurship in Nis:**

What we have come to through research on measures to support women's entrepreneurship in the last three years. There are no measures and actions in the Local Economic Development Program for 2019 and 2020 that would encourage women's entrepreneurship, although the National Strategy for Support of SME Development, Entrepreneurship and Competitiveness for the period was used to draft the Program for the two mentioned years. from 2015 to 2020, which defines the basic strategic goals, and one of them is the development and promotion of entrepreneurial spirit and encouraging entrepreneurship of women, youth and social entrepreneurship.

In the Program (2019 and 2020), women's entrepreneurship is not included among the specific goals of the program and priority goals.

In the Program of Local Economic Development of the City of Nis for 2021, there are parts related to women's entrepreneurship.

Namely, among the specific goals of the Program, it is stated as one of the goals: Support to women's entrepreneurship (Program, 2021: 8), while as mentioned, such a goal does not exist in previous programs (for 2019 and 2020).

In addition, there is a section in the 2021 Program entitled Promoting Available Funds to Foster Competitiveness from National and International Funding Sources. The program emphasizes the promotion of the Program of several institutions, and among those that include the promotion of women's entrepreneurship, there is a public call for the Program for Encouraging Entrepreneurship Development through Financial Support for Women Entrepreneurs and Youth and the Development Fund of the Republic of Serbia. One of the programs is a program called Loans for Women Entrepreneurs and Youth (Program, 2021: 63).

Also, within the Program for 2021, there is a section that can be interpreted in a way as a small incentive for entrepreneurship in terms of independent work over the Internet. Namely, the section entitled Academy of New Occupations refers to a project in which the goal is for 90 young people to acquire practical knowledge, skills and competencies that are modern and in demand in the labor market, and with which people who acquire knowledge will be able to do business as freelancers, that is, to work from home and earn money by working online. These trainings are from several areas: digital marketing, web design, graphic design, photoshop, etc. In addition to unemployed young people who have informal experience in certain areas, the participants will also be mothers, vulnerable groups, etc. (Program 2021, pp. 59 and 60).

**The goals and tasks of the employment policy on the territory of the City of Nis (LAP for Employment 2021-2023) in the next three years will be focused on: improving the position of young people and women in the labor market; rising unemployment; creating new jobs, by bringing in new investors and encouraging entrepreneurship and self-employment ..., and what is most important is that women are recognized as one of the target groups towards which the activities of this plan will be directed.**

### **Results of implemented measures for subsidizing economic entities through the Local Economic Development Program of the City of Nis in 2019/2020/2021. years**

The Office for Local Economic Development was responsible for the implementation of the Local Economic Development Program of the City of Nis for 2017, 2018, as well as for 2019 and 2020.

Due to the COVID-19 virus epidemic, the measures envisaged by the PLER for 2020 were not implemented, and the programs for 2017, 2018 and 2019 envisaged three groups of measures:

- Encouraging competitiveness
- Encouraging employment
- Attracting investment

Subsidy measures to economic entities were included in the first group - stimulating competitiveness. For the first time during 2017, the City of Nis, through the Local Economic Development Program (PLER), provided support to a large number of MSMEs through several measures. The total funds envisaged by PLER in 2017 were 18,000,000.00 dinars. The decision on the budget for 2018 envisaged a total of 40,000,000.00 dinars for direct support of MSMEs through PLER measures, and about 300 business entities were included. In 2019, in order to improve competitiveness, the City of Nis announced two public calls for grants for three different measures for which a total of 39,000,000.00 dinars was planned.

*As part of the measure to improve the availability of financing, a public invitation was sent to banks interested in short-term lending to economic entities from the territory of the City of Nis,*

*with the participation of the City of Nis in subsidizing interest rates. The users of credit funds were micro, small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs, and the purpose was for: costs of procurement of machinery and equipment, modernization of production processes, stabilization of production, investment in new modern means of work and production, construction and reconstruction and adaptation of business premises . The minimum amount of the loan for which interest was subsidized was 100,000.00 dinars, and the maximum amount was 1,500,000.00 dinars. The funds with which the City of Nis subsidized the interest on the granted loans amounted to 4,872,472.46 dinars. **A total of 146 business entities received credit funds, of which 38% were owned by women (on paper). and the bank placed loans in the amount of 161,871,439 dinars.***

In order to encourage the competitiveness of MSMEs, the City of Nis has issued a public call for grants to MSMEs for two different measures. Both measures were implemented as state aid of small value (de minimis state aid), and a total of 34,085,028.37 dinars provided by the PLER was spent for these measures.

The measure was implemented by conducting one of the following activities: organized or individual appearance at the fair or visit to the fair; arranging business in accordance with the requirements of international business standards (implementation of standards, certification, recertification) and marking products with the "CE" mark; procurement of new equipment and / or machinery, machine parts or specialized tools; • electronic presentation of the company; testing new products; improving existing and developing new products / services. The funds were allocated to cover up to 50% of eligible costs without VAT, with a limit of up to 300,000.00 dinars per business entity.

**A total of 96 business entities received grants for this measure in the total amount of 23,478,170.73 dinars, of which 48% were owned by women, or at least companies were run on them.**

### **Public call for the allocation of incentive funds within the implementation of the program of local economic development of the city of Nis for 2021**

TARGET GROUP: For the first measure: the aim of the grant is to support micro, small and medium enterprises, such as women entrepreneurs and companies owned by women with at least 51 percent share in it and in which women are responsible for business and management. This measure is a novelty compared to previous years because it is an important segment of the development of the overall economy.

The implementation of the measures will depend on the epidemiological situation!  
<https://www.gu.ni.rs/javni-pozivi/>

In order to encourage competitiveness and improve the business environment in Nis for 2021, on November 2, 46 grant agreements were handed over to representatives of micro, small and medium enterprises, as well as entrepreneurs, at the City Hall.

The awarding of the contract was preceded by a public call for the allocation of incentive funds within the implementation of the Local Economic Development Program of the City of Nis for 2021, which was conducted by the Office for Local Economic Development.

Priority in awarding grants was given to companies operating on the principle of circular economy or applying energy efficiency and green economy models, as well as companies owned by women and young people up to 30 years of age, **although 16 out of 46 contracts were awarded to women.**

## **IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES on the project:**

Holding a press conference (2 conferences, 1000 leaflets). The first was held on May 16, 2021. in which the activities that will be implemented within this project are presented, including a leaflet prepared on the topic of gender responsive budgeting. Leaflet distributed as part of a street action. For the needs of the project, 1000 leaflets on the topic of gender responsive budgeting were prepared, which were distributed during the project, at meetings, focus groups, on street action ..)

<https://akordmedia.info/protekta-predstaviala-projekat-grad-nis-ka-rodno-odgovornom-budzetu/>, <https://naslovi.net/2021-05-13/niske-vesti/grad-nis-ka-rodno-odgovornom-budzetu/27914308>, <https://niskevesti.rs/grad-nis-ka-rodno-odgovornom-budzetu/>, <https://gradskiportal018.rs/2021/05/13/grad-nis-ka-rodno-odgovornom-budzetu/>

Second - The final conference was held on June 29. and it presents an Analysis of the current situation related to gender responsive local budgeting and a set of recommendations for the introduction of gender budgeting, as well as the results of focus groups.

<https://www.juznevesti.com/Drushtvo/Protekta-jacanje-zenskog-preduzetnistva-kao-obaveza-lokalnih-samouprava.sr.html>

<https://gradskiportal018.rs/2021/06/30/grad-nis-ka-rodno-odgovornom-programskom-budzetu/> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SiLIETFd8qs>  
<https://www.facebook.com/protekta.org.rs/videos/1510260609316324>

***Holding meetings (6 meetings):*** During the project, several meetings were held with representatives of city authorities and representatives of the Gender Equality Council in order to define obstacles to the process of introducing gender budgeting. Regarding the meetings with the representatives of the Working Group for the development plan of the City of Nis 2021-2027.

***Research on gender responsive budgeting / women's entrepreneurship.*** Within the project, a research was conducted on the topic of women's entrepreneurship, the current situation on the territory of the City of Nis. Unfortunately, there is very little data on this topic, there is no accurate record, the existing data are variable, depending on the institution / organization ....

***Realization of focus group (3, with a total of 22 participants):***

Focus groups were held in early June. Two focus groups were held with representatives of women entrepreneurs on June 2 and 11, 2021, and one with potential donors on June 3, 2021.

Some of the questions we discussed with women entrepreneurs were: When were they founded? Who supported them / who helped them in the process of opening / registration? Why did they decide on this type of activity, is it in line with education? What were their biggest weaknesses and problems in work? Who void their finances? Yes have they thought about changing the business, expanding? Did they think of giving up? How COVID 19 influenced their work. When selecting focus group participants, we took into account that the activities / services are different. (dentist, hairdresser, bookkeeper, beautician, consultant, lawyer, travel agent ...). Their main problem is sustainability, rent, taxes, banking system, inability to use paid maternity leave, legal basis, etc. The market and finances mostly dictate which business will be sustainable. Some women who did not decide to take this step out of necessity, as the main reasons, state the desire for independence, business opportunities and ideas, the desire to increase their income, striving for a new challenge and a better balance

between personal and business life. Another important challenge for these entrepreneurs, especially those at the very beginning, is financing their ventures. Almost a third of women invested family money in their business, another third their own, and only one received a loan. Almost 2/3 of women cited access to finance as a major barrier to entering entrepreneurship.

Regarding the focus group with potential donors when it comes to women's entrepreneurship, some of the questions we talked about were: What kind of support do they provide? Do they consult women entrepreneurs in the process of deciding on projects, programs, types of support they need? What types of activities are most represented, are there any statistics regarding women entrepreneurs? Who makes programs for women? Participants in the focus group were from the Chamber of Commerce, National Employment Service, representatives of the municipality, HELP, Regional Development Agencies, etc. Some of the conclusions from this focus group are that since there are a large number of institutions dealing with entrepreneurship in the City of Nis (CLEAR, NTP, city municipalities, RBA South, RPK Nis, NES - Nis branch, NGOs), interconnection of all these institutions It would enable the exchange of information, implementation of joint projects, capacity building of each institution, improve their mutual communication and coordination, which would lead to improved services of local business administration and all related institutions, as well as creating a stimulating business environment for entrepreneurship and MSME sector. female entrepreneurship.

Women in the competition for funds are faced with unfair competition, bearing in mind that they run companies that are small and micro, so they often do not have enough capital to develop their business. Given the ubiquitous problem of finding adequate employment, as well as the increasing number of unemployed women compared to the average, an increasing number of members of this vulnerable group decide to start their own business, but with insufficient knowledge of such activities. Although many institutions and organizations, as well as business-oriented companies, provide the services of such support programs, the programs themselves are quite uneven in terms of quality, frequency of maintenance, and even accessibility to all interested parties. With a systematic approach, involving all relevant and adequate organizations and institutions in the development of such support programs, as well as the selection of quality program organizers, target individuals would gain a better and more necessary level of knowledge for involvement in entrepreneurship. This target group has certain characteristics (lack of start-up capital, lack of necessary knowledge, insufficient business experience, etc.) that separates them from other groups and the population interested in starting their own business, so creating special and specific support programs just for them increases success. and the survival of business entities. In addition to the primary support programs needed for basic familiarization and starting a business, it is necessary to form more advanced support programs, so that newly established businesses can successfully cope with the challenges arising in later activities, such as coaching, mentoring and similar support programs..

***Preparation of recommendations (100 copies):***

One of the project activities was the preparation of Recommendations for the introduction of gender responsive local budgeting, which would facilitate the representatives of city authorities / city municipalities in the process of gender-sensitive budgeting.

## SOME OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The strategic plan for the development of local self-government clearly specifies the starting points for the development of women's entrepreneurship, especially the development of specialized entrepreneurial competencies in the field of digital business;

2. Establish organizational units to support women's entrepreneurship in cooperation with local and national associations of women entrepreneurs, which would cover the following activities: strategic planning of women's entrepreneurship, development of educational programs in entrepreneurship, marketing, management, business communication and behavior, digital communication and promotion, as well as building strong brands of geographical and traditional origin for continuous learning and knowledge improvement;

3. Measures to ensure equal opportunities for women from rural areas to have access to public services (education, placement of children in kindergartens, health services, public transport to urban centers, etc.);

4. Provide support in the budget for new digital entrepreneurs (attendance and participation in fairs and exhibitions of entrepreneurship, additional training, etc.);

5. Develop and manage a single open internet platform to increase the visibility and improve the business of identified entrepreneurial ventures. The platform should include the presentation of all entrepreneurial ventures of the participants who have ideas, the development of basic functionalities for searching and ordering the goods offered and providing additional visibility through promotion on social networks;

6. Establish wider recognition of local women's entrepreneurial endeavors;

7. Gather a team of mentors (who come from different fields, and have different knowledge in the field of marketing, sales, promotion, etc.) interested in transferring and sharing their knowledge in certain areas, and who would provide mentoring support individually or in groups;

8. Support the establishment of regional / local hubs to support entrepreneurs;

9. Involve all local actors (representatives of local governments, local associations, local committees, media, experts, etc.) in promoting and supporting the growth of local entrepreneurial ventures;

10. Provide funds for local media projects of public interest and include in the criteria for allocating these funds advantages for media that promote women's entrepreneurship and incentives for the formulation of such projects;

U Nišu,  
12. 03. 2022.

PROTECTA Team