

# E-MUNICIPALITIES

a step towards full citizen participation







# Introduction

In April 2017, New Social Initiative - NSI started a pilot project "Increasing citizen participation and accountability in local governance in northern Kosovo". The aim was to assess the current level of local municipalities adherence to the principles of citizen participation and accountability as per the Kosovo legal framework.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the project intention was to identify examples of good practice and explore their applicability within the local context.<sup>2</sup> This resulted in a set of recommendations and technical assistance actions that led to the establishment of innovative mechanisms for interactions with citizens.

After researching the attitudes of citizens, analyzing their needs, but also analyzing examples of good practice from the region when it comes to citizen participation in decision-making processes, NSI launched the web platform E-opština Zvečan in November 2017 ([www.ezvecan.com](http://www.ezvecan.com)).

After the successful implementation of the pilot project, NSI, with the financial support of PAX, and OSCE, in early 2018 began a process of establishing additional web platforms, E-municipalities, in the three remaining municipalities in northern Kosovo (North Mitrovica, Leposavić and Zubin Potok). In November 2018, [www.esevernamitrovica.com](http://www.esevernamitrovica.com), [www.eleposavic.com](http://www.eleposavic.com), [www.ezubinpotok.com](http://www.ezubinpotok.com) were launched.

E-municipalities are unique web platforms with the main goal to provide information to citizens about the structure and functioning of their municipalities. This includes informing citizens about events and news at the local level, providing civil society and citizens with insight into public documents, but also enabling citizens to participate through available mechanisms System 48h and Ask the Mayor. Through the System 48h mechanism, citizens can report a problem to their municipality. With this mechanism, citizens can select the type of problem, provide description of the problem and its location, and attach photos. By providing contact information, citizens receive the response directly within the 48 hours. All submissions and responses are archived on the E-municipalities websites.

<sup>1</sup> See: Milovanović, Dina, 'Is Your Municipality Truly Yours? - Assessment of local governments' adherence to principles of citizen participation in north Kosovo', NSI, 2017; <http://newsocialinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Is-your-municipality-is-truly-yours-1.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> See: NSI, 'Innovative Approaches in Citizen Participation: Good Practices', 2017; [http://newsocialinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Good-Practices-report\\_final-draft.pdf](http://newsocialinitiative.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Good-Practices-report_final-draft.pdf)

Through the Ask the Mayor mechanism, citizens can communicate with their mayor through the web platform. This mechanism allows citizens to ask a question to the mayor directly. If the question is within the competence of the mayor, they receive an answer via email. All questions and responses are available on the E-municipalities websites.

From the beginning of 2020, all four web platforms are also available in Albanian language (previously only in Serbian), thanks to the support of the Office of the Language Commissioner and the European Endowment for Democracy.

In March 2020, the Covid-19 info page was added to the web platforms to inform citizens about the situation related to the pandemic. In this period, the e-municipalities were used for online public consultations organized by the municipalities under the Inclusive Development Programme implemented by UN-Habitat, PAX and Community Building Mitrovica.

From its establishment until today, E-municipalities have been following the growing trend of as municipalities measure increase in the number of users, as well as the number of users of System 48h and Ask the Mayor mechanisms.

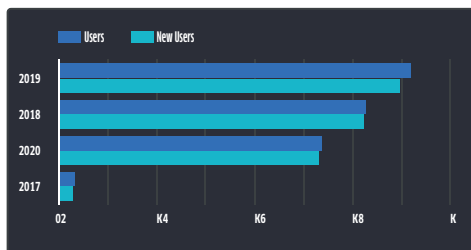


E-OPŠTINA  
ZVEČAN  
E-KOMUNA  
EZVEČANIT



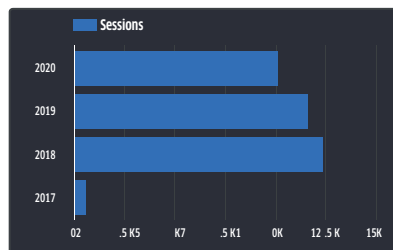
## Zvečan/Zvečan

The E-Zvečan web platform was the first to be established, and it officially started working on November 28, 2017. The E-Zvečan platform has been visited by 18831 unique users with more than 34655 sessions since its establishment up to end of 2020. When we conduct a comparison on an annual basis: In the period November 2017 - October 2018, E-Zvečan was visited by 5431 users with 10 726 sessions, in the period November 2018 - October 2019 the platform had 8142 visitors and 13057 sessions, and in the period November 2019 - October 2020 the platform had 5260 users and 9949 sessions, which is the optimal number of users of the E-opština Zvečan, bearing in mind the size of the municipality and the number of its citizens.



Users  
18,794

New Users  
18,831



Sessions  
34,655

Using E-Zvečan, the citizens sent 39 questions to the mayor through Ask the Mayor mechanism, out of which 24 were answered, while 15 were not because the questions did not fall under the competence of the mayor. Zvečan municipality has answered a total of 41 requests sent by citizens through the System 48h.

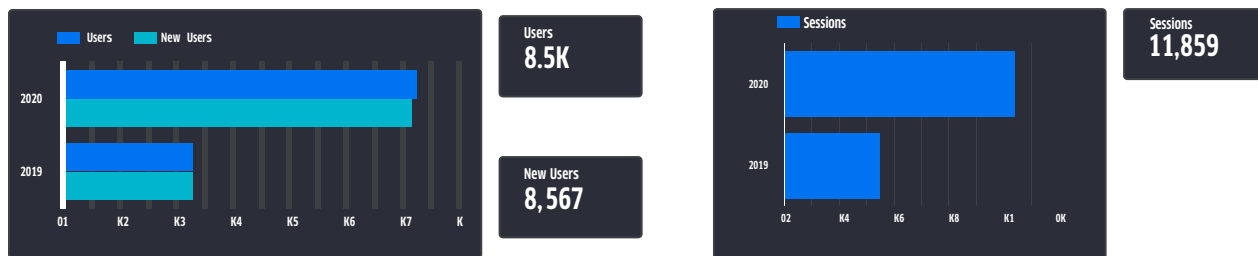
The Municipality of Zvečan once conducted a public consultation with citizens using the E-Zvečan platform, and the reason was the [reconstruction and adaptation of the production hall for the needs of the fire brigade in Zvečan](#).



E-OPŠTINA  
SEVERNA MITROVICA  
E KOMUNA  
MITROVICA VERIORE

## North Mitrovica

The E-Severna Mitrovica web platform has been officially functional since November 28, 2018. This platform has been visited by 8567 users who have had 11859 sessions since its establishment up to end of 2020. In the period November 2018 - October 2019, E-Severna Mitrovica had 1530 visitors and 2338 sessions, while in the period November 2019 - October 2020 the platform had 6010 users and 8064 sessions.



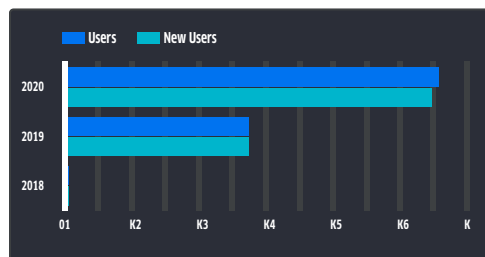
Using E-Severna Mitrovica, the citizens sent 23 questions to the mayor of through the Ask Mayor mechanism, out of which 13 were answered, while 10 were not because the questions did not fall under the competence of the mayor. North Mitrovica municipality has answered a total of 7 requests sent by citizens through the System 48h.

The Municipality of North Mitrovica has not yet used E-Severna Mitrovica for public consultations with citizens.



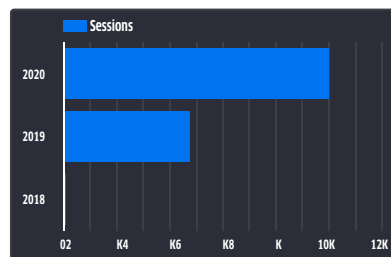
## Leposavić/Leposaviq

The E-Leposavić web platform has been officially functional since November 28, 2018. This platform has been visited by 8330 users who have had 14876 sessions since its establishment. In the period November 2018 - October 2019 the platform E-Leposavić had 1903 visitors and 3281 sessions, while in the period November 2019 - October 2020 the platform had 5903 users and 10182 sessions.



Users  
8.2K

New Users  
8.330



Sessions  
14,876

Using platform E-Leposavić, the citizens sent 20 questions to the mayor using the Ask the Mayor mechanism, out of which 10 were answered, while 10 were not because the questions did not fall under the competence of the mayor. Leposavić municipality has answered a total of 1 request sent by citizens through the System 48h.

E-Leposavić was used for the purpose of drafting the final project proposal: Rehabilitation and adaptation of the facility and public space for the needs of civil society organizations and associations, and establishment of the [Center for testing the potential and sustainable use of natural resources and environmental protection in the region](#). This web platform was also used for the purpose of development of the [Citizen Participation Plan](#).

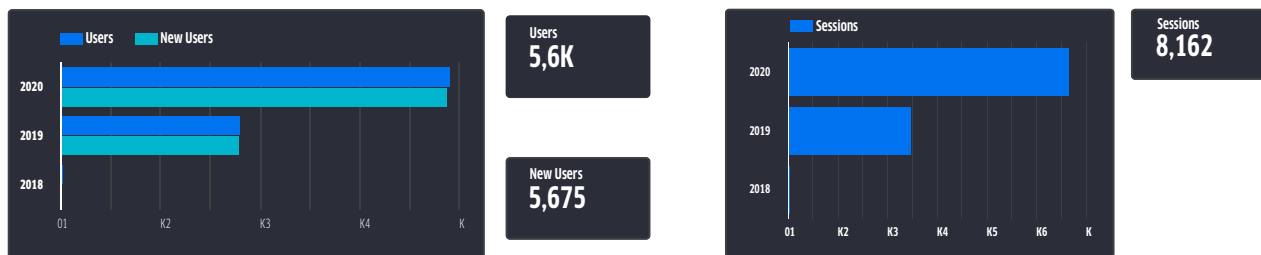


E-OPŠTINA  
ZUBIN POTOK  
E-KOMUNA  
ZUBIN POTOK



## Zubin Potok

The E-Zubin Potok web platform has been officially functional since November 28, 2018. This platform has been visited by 5675 users who have had 8162 sessions since its establishment up to the end of 2020. In the period November 2018 - October 2019 the platform E-Zubin Potok had 1309 users and 1890 sessions, while in the period November 2019 - October 2020 the platform had 3985 users and 5666 sessions.



Using E-Zubin Potok, the citizens sent 12 questions to the mayor using Ask the Mayor mechanism, out of which 4 were answered, while 8 were not because the questions did not fall under the competence of the mayor. Zubin Potok municipality has answered a total of 5 request sent by citizens through the System 48h.

The Municipality of Zubin Potok used E-Zubin Potok for public consultations with citizens on two occasions. E-Zubin Potok was used for consultations regarding the construction of [local roads in the villages Crepulja and Prevlja](#), and for purpose of the development of the [Citizen Participation Plan](#).

# Covid-19 Info Page

At the beginning of April 2020, NSI created the COVID-19 info page as a part of E-municipalities platforms. The purpose of this page is to gather in one place important and reliable information about COVID-19, statistics, important telephone numbers at the state and municipal level, as well as to provide citizens with useful links during the coronavirus pandemic.

Page links: [E-Zvečan Covid-19 info page](#); [E-Severna Mitrovica Covid-19 info page](#); [E-Leposavić Covid-19 info page](#); [E-Zubin Potok Covid-19 info page](#).

Out of 77 answers received in the online questionnaire conducted by NSI in November 2020, 62.3% of respondents answered that E-municipalities helped them to obtain information during the pandemic.

## Questionnaire results

In November 2020, NSI conducted an online questionnaire to collect citizens' attitudes on the use of E-municipal webplatforms and to obtain citizens' recommendations for their improvement. The questionnaire included citizens of all four municipalities in northern Kosovo.

Herewith, we present the most important results of the questionnaire:

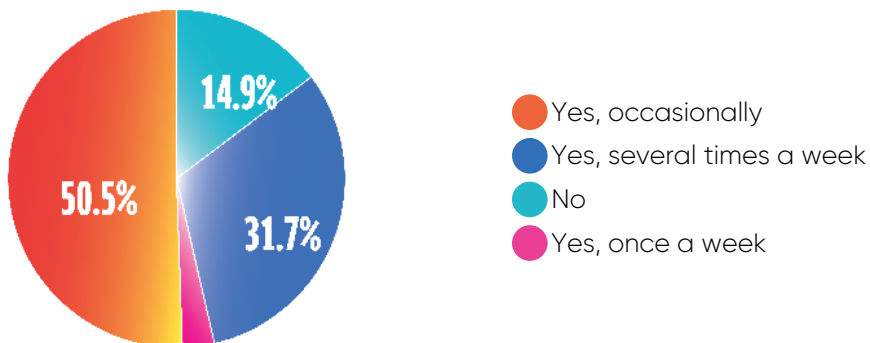
### 1. Review of the questionnaire:

Basic data:

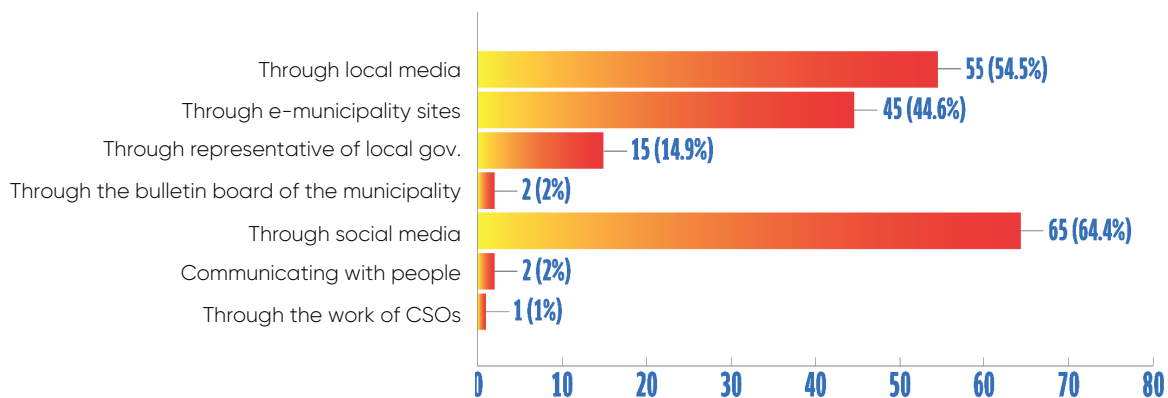
- A total of 101 answers
- Gender: 55.4% male; 44.6% female
- Age: 46.5% between 26-35; 26.7% between 36-55; 24.8% between 18-25;
- The municipality they come from: 46.5% North Mitrovica; 21.8% Leposavić; 16.8% Zvečan; 7.9% Zubin Potok;

## Key findings:

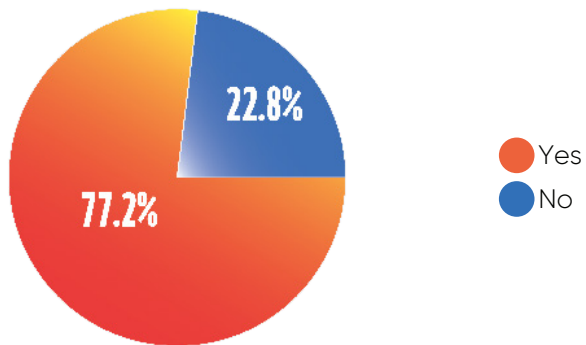
1) How often are you informed on the work of the municipalities in the north of Kosovo?



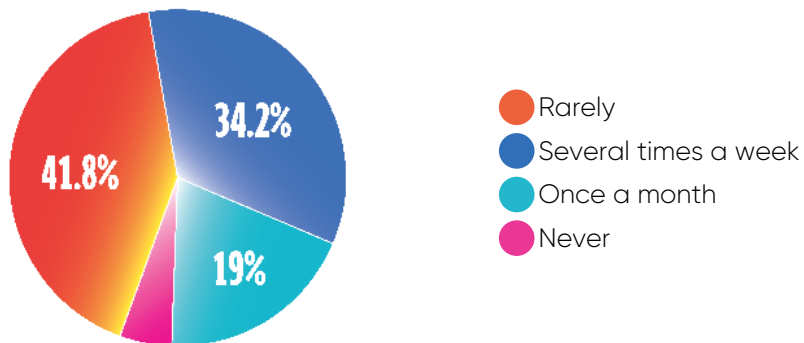
2) How do you get informed about the work of your municipality?



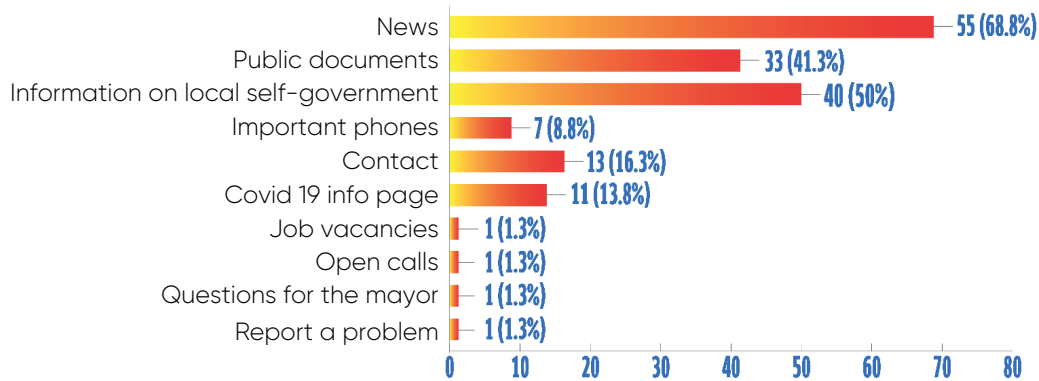
3) Do you know that there are websites (electronic platforms) of four municipalities in the north of Kosovo - E-municipalities?



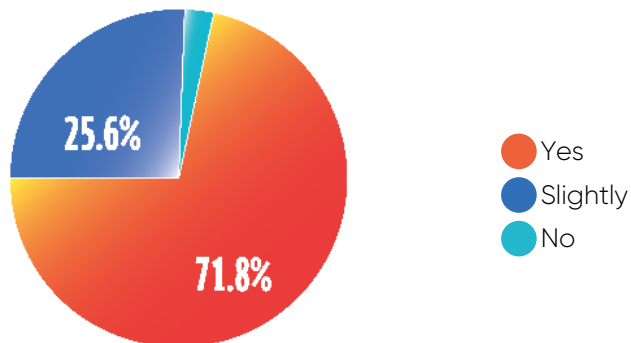
4) How often do you visit E-municipalities web platforms?



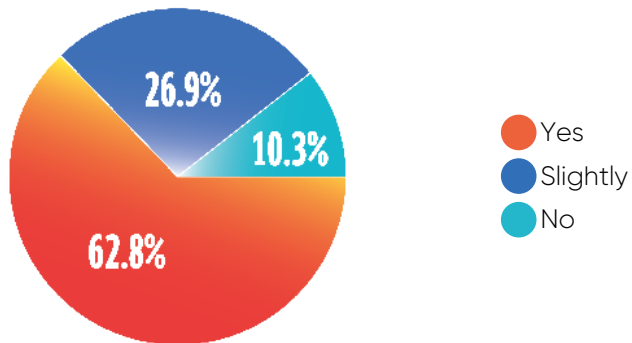
5) What do you search for the most on E-municipalities web platforms?



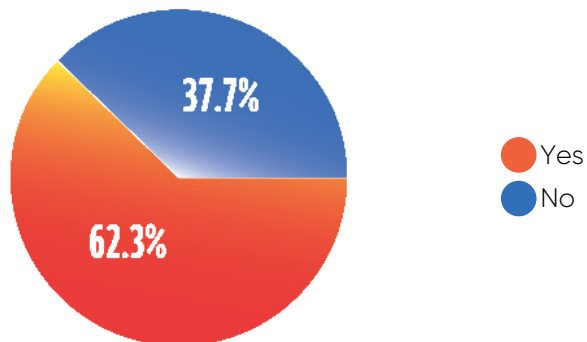
6) Do you think that the information provided on E-municipalities is useful for understanding the priorities, policies, and functioning of the municipalities?



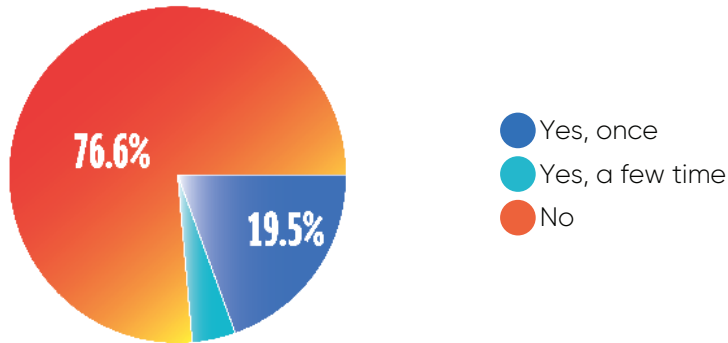
7) Do you think that E-municipalities web platforms help the municipalities to be more transparent and accountable to citizens?



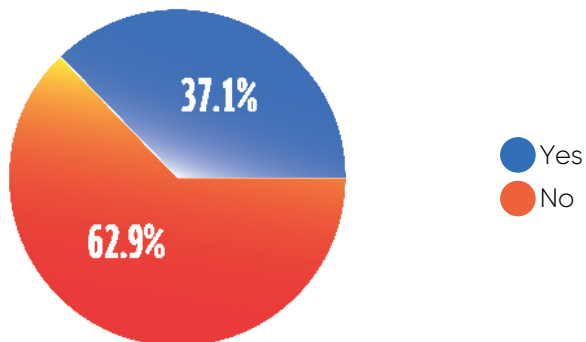
8) Did the E-municipalities help you get information during the pandemic?



9) Have you ever sent a request to the municipality using the System 48h mechanism?



10) If so, did you receive a response within the 48-hour deadline?



## **2. User suggestions on potential E-municipalities improvements and features:**

*"Questions to municipalities can be seen by others, to increase the responsibility of municipalities. There may also be a forum in which some topics are discussed, to keep the municipality officials informed."*

*"I would like to see more information about the work of the departments within municipalities and to have as many electronic services as possible."*

*"More documents of public importance."*

*"Information on infrastructure projects, and an option for citizens to provide suggestions and ideas for the municipality, without going there physically."*

*"Feature where citizens can make proposals and submit ideas to the municipality."*

*"Information on the projects planned for the next year with the information on the deadlines for completion of work and the funds provided."*

*"Information on tenders and results."*

*"Option to file a request for public documents online."*

*"Access to municipal assembly decisions."*

*"Job vacancies."*

*"Interviews with municipal officials."*

## **About NSI**

New Social Initiative - NSI is a civil society organization from Kosovo, but also cooperating with the key stakeholders in the Western Balkan region and beyond, to ultimately impact inclusiveness, trust-building, democratization processes and good governance in Kosovo. While doing so, NSI follows its vision of an inclusive society built on trust and appreciation among its communities, in which citizens from all ethnic groups actively participate in the society and its governance. NSI strives to create an impact and bring change by empowering our constituency, a non-majority community throughout Kosovo, for participation in Kosovo social and institutional life and by increasing trust among communities. NSI believes that the improvement of Kosovo Serbs community position and relation to the majority community is one of the key contributors to inclusiveness and democratization of Kosovo society.

## **VISION**

New Social Initiative's vision is an inclusive society built on trust and appreciation among communities in Kosovo and active participation of citizens from different ethnic groups/ non-majority communities.

## **MISSION**

NSI is a civil society organization that empowers non-majority communities for participation in Kosovo social and institutional life and increases trust among communities by supporting dealing with the past and normalization of relations between Kosovo and Serbia.

# Acknowledgement

E-opštine was made possible through the support of:

**PAX** is a Dutch peace organization and works with committed citizens and partners to protect civilians against acts of war, to end armed violence, and to build just peace. PAX operates independently of political interests. Since 2017, PAX has partnered with UN-Habitat and Community Building Mitrovica (CBM) under the Inclusive Development Programme, supported by SIDA. PAX has supported NSI through the project "Increasing citizen participation and accountability in local governments in northern Kosovo".

**OSCE Mission in Kosovo** supports central and local stakeholders to improve their oversight role over executives and provides advice on how to increase transparency, communication, and public participation, in line with good governance principles. OSCE has supported NSI through the project "Advancing the role of CSOs, young women and men future leaders in decision making and public life (phase II), Activity 1.1. – Supporting Innovation in Public Participation".

**The Office of the Language Commissioner (OLC)** is mandated to oversee the implementation of the law on languages, works with institutions to improve the implementation of the law, and promote and protect the right on the use of the language of all communities in Kosovo. OLC has supported NSI through the project "My municipality speaks my language" in 2019.

**European Endowment for Democracy (EED)** is an independent, grant-making organization that supports people striving for democracy in the European Neighborhood – the Eastern Partnership, Middle East and North Africa, the Western Balkans, and beyond.

**Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF)** advances social change that contributes to a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world.



 @newsocialinitiative

 @NSIMitrovica

 @nsimitrovica

 Čika Jovina V/117, North Mitrovica

 [www.newsocialinitiative.org](http://www.newsocialinitiative.org)

 [office@newsocialinitiative.org](mailto:office@newsocialinitiative.org)

