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ESSAY

Topic: How can EU funds be used for the benefit of the community in which you live?

The European Union continuously launches programs for financing various community projects, depending on the areas foreseen for investment. The truth is that the EU requires serious projects. It carries out a strict and transparent monitoring of the spending of those funds, but above all a special focus is placed on the project sustainability, efficiency and longevity.

Given the fact that 27 EU Commissioners have the ultimate political responsibility to ensure that EU funds are spent properly and given the fact that the EU analyses each project point by point (how much it adheres to the call) very seriously, we are obliged to offer an effective project, as a relative guarantee that as such it can pass to other stages.

Since these days we are in the phase of open EU programmes, namely the Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between the Republic of Kosovo and the Republic of North Macedonia, we will hypothetically present an idea on how to use EU funds for the benefit of my community, adhering to the call in the foreseen areas of application, that of environment and tourism. In the city of Ferizaj, where I live, we have the opportunity to encourage the restoration and re-use of cultural heritage buildings, as well as to support the sharing of practices and promote excellence in this field.

An object of the beginning of the XX century, namely the old building of one of the schools of Ferizaj, is one of the few buildings that has survived the time. Located in the city centre, this building is closely linked to the urban culture of the city. Generations of students have been part of this school and memories with this object are an integral part of the generations that have already grown old in this city. Even today, they use this object as a reference point when meeting friends.

In the last twenty years, the city of Ferizaj has marked a rapid growth, both in terms of population and in terms of business development and economy. The number of students has increased as well, making the existing object insufficient for the development of educational activities. This school building was operational until 2003 when the new school building was built. Since then it has been left at the mercy of time, undergoing constant degradation. Moreover, the facility has been transformed into an informal waste-smelling environment, even as a place where narcotics can be used, endangering the health of the surrounding residents.

However, the citizens of Ferizaj are against the demolition of this building. Through this object they fanatically preserve the memory of our city. The dominance of illegal and irregular constructions represents at the same time the decline of the urban tradition and jeopardizes the cultural interaction.

Urban cultural places are generators of mass culture, as a means of empowering sustainable economic development. Cultural protection can help to achieve a higher quality of life in a more capable economic and social context.

Thus, my idea would be to intervene in the infrastructure in Ferizaj, namely restoring, conserving and adapting the oldest school building as a Cultural Heritage Incubator with support objects in the Municipality of Ferizaj.

This building has a total of five (5) classrooms or separate spaces. In a hypothetical project, after a planned restoration, they would consist of:

Cultural Heritage Incubator

Vocational Centre - A space wherein the municipality will organize joint activities with certain stakeholders (women, youth, people with disabilities, civil society organizations), providing them with opportunities to use this space to carry out their activities.

Cultural and Tourist Information Centre - A space where information will support the tourist and cultural opportunities offered by the Municipality of Ferizaj. Its mission is to function as a focal point for culture and information at the local level in Ferizaj. The development of tourist packages for tourist destinations and their cultural heritage assets in Ferizaj would be among the activities of the Centre.

Forum Gallery - dedicated to contemporary photography and visual arts, mainly for the promotion of cultural and tourist sites in Ferizaj.

Museum Hall - would collect various cultural objects from the city and surroundings of Ferizaj that reflect the cultural values of the municipality.

The restoration of this facility would provide more opportunities for the community, and less risk for young people!