

Annual Report 2023

April, 2024



**ANNUAL REPORT
2023**



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About Democracy Plus (D+)

Democracy Plus (D+) is an independent and non-profit organization founded in March 2016. D+ is committed to building a democratic society by increasing citizen participation in political processes, increasing accountability and influencing decision-making processes. We strive to integrate information technology in all our efforts, this to promote the use of the Internet, which has an important role in the democratization of a society.

D+ aims to contribute to the creation of good practices for good governance by public institutions at central and local level, strengthening the rule of law, advancing political parties, and supporting free and fair electoral processes. D + undertakes initiatives aimed at bringing decision-makers closer to the citizens through policy research, facilitation of dialogue or communication and public education.

In 2023, D+ persistently pursued the advancement of a democratic culture through various initiatives. These efforts were directed towards shaping decision-making processes, enhancing transparency and accountability within public institutions, fostering citizen engagement in policymaking, and refining public procurement practices.

This report provides a succinct overview of D+'s endeavors during 2023 and assesses their efficacy in furthering our mission.

Vision

Governance and societies where democratic culture and values are the norm.

Mission

D+ is committed to the development of a democratic society, through influencing decision-making and strengthening civic participation in the design and implementation of public policies.

Programs

1 Good Governance

2 Rule of Law

3 Political Parties and Elections

1. Contribution to Public Policies

1.1 Supporting the Kosovo Assembly in Post-Legislative Review of Eight (8) Laws

In 2023, D+ provided expert assistance to the working groups of three (3) parliamentary committees within the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo:

- I** Committee on Legislation, Mandates, Immunities, Rules of Procedure of the Assembly and Oversight of Anti-Corruption Agency in drafting four (4) post-legislative review reports;
 1. Law no. 06/L-009 on Mediation;
 2. Law No. 02/L-65 Civil Law against Defamation and Insult;
 3. Law no. 08/L-017 on the Agency for Prevention of Corruption, and
 4. Law No. 08/L-108 on Declaration, Origin and Control of Assets and Gifts.
- II** Environment, Food, Agriculture, Planning and Development Committee in drafting three (3) post-legislative review reports;
 1. Law No. 2003/5 on Seeds;
 2. Law No. 04/L-114 on Flour Fortification
 3. Law No. 04/L-147 on Waters.
- III** Committee on Health and Social Welfare in drafting one (1) post-legislative review report;
 1. Law No. 04/L-156 on Tobacco Control and Law No. 08/L-040 on amending Law No. 04/L-156 on Tobacco Control.
- IV** Committee on Education, Science, Technology, Innovation, Culture and Sports in drafting one (1) post-legislative review report;
 1. Law No. 05/L-90 on Sponsorship in the Fields of Culture, Youth, and Sports, Amended by the Law No. 06/L-116.

1.2 Engagement of 16 Interns in Parliamentary Committees of the Kosovo Assembly

In 2023, D+ continued its support in daily engagements for the parliamentary committees by involving 16 interns across various committees of the Kosovo Assembly. These interns played a crucial role in assisting committee staff with daily tasks, including scheduling meetings and conducting research on relevant committee topics. This year marked the sixth consecutive year of D+'s engagement with interns within the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo.

1.3 Inclusion of Marginalized Groups through Consultative Meetings on Six (6) Draft Laws and Ten (10) Municipal Regulations

D+ facilitated the participation of 241 citizens in policy-making through twenty consultative meetings in 2023. These meetings focused on the drafting process of ten (10) laws and ten (10) municipal regulations directly impacting marginalized communities in Kosovo. A total of 104 comments for draft laws and 128 for municipal regulation drafts were collected and placed on the public consultation platform by D+. Additionally, these comments were sent via email to the responsible officials in the ministries and municipalities.

D+ continues to monitor the public consultation platform to track whether the ministries and municipalities have considered the comments from the consultative meetings with marginalized groups. As of the writing of this report:

- **Central level/ministries** have received 20 comments.
- **Local level/municipalities** have received 31 comments.

1.4 Encouraging Municipalities to Publish Draft Policies on the Public Consultation Platform

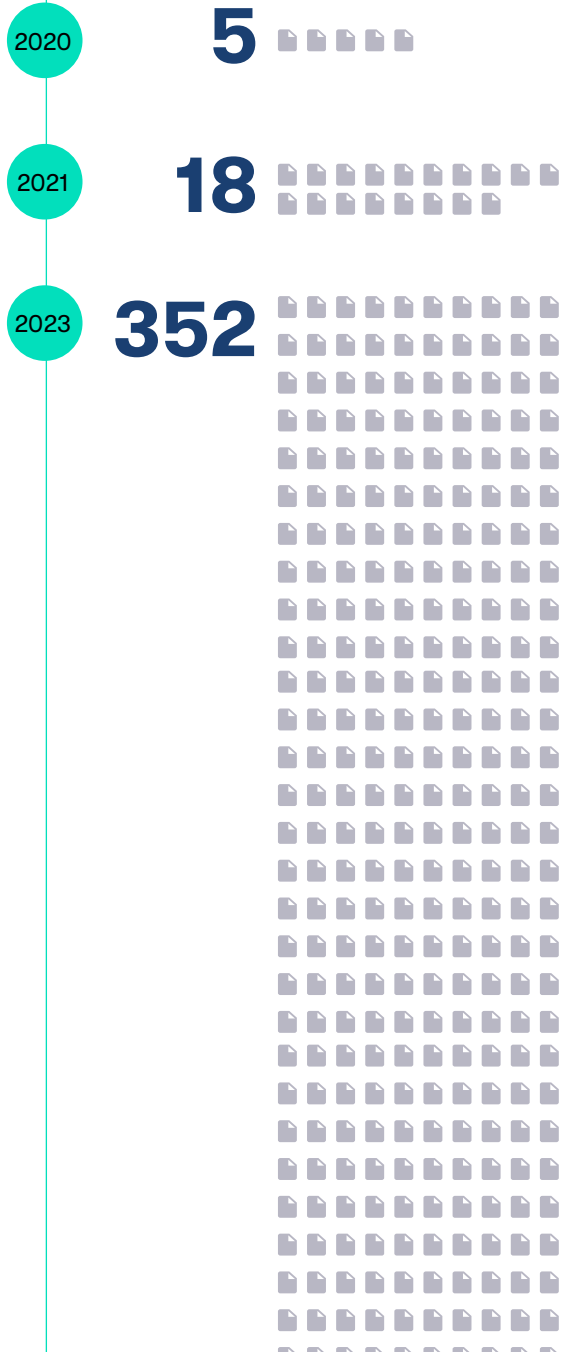
Through advocacy efforts with municipal officials, D+ has significantly influenced an uptick in the number of municipalities utilizing the public consultation platform, particularly in publishing local policy drafts. In 2020, only the Rahovec municipality posted documents on the public consultation platform. By 2021, this number increased to three municipalities (Rahovec, Peja, and Malisheva).

Thanks to D+'s advocacy, in 2023, the number of municipalities utilizing the public consultation platform rose to 26. For perspective, the number of documents for public consultation placed on the platform by municipalities was 5 in 2020, 18 in 2021, and approximately 352 documents in 2023.

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The number of documents for public consultation placed on the platform



1.5 Contribution to the Promotion of Fair Administrative Procedures for Citizens and Businesses

D+ made significant contributions in 2023 through the project “Promotion of Fair Administrative Procedures for Citizens and Businesses,” consisting of two components: Assistance in implementing the government’s program to reduce and prevent the administrative burden on citizens and businesses, and Advocacy for citizens’ rights to compensation in cases of damage caused by public authorities. Activities included:

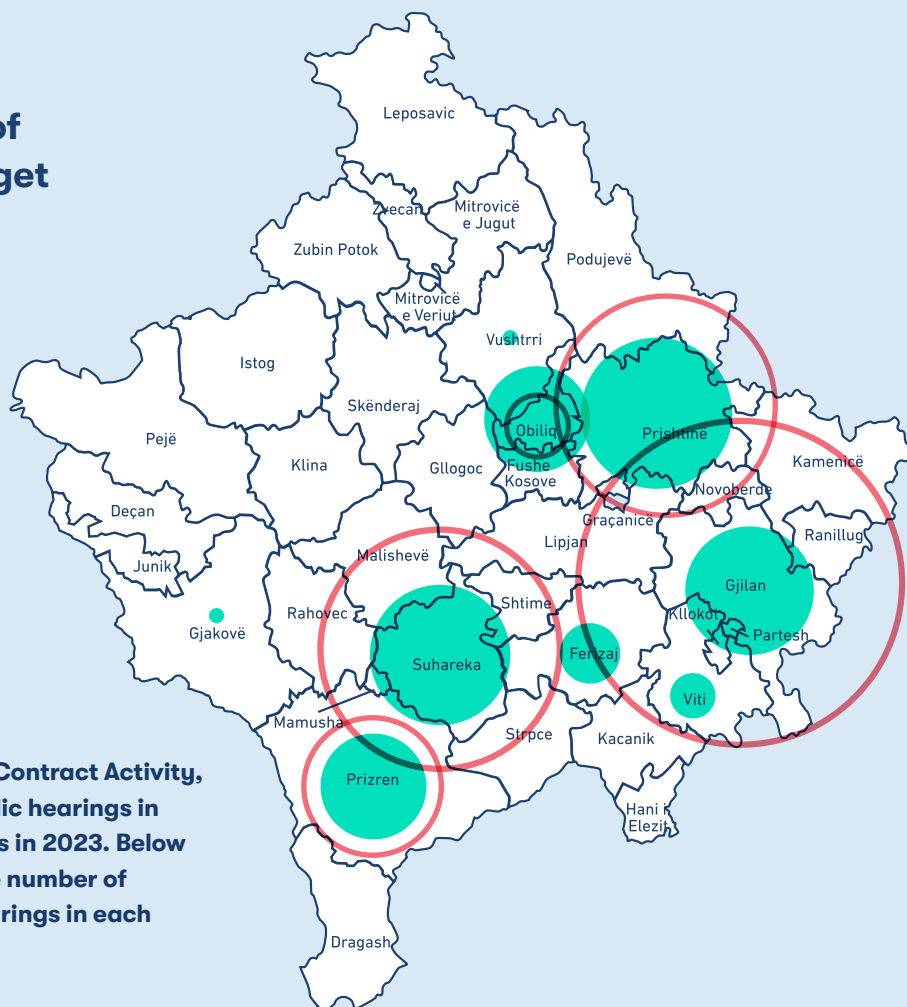
- Monitoring ten (10) cases related to injustices and harm caused by public bodies against private individuals.
- Drafting three (3) concise reports reflecting monitoring results, covering areas such as:
 1. Compensation from Public Authorities:Monitoring legal challenges in cases of pensions for persons with disabilities;
 2. Compensation from Public Authorities:Monitoring Cases for War Invalids and Family Pension;
 3. Compensation from Public Authorities:Cases of Contributory Pension and Compensation for Education Workers in the ‘90s.
- Conducting a survey about citizens’ knowledge regarding their right to compensation.
- Publishing two (2) analyses related to fair administrative procedures for citizens and businesses:
 1. Review of legislation related to the right to compensation in cases of damage caused by public authorities in Kosovo;
 2. Towards user-oriented public services in Kosovo.
- Organizing an annual meeting with the business community to discuss their specific needs and concerns regarding the reduction of administrative burden, presenting best practices from various institutions, and sharing knowledge.
- Conducting two televised debates with field experts: one debate aimed at addressing cases of compensation for damage caused by public authorities, while the other focused on the implementation of the program to prevent and reduce administrative burden.
- Publishing two videos: one related to the implementation of the Program for the Reduction and Mitigation of Administrative Burden, and the other aimed at informing and raising awareness among citizens about compensation in cases of damage caused by public bodies.

1.6 Public Opinion Research on Awareness of Their Rights to Compensation from Public Institutions

D+ conducted a public opinion survey to gauge citizens’ awareness regarding their right to compensation from public institutions.

The research findings revealed that 60.2% of citizens in Kosovo lack awareness of their right to compensation if violated by public institutions. Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of citizens (91.7%) have never pursued this right. Additionally, 61.5% of citizens are unaware of where to seek compensation.

1.7 Monitoring of Public and Budget Hearings



As part of the Social Contract Activity, D+ monitored 98 public hearings in various municipalities in 2023. Below is a breakdown of the number of monitored public hearings in each municipality:

Municipality	Number of monitored public hearings
Prishtinë/Priština	20
Prizren	14
Gjilan/Gnjilane	18
Suhareka/Suva Reka	17
Obiliq/Obilic	14
Ferizaj/Uroševac	8
Vushtrri/Vučitrn	1
Gjakovë/Đakovica	1
Viti/Vitina	5

As part of this activity, D+ assisted in organizing the participatory budgeting process. The number of participants in this process was:

Municipality	Number of participants
Prishtinë/Priština	256
Prizren	139
Gjilan/Gnjilane	548
Obiliq/Obilic	26
Suhareka/Suva Reka	361

1.8 Organization of 58 Community Issue Meetings in Five (5) Municipalities

D+ facilitated the organization of 58 community meetings, each addressing specific issues outlined in the Social Contract agenda. These meetings were conducted across the following municipalities:

Municipality	Number of meetings held
Prishtinë/Priština	5
Prizren	12
Gjilan/Gnjilane	10
Suhareka/Suva Reka	15
Obiliq/Obilic	16

Additionally, five successful interactive workshops were conducted in five municipalities: Gjakovë/Đakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Kamenica, and Viti/Vitina. D+ assisted in identifying various citizen groups and facilitated different sessions in the workshops.

1.9 Assessment of the Implementation of Procedural Justice in Basic Courts and Their Branches in Kosovo

In 2023, D+ conducted an assessment of procedural justice implementation in the seven (7) Basic Courts and their 18 respective branches in Kosovo. Based on this assessment, D+ provided policy recommendations aimed at enhancing procedural justice in each court. The published reports stemming from this research include:

1. Assessment Report on the Application of Procedural Justice in the Eighteen Branches of Courts in Kosovo (Part II).
2. Reports on the implementation of procedural justice in the branches of the courts of Ferizaj/Uroševac, Mitrovica, Prishtinë/Priština, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Prizren, and Gjilan/Gnjilane.
3. Assessment of the Application of Procedural Justice in Basic Courts 2021-2023: Comparative Analysis.

2. Monitoring of Public Procurement

2.1 Four Reports Published from the Monitoring of 43 Tenders

D+ has maintained its monitoring of public procurement procedures, aiming to inform citizens about potential misuse of public funds. This effort involved the analysis and monitoring of 43 tenders.

The four (4) published reports encompass 16 tenders, which were awarded by 13 local and regional Public Enterprises. Additionally, 27 tenders are included in a separate report, involving contracting authorities from eight (8) municipalities and the Ministry of Health. The published reports are as follows:

1. [Monitoring of Public Procurement in Public Enterprises: "Prishtina Parking", "Trafiku Urban", "Kuzhina Qendrore" and RWC Prishtina.](#) 
2. [Monitoring of Public Procurement in Public Enterprises: RWC Ekoregjioni, Hidroregjioni Jugor, Public Housing Enterprise and Hortikultura.](#) 
3. [Monitoring of Public Procurement in Public Enterprises \(October - December 2023\).](#) 
4. [Monitoring of Public Procurement in Public Enterprises: Termokosi, KRU Bifurkacioni, Trafiku Urban dhe Pallati i Rinisë.](#) 
5. [Procurement Monitoring Report.](#) 

An noteworthy success in this endeavor was the identification of irregularities in the procurement procedure monitored by the "Kuzhina Qendrore" for the Supply and Installation of Solar Panels (valued at 36,000 euros), which violated the Public Procurement Law (PPL).

Following D+'s report publication, the Procurement Review Body (PRB) confirmed these findings and annulled the tender award. Additionally, the procurement official in the Municipality of Pristina had his certification suspended for one year due to the identified violations. In another instance, D+ found essential errors in the tender of the public enterprise "Prishtina Parking," hindering free competition. Upon D+'s findings, the enterprise acknowledged the mistake as unintentional.


Similarly, in the second report concerning the tender awarded by the Public Housing Enterprise for the valuation of properties and rents of public enterprises (valued at 23,000 euros), D+ identified significant violations of the PPL in the tender administration. After the report's publication, the PRB confirmed these findings, annulling the enterprise's decision and prompting a re-assessment.

2.2 Monitoring the Conclusion of Special Service Agreements by Central Public Institutions

D+ continued its monitoring of consultant contracting by public institutions through special service agreements. The published report detailing monitoring findings encompasses nine (9) contracting authorities. It addresses two types of contracts: The first group of contracts involves services contracted under the guise of consultants/experts/advisors, yet in reality, the contracted tasks are routine administrative duties falling within the purview of the institutions' staff. The second group of contracts pertains to legal representation of institutions. However, the contracting of these services has led to the creation of parallel positions, as all institutions already possess legal offices or public attorneys.

2.3 Investigative Articles

In addition to public procurement monitoring, D+ collaborated with three journalists specializing in public procurement. Together, they produced investigative articles examining the public procurement activities of three institutions. The investigative articles prepared this year include:

- [Suspicious regarding companies involved in a tender exceeding half a million euros from the Ministry of Internal Affairs.](#) 
- [With over 700 thousand euros spent and two years of delays, water remains above the underpass.](#) 

- The 2.5 million euro tender for the Opera has been referred to the Procurement Review Body due to suspicions of favoritism towards the winning company. [↗](#)

2.4 Publication of Five (5) Short Reports

In efforts to enhance policy and transparency in public procurement within Kosovo, D+ has compiled five (5) short reports analyzing common violations observed during procurement procedures. All recommendations stemming from these reports have been conveyed to the respective institutions. The published reports are as follows:

1. The Blacklist as a Tool for Preventing Misuse in Public Procurement;
2. The Use of Single-Source (Negotiated) Contracts in Public Procurement;
3. Main Problems in the Implementation of Annual Public Procurement Plans in Public Enterprises;
4. The Unusual Dismissal of a Member of the PRB: Was the Law Respected?;
5. The Lack of Criminal Prosecution for Cases of Document Forgery in Public Procurement Processes.

It's worth noting that the recommendation from the first report, advocating for the automatic linkage of the Blacklist with the E-Procurement Platform, has been embraced by the Public Procurement Regulatory Commission. Consequently, efforts are underway to implement such a practice.

2.5 Monitoring of the Procurement Review Body

D+ has sustained its monitoring of the Procurement Review Body (PRB) sessions. D+ monitors have scrutinized the decisions and practices of the PRB to evaluate the impartiality of this mechanism in handling complaints lodged with the institution. The findings from the monitoring of sessions in the first half of 2023 are encapsulated in the published report titled Procurement Review Body: Monitoring and Recommendations (January - June 2023)"Procurement Review Body: Monitoring

and Recommendations (January - June 2023)." One noteworthy recommendation addressed in the report involves the appointment of reviewing experts tasked with addressing complaint claims submitted by operators. Until now, the appointment of experts is semi-automatic, as the electronic system integrated within this PRB initially recommended three names for a reviewing expert, and the administration chose one of them. D+'s recommendation for modifying the system to automate the process of selecting a name, removing the need for manual selection by the administration. This change would increase transparency.

2.6 Advocacy Meetings to Improve Public Procurement Procedures

In line with its advocacy efforts, D+ conducted 20 advocacy meetings with representatives from ministries, public enterprises, the National Audit Office, deputies of the Kosovo Assembly, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders. These meetings aimed to discuss findings from five (5) D+ reports related to public procurement.

2.7 Production of Five (5) Videos Related to Report Findings

D+ released five (5) informative videos, three (3) of which highlighted the findings from public procurement monitoring reports involving 13 public enterprises. The remaining two (2) videos were aimed at informing citizens about their rights regarding compensation in cases of damage caused by public authorities and strategies for reducing administrative burdens. The published videos are as follows:

1. Monitoring of Public Procurement in Public Local and Regional Enterprises by D+;
2. Monitoring of Public Procurement in Public Local and Regional Enterprises (April - June 2023);
3. Violations of Public Enterprises in Public Procurement;
4. How to Claim Your Right to Compensation in Case of Harm Caused by Public Authorities?
5. What Does the Administrative Burden Represent for Citizens and Businesses in Kosovo?

3. Efforts to Prevent the Spread of Fake News

3.1 The Kosovo Coalition on Disinformation

In 2023, D+ joined the Kosovo Coalition on Disinformation. This coalition is dedicated to advocating and supporting the enhancement of awareness and capacity building within Kosovar society to combat the challenges posed by disinformation and cultivate a society where accurate, comprehensive, and timely information serves as the foundation for informed decision-making.

3.2 Organization of Information Sessions for Identifying Fake News

D+, in collaboration with BIRN Kosovo, conducted informative sessions with approximately 365 young individuals across 15 municipalities of Kosovo: Skënderaj/Srbica, Drenas/Glogovac, Kamenicë/Kamenica, Obiliq/Obilić, Gjakovë/Đakovica, Ferizaj/Uroševac, Vushtrri/Vučitrn, Dragash/Dragas, Viti/Vitina, Gjilan/Gnjilane, Klinë/Klina, Mitrovicë/Mitrovica, Rahovec/Orahovac, Therandë/Suhareka, Podujevë/Podujeva.

The primary objective of these sessions was to equip young individuals with knowledge and skills to identify fake news, manage its impact, and understand reporting procedures.





To inform the public about the activities of public institutions and D+'s initiatives, D+ staff made over **60 media appearances**, including written articles, interviews, and participation in television debates.

3.3 About 100 Young People Informed About Media Literacy Through D+'s Organized Bootcamp

D+'s media literacy bootcamp brought together approximately 100 young individuals from diverse communities residing in Kosovo. The bootcamp aimed to educate participants on topics such as disinformation, critical thinking, and strategies to counter disinformation and hate speech. Through a combination of engaging speakers and interactive workshops, D+, in collaboration with UNDP in Kosovo, empowered young people to combat fake news and advocate for media literacy.



3.4 Media Appearances

To inform the public about the activities of public institutions and D+'s initiatives, D+ staff made over 60 media appearances, including written articles, interviews, and participation in television debates. These appearances served as platforms for D+ to address various public policy issues, provide opinions, and offer recommendations. Additionally, through media appearances, the public was informed about the projects undertaken by D+ and its ongoing activities.



4. D+'s Impact on Environmental Policies

4.1 Global Recycling Week

During Global Recycling Week, D+ organized public discussions with the citizens of Gračanica municipality, emphasizing their crucial role in segregating recyclable waste at home. This initiative was part of the USAID Recycling Matters - Gračanica Activity, implemented by D+ in collaboration with Communication for Social Development (CSD) and Roma Versitas Kosovo (RVK).

During Global Recycling Week, D+ organized public discussions with the citizens of Gračanica municipality.





4.2 Opening of the Resource Center for Informal Waste Collectors

The Resource Center for informal waste collectors has been inaugurated for the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities!

D+, in partnership with Communication for Social Development and Roma Versitas Kosovo, welcomed the first group of informal collectors who will receive support with essential work equipment. Situated in Gračanica, the multidimensional Resource Center offers integrated services such as training, equipment, information, and resources, aiming to enhance safety and efficiency for informal waste collectors in their work.

4.3 Training for Informal Waste Collectors from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian Community in Graçanicë/Gračanica

The inaugural training session for informal waste collectors from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities in Graçanicë/Gračanica took place.

Participants were provided with valuable insights on leveraging financial opportunities associated with formalizing their businesses, along with learning about best practices for health protection during waste collection.

4.4 Informal Collectors Visit Recycling Companies

As part of the USAID Recycling Matters - Gračanica Activity, D+ organized meetings between informal waste collectors from the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities and private companies engaged in recycling.

4.5 Distribution of Tools and Workwear for Informal Waste Collectors

Continuing its efforts in the recycling project, D+ distributed work tools to informal waste collectors. Additionally, as part of this initiative, D+ facilitated the delivery of work machinery for informal waste collectors belonging to the Roma, Ashkali, and Egyptian communities. These devices will enhance efficiency during the collection, transportation, and processing of recyclable materials in Gračanica.



4.6 Research Publication “From Policy to Practice: Challenges of River Pollution and Waste Management in Kosovo”

In collaboration with BIRN Kosovo, the Advocacy Center for Democratic Culture, and the Gorazhdevac Media Group Association, D+ conducted a study on the conservation of natural monuments, rivers, and waste management. Key findings from this report include:

- The primary contributor to river pollution is the discharge of wastewater from residences and businesses.
- Villages located near rivers still lack adequate sewage systems.
- Kosovo faces challenges in meeting European Union standards concerning water, environment, and climate impact due to insufficient human, administrative, and financial capacities.

4.7 Study Publication: “Affordability of Cigarette Prices Among Adult Smokers in Kosovo”

D+ released the findings of a **study** examining the affordability of tobacco consumption and the behavior of adult smokers in Kosovo.

The research indicates that lower tobacco affordability correlates with reduced tobacco consumption in Kosovo. Specifically, the results consistently demonstrate that a one-percent decrease in tobacco affordability leads to a three-percent reduction in tobacco consumption.

4.8 Report - The Initiation of Smoking Among Youth in Kosovo

D+ also published a report addressing the initiation of smoking among youth in Kosovo. The findings of this report suggest that:

- exposure to tobacco by consumers, such as parents or peers, can incentivize youth to start smoking.
- Additionally, the report highlights that for every 1% increase in the price of tobacco, there is a 65% decrease in consumption or purchase.
- Furthermore, if the majority of society surrounding youth consumes tobacco, there is a 100% increase in the probability that individuals will also initiate tobacco consumption.

4.9 Reports and Fixes on the ndreqe.com Platform

Throughout 2023, approximately 481 issues related to waste, potholes, damaged sidewalks, public lighting, wastewater, road signs, environment, etc., were reported on the ndreqe.com platform. Out of these reports, 138 issues were successfully resolved within the year by 38 municipalities in Kosovo.

5. Other Activities

5.1 Conference “Better Employment Opportunities for Seasonal Workers in Kosovo”

D+ orchestrated the conference "Better Employment Opportunities for Seasonal Workers in Kosovo," convening representatives from state institutions, the German Embassy, and civil society organizations. The primary objective of this gathering was to present the final report on the engagement of seasonal workers in Kosovo's agricultural sector. Key recommendations from the report aimed to streamline the formalization of seasonal workers in this sector, including:

- Defining seasonal work within the legal framework.
- Ensuring the declaration of seasonal workers to the Kosovo Tax Administration (KTA).
- Requiring workers to be declared before commencing work, or at the latest on the same day before work begins.



5.2 Formalization of Seasonal Workers in the Agriculture Sector

D+ authored a report on the legal framework of seasonal employment, presenting its findings and recommendations to the working group established by the Ministry of Finance, Labor, and Transfers (MFLT). The presentation emphasized avenues for enhancing seasonal work opportunities, identifying legal hurdles, and proposing amendments to existing laws or the drafting of new legislation specifically regulating this domain.

As part of the project for formalizing seasonal workers, D+ participated in the conference "Regional Exchange on Best Practices for Regulating Seasonal Work in the Western Balkans Region." This event facilitated discussions among participants from the Western Balkans who shared their experiences in regulating seasonal work across various sectors such as agriculture, tourism, hospitality, and other potential sectors. The overarching goal was to foster employment opportunities in Western Balkan countries.





5.3 Meeting: “Challenges and Needs of the Business Community for Reducing Administrative Burden During Their Interaction with the Kosovo Tax Administration”

As part of the project "Promotion of Fair Administrative Procedures for Citizens and Businesses," supported by the EU office in Kosovo, D+ convened a meeting with the business community to address the theme: "Challenges and Needs of the Business Community for Reducing Administrative Burden During Their Interaction with the Kosovo Tax Administration." This session delved into the needs and obstacles encountered by businesses in their interactions with the KTA, aiming to explore ways to simplify procedures and regulations to enhance operational efficiency for businesses.

5.4 Meetings of Young People with Deputies of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo

Throughout 2023, D+ facilitated discussions between young individuals and deputies of the Assembly of the Republic of Kosovo. These discussions primarily centered on topics such as the involvement of youth in politics, the impact of parliamentary committees on enhancing public policies, justice reforms, the autonomy of deputies, youth migration, and other pertinent issues raised by the youth.

5.5 Reflection of Findings from Monitoring 27 Tenders in a Media Article

D+ collaborated with BIRN Kosovo to monitor 27 tenders as part of the project "Supporting NGOs to Monitor Procurement Activities in Municipalities and the Ministry of Health," backed by USAID's Integrity in Municipalities activity. One of the most common violations detected during this monitoring was the establishment of discriminatory criteria, excessively high project criteria, or the specification of particular products and manufacturers. Out of the nine tenders monitored in the pre-tendering phase, only one had no corrections of errors in notifications, particularly technical or professional criteria. In eight of the monitored tenders, at least one correction of errors was made through error correction forms (B54). In two instances, there were six corrections of notifications, primarily lowering technical or professional criteria, only after complaints were filed by Economic Operators (EO).

These findings are also visualized through an infographic.

6. Partners and Donors

The accomplishment of the above activities and results was made possible by the support, endorsement, and collaboration of various local and international organizations, including USAID, EU Office in Kosovo, National Endowment for Democracy, UNDP, NDI, KAS, KCSF, GIZ, Helvetas Swiss Intercooperation Kosovo, and BIRN Kosovo.

All audit reports of the organization, including those for the year 2023, are available for public access on our website <https://dplus.org/per-ne/>.

