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From October 2006, when the FLGR National contest 'Innovative Municipality' took place, until July 2007 162 innovative practices were submitted to the electronic database, managed by the Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR). The practices were implemented by a variety of organizations and institutions on a local level: municipalities and their civil or business partners, chitalishte (community centres), as well as regional and professional associations of municipal experts. 85 of the submitted documents are in Bulgarian, while 77 are in English (some of them in shortened versions).

Some of the practices were presented by the organizations and institutions, which initiated them, others - by FLGR's partners or journalists. To all who spared their time for enriching the 'Innovative Practices' database we are greatly thankful. We also firmly believe that their experience will encourage and motivate followers from all over the country.

The **2007 'Innovative Practices' Annual Issue** presents only 12 of the submitted practices. On selecting them, we have tried to showcase how projects in similar spheres of life can be implemented either by NGOs, relying on very limited budgets or by coalitions of organizations, enjoying substantial financial support by EU programs.

Thus we desire to underline that **either work** has been beneficial to the Bulgarian society development. What is more, we believe that the synergy of their efforts will better contribute to our communities' development. Alas, we regret to say that most of the organizations and institutions are still striving to coordinate their activities and to avoid 'piece-work' impact.

The **second important issue** that we highlight in this edition is the role of the 'good-news carrier', which the innovative practices database takes. On the background of distrust and pessimism, which have been haunting our society, the innovative practices showcase in a transparent way the steps, which some institutions and organizations take to improve their communities' quality of life. These initiatives often require a change of thought as well as courage to implement the new ideas. Not infrequently the experts, who dare try the practices, have to assume additional responsibilities. As a rule their only reward is the attention they get from colleagues from other municipalities or even from other countries.

The **third conclusion**, suggested by the innovative practices content, relates to the needed financial means - it comes out that when an idea have been identified as a priority by the community and the local government or the civil organisations, then funds can always be raised.

Enjoy reading!

FLGR team



SETTING UP THREE AGENCIES FOR ENERGY MANAGEMENT IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

Background

During the past decade the energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy became main priorities in the national and the European energy management policy and proved to be essential tools in the actions against climate changes.

The process of achieving the EU membership criteria and the implementation of Acquis Communautaire place new responsibilities and engagements for the Bulgarian local authorities. Local governments should set policies for sustainable economic development on local and regional levels as well as for preparation and implementation of energy efficiency programs.

Initiated by the Union of Black Sea Local Authorities (UBBSLA), three agencies for energy management are set up in the Black Sea region with seats in Varna, Burgas and Dobrich. The agencies are established under the framework of the UBBSLA project, funded by Save II Program of the European Union, General Directorate Energy and Transport.

As a member state Bulgaria should comply with the European legislation on energy efficiency (Green Paper on Bio-Preparedness, adopted by the European Commission, Energy Efficiency Action Plan, Directive 2002/91/EO for energy efficiency of buildings and etc.). These documents set a number of assignments related with the cost-effective usage of energy and natural resources, application of measures for energy efficiency and promotion of energy saving approaches.

Currently, vigorous actions for encouraging the pure energy actions have been implemented in the EU as in Bulgaria on local and national levels. Some years ago, the local governments didn't have any significant powers in the area of energy management, while today they have to adopt effective energy management policies.

Following the main principle of the sustainable development 'Think Global, Act Local' and replying to the Black Sea Municipalities' needs, the UBBSLA initiated projects for establishing three agencies for energy management in the Black Sea region.

Practice

Actions steps in project implementation:

1. A project proposal for the establishment of a Black Sea Regional Agency - Varna was developed. The project cost amounts to 300 000 EUR and was funded by the Save II Program of the European Union, General Directorate Energy and Transport (40 %) and by the UBBSLA (60%). It was implemented from January 2003 until July 2006.

2. A project proposal for the establishment of a Regional Agency for Energy Management - Bourgas and Agency for Energy Management - Dobrich was also developed. The project cost amounts to 400 000 EUR and was funded by the Intelligent Energy Europe Programme, DG Energy and Transport (50 %) and by the UBBSLA (50%). It is implemented from 2005 until July 2008.

The main goal of both projects is to contribute to the sustainable devel-

opment and the effective energy management in the Black Sea municipalities.

Results

1. In 2003 the Black Sea Regional Agency for Energy Management - Varna was established. The Agency functions cover the member municipalities' area with the main administrative center the city of Varna.

2. In 2005 the Regional Agency for Energy Management - Bourgas was established. The Agency functions in the area of Burgas Region with the main administrative center Burgas.

3. In 2005 the Regional Agency for Energy Management - Dobrich was established. The Agency functions in the area of Dobrich Region with the main administrative center Dobrich.

4. A Regional Consortium of the Energy Management Agencies in the Black Sea region was set up to implement regional initiatives.

The agencies are registered in accordance with the Law for the Non-Profit Corporate Bodies and carry out their activities in order to achieve the following goals:

- Representation and protection of its members' interests for the endorsement of the energy efficiency measures as substantial policy components for the sustainable development of the Black Sea region in Bulgaria.

- Unification of the Black Sea municipalities' efforts to improve the energy efficiency as a main tool for the solution of important energy and environmental priorities on a national level.

- Protection and recovery of the Black Sea region environment.

- Creation of conditions for decreasing the municipal budget expenses on energy bills.

- Assistance to decrease the energy bills for customers.

- Improving the city councilors' energy management capacity and skills.

- Increasing the public awareness on the importance of the effective energy management as well as the public involvement in these measures.

- Examining and dissemination of Bulgarian and foreign experience on effective energy management.

Results from the Agencies' functioning:

- The Black Sea Regional Agency for energy management has implemented 7 projects amounting to 500 000 EUR.

- The Regional Agency in Burgas has carried out 4 projects, amounting to 300 000 EUR.

- The Regional Agency in Dobrich has carried out 3 projects, amounting to 300 000 EUR.

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ENERBUILD: PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP FOR INTEGRATED IMPROVEMENT OF THE ENERGY CHARACTERISTICS OF MUNICIPAL BUILDINGS - UNION OF BULGARIAN BLACK SEA LOCAL AUTHORITIES (UBBSLA)

Background

The project ENERBUILD: Public-private partnership for integrated improvement of the energy characteristics of municipal buildings is a pilot initiative for energy audit of public buildings. It also aims at setting up a model for improving the energy efficiency characteristics of the buildings in the municipalities of Beloslav, Byala and Aksakovo. The project is developed and implemented by the Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities as a cooperation initiative to set up a public-private partnership.

The newly adopted legislation in Bulgaria on the energy efficiency measures (Law on Energy Efficiency and the relevant orders and regulations: Decree № 18 from 12th November, 2004 on energy characteristics of the buildings, Decree № 21 from 12th November, 2004 on energy efficiency audits, Decree № 19 from 12th November, 2004 on certifying the buildings for energy efficiency) sets new responsibilities and duties for the municipalities in regard to the energy efficiency of public buildings. The Law stipulates that:

- Municipalities shall develop and implement local energy efficiency programs;
- Municipalities shall modernize the building stock, including residential housing as well as administrative and service facilities in order to improve their energy efficiency characteristics;
- Municipalities shall introduce energy saving installation systems for the street lamps and outside lighting on the public buildings in residential areas;
- Municipalities shall certify the municipal building stock, which is in running order and has a useful area of 1000 sq.m.
- The introduction of energy efficiency measures in the municipal buildings like hospitals, schools, administrative facilities and etc comes as a first priority because of the energy expenses for electricity and heating. In order to successfully accomplish efficiency standards, the local governments should provide investments and necessary funding. This financial requirement puts a high financial pressure on the municipal budgets especially for small-size municipalities like Beloslav, Byala and Aksakovo.

■ Thus the Union of Bulgarian Black Sea Local Authorities in partnership with the local authorities mentioned above launched the ENERBUILD project: Public-private partnership for integrated improvement of the energy characteristics of municipal buildings. The project proposal aims at establishing a local procedure on how to improve the energy efficiency characteristics of the buildings, which will yield annual bill savings to be proportionally distributed among the stakeholders (public and private sector organizations). Such an approach will secure successful implementation of energy efficiency improvement projects with minimum financial burden on the public money.

The project suggests an innovative model for elaboration of energy efficiency measures in the municipal buildings, based on the public-private partnership approach like the ESCO contracts with guaranteed results. The ENERBUILD project complies with the Law on Energy Efficiency and all the municipal responsibilities, stemming from it.

Practice

Project Stages:

1. Launching of the project idea by the Association of Bulgarian Black Sea Municipalities in partnership with the local experts.

2. Drafting of the project proposal and submitting it under the PHARE 2004/016-711.11.04 Public Private Grant Scheme, the leading applicant being the Municipality of Beloslav.

3. Launching of the project activities in November 2006; the project continues 12 months and its total cost is 26 004 EUR, 75% of which is funded by the program.

4. The project comprises five activity groups as follows:

■ **Module 1 'ESCO scheme for energy audit and solid wall insulation of public buildings'**

Expected results: Guidebook on implementing energy efficiency measures in the municipalities; Technical assignment for a preliminary energy efficiency evaluation; Scheme for implementing PPP for providing services with energy saving results;

■ **Module 2 'Setting up an electronic database to assist the energy efficiency evaluation'**

Expected results: Questionnaire to assist the energy efficiency evaluation of building characteristics; Data reports on 10 evaluated municipal buildings in the target municipalities;

■ **Module 3 'Developing a technical assignment for detailed evaluation'**

Expected results: Technical assignment for energy efficiency evaluation; 3 evaluated municipal buildings; Sample of a tender procurement procedure documents to award an ESCO contract;

■ **Module 4 'Marketing strategy on promoting services on energy efficiency'**

Expected results: A Marketing strategy; Local cluster of consultation companies to provide services on energy efficiency, Workshop meetings;

■ **Module 5 'Promotion of the model ENERBUILD'**

Expected results: Press conferences; Web page; Publications; Conference on energy efficiency measures;

Results

The promotion and implementation of the ESCO schemes in energy efficiency projects on municipal buildings will result in better business and ecological environment in the pilot municipalities: Beloslav, Byala and Aksakovo. In addition the project results will be used as an innovative practice in several aspects:

■ UBBSLA initiates partnership and cooperation among the Black Sea local authorities in order to jointly implement projects on common issues;

■ The model of a successfully implemented ESCO scheme will be promoted in the rest of the member municipalities;

■ The public-private partnership model, set by the project, will be multiplied in other public services provided by the local authorities.

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**The practice is the winner in the
FLGR's thematic competition
'2007 for Best Practice of
regional/professional association
of municipalities**



HOW THE MUNICIPALITY OF MONTANA MANAGED TO FULFILL THE MUNICIPAL ENERGY EFFICIENCY PROGRAM '2006

The Program Status and the Organization of the Program Implementation

The Municipality of Montana has developed a profound detailed Program on Energy Efficiency 2005-2007, which has been regularly updated. The Program is strictly followed in accordance with the planned measures and implementation period. In addition a specialized unit, comprising three municipal experts, was set up to professionally develop the program. The professionals analyzed the municipal expenses on energy in the last three years and based on the conclusions suggested project ideas to be included in the Municipal Program on Energy Efficiency and a Program on Renewable Energy Resources for 2005 - 2007

The Unit had also the responsibility to regularly update the data on the energy consumption of the municipal buildings during the planned period, to draft projects on energy efficiency measures and the usage of renewable energy resources for the Municipality of Montana and to prepare reports on the implemented approaches, evaluating the achievements and the energy savings.

The experts from the Unit have been working in partnership with the rest of the administrative departments. This enforces continuous trainings of the municipal staff on different topics related to the 2005 - 2007 Program implementations.

In the city of Montana, most of the municipal buildings are connected with the central gas distribution system which explains why most of the expenses come from heating energy. To identify the problems and their solutions, the Unit experts collected financial data on the payments for the last three years. They used the official Protocols, regularly prepared by the Montana Gas Company and examined and signed by the local government. In addition, the experts obtained official information on the electricity consumption in the municipal buildings. After the collected figures were processed, the main Program target group was identified - the schools in Montana.

During the time when the Program on Energy Efficiency was being developed, the municipal budget amounted to 14 498 827 levs, and no projects on energy saving measures were being implemented. Thus as a strategic first step in this area, the repair and renovation of the street electrical systems were planned and as well as the usage of energy saving lighting devices. The two Programs - for energy efficiency and for renewable energy resources were profoundly discussed by the city councilors in all the Standing Committees in the City Council. After that they were officially adopted. Yearly Action Plans were also developed as attributes to the 2005-2007 Program. They are supplied with bills of quantities related to current projects for each year.

The City Council voted for budget allocations of 190 000 levs from 2006 budget to secure the Action Plan implementation. These resources present 1,06 % from the total cost of the Program 17 795 000 and 7,5 % from all the capital expenditures of 2 544 685 levs for the year 2006. In addition to this, the budget allocated financial means for energy evaluation of three school buildings in Montana, which are included in the Action Plan '2006. Energy saving measures, as required by the above mentioned energy audit reports, for two of the schools were funded through the relevant program of the Ministry of Education and Science. The planned measures, suggested by the energy audit for the third school were funded through an ESCO company, established in accordance with a City Council Act and following the Law on Public Procurement. The financial help from the Agency for Energy Efficiency and the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works (MRDPW) secured the energy evaluation of two other buildings with an useful area of 1000 sq.m. Later, again thanks to a project funded by the MRDPW, the Municipality of Montana prepared the technical documentation related with the energy audit reports and ensuring the introduction of energy saving lighting systems in the city of Montana and 23 villages.

The Municipal Department for Sustainable Development and European Integration has the responsibility for drafting project proposals to be submitted under national and international donor programs. The department also includes the Chairperson of the Municipal Energy Efficiency Program Unit. The latter is in charge of the implementation of the required measures for energy savings.

In general, the annual data on energy consumption for each building is of essential importance for the update of the program and the elaboration of relevant project proposals. Thus the database covers several-year-period starting 2002 and reports the electricity and gas consumption of the buildings. As the Municipality owns and manages a number of premises, including these that are managed by other municipal units, the collected information covers all the buildings that are public municipal property and those with useful area over 1000 sq. m. This approach allows for timely control of the energy consumption per building as well as planning efficiency measures. What is more, if a comparative analysis based on the yearly data is made, increase or decrease in the energy consumption can be duly spotted and the relevant problems can be immediately fixed.

Results

The introduction of such measures yielded 30% savings in the energy bills. The interesting fact is that the preliminary analysis results coincide with those reported in practice. The buildings offer improved temperature conditions and comfort in accordance with the school temperature standards. The substitution of the old devices with new energy saving ones lead to equalization of the expenses for 2005 and 2006, at the same time the 2006 budget paid for 400 new lighting systems installation and 400 energy efficiency lamps. As a result, the street lighting in the city and 23 villages was improved.

At the same time, the target buildings, whose energy evaluation was funded by the 2006 budget allocations, are defined based on the pro-

found analysis of the energy consumption in them and on the number of the final beneficiaries, who will enjoy the project results. Another important criterion for the building identification is the potential future of the buildings, in other words, what will happen to the buildings in the next five years, which is the paid-back investment period. In accordance with the Law, the energy evaluation of these buildings was supported by a City Council Act. Next, the companies, specialized in energy auditing were selected after their expertise and capacity had been carefully examined for Ministry authorization through the Agency on Energy Efficiency. Up to now, the Municipality of Montana has set the energy analysis to three companies, which have performed very professionally and reliably.

2006 was extremely successful for the city government in relation to the number of the projects implemented. The latter encouraged and induced a very positive attitude towards energy efficiency measures. These projects also mobilized the local support and efforts, which resulted in broad public support for the 2006 planned projects. The Montana Strategy combined not only the introduction of energy saving measures but the implementation of energy evaluations, the preparation of technical documentation for 2007 projects and after that. The existence of the sets of required documents will allow Montana to submit other project proposals under the relevant EU funds. The most important 2006 projects are:

- Preparation of energy evaluation and introduction of energy saving measures in a school building in Montana. The project is included in the Annual Program for Energy Efficiency '2006 and is supported by the City Council Act. It amounts up to 470 000 levs and is funded by an ESCO company with a pay-off period of 7 years.

- Substitution of street lighting system devices with energy saving ones and completion of the installation of such on the Montana territory - 800 devices are installed amounting up to 80 000 levs. The project is included in the Annual Program for Energy Efficiency '2006 and is supported by the City Council Act.

- Establishing of a radio command system for the street lighting, covering the whole city territory amounting up to 30 000 levs. This innovative project allows the achievement of extremely effective control on the city consumption during the different seasons. The project is funded by the municipal budget.

- Construction of a connection to the central gas system and reconstruction of the heating installation of the buildings comprising the Sports Complex 'Ogosta' amounting up to 80 000 levs funded by the municipal budget.

- Preparation for an energy evaluation of a school building in Montana and introduction of energy saving measures in a public school II in Montana, amounting up to 145 000 levs, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipal budget. The project is included in the Annual Program for Energy Efficiency '2006.

- Preparation for an energy evaluation of a school building in Montana and introduction of energy saving measures in a public school IX in Montana, amounting up to 134 000 levs, funded by the Ministry of Education and Science and the municipal budget. The project is included in the Annual Program for Energy Efficiency '2006.

- Introduction of energy saving measures in the Youth House building, amounting up to 68 000 levs, funded by the UNDP program 'Beautiful Bulgaria' and the municipal budget. The project is supported by the

City Council Act.

- Energy evaluation of a school building in Montana with over 1000 sq. m. useful area - Municipal Medical Center Ltd., amounting up to 10 000 levs funded by the Agency for Energy Efficiency.

- Energy evaluation of a school building in Montana with over 1000 sq. m useful area - Dentist Center funded by the MRDPW.

- Elaboration of technical documentation on energy efficient street lighting systems for the city of Montana and the villages amounting up to 20 000 levs, funded by the MRDPW. The project is of high importance for the municipality, not only it introduces efficiency measures, but also because it sets a model for managing the property of the street electricity poles: a matter of continuous discussion between the city leadership and the Electricity Distribution Ltd. - Pleven.

- Hard wall insulation of the School Gym in a public secondary school, funded by the UNDP program 'Beautiful Bulgaria' and the municipal budget. The project is supported by the City Council Act.

- Elaboration of a project proposal on 'Installation of a heating system and building a connection with the central gas distributing system' for two municipal public buildings, housing two social departments, funded by the MRDPW.

- Elaboration of a project proposal on 'Installation of an inside ventilation system in the Center for disabled people in Gorna Vetrenitsa, funded by the MRDPW.

To sum up, it should be highlighted that in addition to all the planned projects, included in the Annual Program on Energy Efficiency '2006, the Municipality of Montana has successfully implemented 9 important initiatives in this area but not included in the Program. The total cost of the projects, included in the Annual Program on Energy Efficiency '2006, amount to 859 000 levs, 580 000 levs of which is paid through the municipal budget. The projects which are not included in the Annual Program have been either funded by outside financial resources or by the budget surplus at the end of the financial year. They amount to 236 000 levs.

The total costs of all the energy efficiency projects amount to 1 095 000 levs. Each of them has been supported by a proactive information campaign, launched by the Municipality, including: press conferences, presentations, consultations and discussions with the stakeholders. The main goal of the information coverage is to increase the public awareness on the importance of the effective energy management in order to successfully comply with the EU directives, legislation and national priorities.

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HIGH TECHNOLOGIES - EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN VILLAGES - THE VILLAGE OF LILYACHE, MUNICIPALITY OF VRATSA

Background

The project aimed at providing better social opportunities and access to information to the local youngsters and new types of services for the community.

The challenge was related to the fact, that the inhabitants did not have equal access to information and administrative services.

Practice

The project renovated two rooms in the local community center building, called Chitalishte, and turned them into a Computer Lab and Customer Service Hall. The latter constitute the newly established Center for Social Activities and Services.

The Computer Lab is well equipped with computers, Internet access, a printer, a scanner and a copy machine so as to serve the needs of the local kids, youngsters, socially disadvantaged people and pensioners.

The Customer Service Hall is also equipped with a computer and a copy machine, donated by the Chitalishte organization. Administrative and information services are provided here for citizens. To achieve this, the project set up a computer database, processing information on business needs, governmental and local regulations as well as licensing requirements. What's more, here customers can have their documents and application forms filled in or can order typing of papers, which are additional services, provided by the service unit. A Customers' Service Guidelines was also assembled to better inform and advertise.

We attracted lots of volunteers including municipal staff, members from Chitaliste and the school community, to assist the implementation of the project activities. These participants took active part in the reconstruction of the premises, the assembly of the equipment and in the computer database filing.

Contacts

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Results

The project provided training courses on Computer Literacy and basic Internet skills for 64 teenagers and 20 adults. As this approach proved to be very successful, we are planning to further sustain this activity.

While working on the project, we also managed to set up new partnerships with the local institutions - the Municipality of Vratsa, the Regional Directorate for Social Support, Mayoralty of Lilyache and 'St. St. Kiril and Metodii' school. We firmly believe the new partnerships will turn into long-term cooperation.

STUDY-TRIPS IN FOREIGN COUNTRIES FOR REPRESENTATIVES OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES



Background

At the beginning of the 21st century the then-forthcoming EU membership set completely new challenges for the Bulgarian municipalities. The accessibility of the pre-accession funding instruments opened the door to new development opportunities and new tasks for the local authorities.

At the same time, the local governments from the member states had already resolved these issues and acquired valuable long-term experience in EU integration. They also mastered a number of positive practices in the areas concerned. On the other hand, their businesses were exploring investment possibilities elsewhere, including Bulgaria.

Thus the ADRM leadership came to think that Bulgarian local governments could learn a lot from the successful practices, implemented by local authorities in the member countries. Furthermore local administrations were constantly looking for opportunities to establish contacts with their counter-parts in the EU countries. Since one of the main goals of the Association, as stated in the Statute, is to expand the cross-border interaction and cooperation between its member municipalities and other governments and organizations, ADRM started the organization of study-trips for the local authorities.

For three years, the organization and the leadership team of ADRM have been actively working to assist the experience sharing and the establishment of cooperation between the municipalities from our country and from the member states. That's how exchange visits for a number of local government representatives were implemented, including: municipal experts, councilors and elected officials, as well as representatives from local cultural institutions, organizations and amateur folklore groups. As a result a number of professional contacts were established between our members and local authorities in France, Hungary and Greece.

The Association of Danube River Municipalities 'Danube' (ADRM) set up a tradition for conducting study-trips in foreign countries for representatives of local authorities - ADRM members. From 2004 to 2007 the Association organized four such trips in Hungary, UK and Italy. The participants enjoyed the possibilities of experience sharing and establishing contacts with local authorities from the visited countries. These interactions aimed at cooperation, twinning and investment attraction between the municipalities.

Practice

ADRM started its experience as a study-trip organizer in the autumn of 2004, when the Association performed an exchange visit to Hungary for some of the municipalities. The initiative was funded by the **HAPI** program under the topic of 'Local Economic Development'. During the trip the participants, being Mayors and Chairpersons of City Councils, interacted with other Hungarian elected officials. They also enjoyed some lectures and presentations on the Hungarian experience in the development of local economy, investment attraction and intergovernmental relations.

In 2005-2006 the Association organized two more study-trips to Italy and UK. The goal of these trips was to ensure meetings with representatives from local authorities, the Embassies and the Bulgarian Trade Missions in the relevant countries. The Bulgarian participants were introduced

to a number of positive administrative practices and set up many beneficial relations. When in London, the local officials visited the World Travel Market, the second of its size, and met with potential investors and tour companies from all over the world.

At the beginning of 2007 ADRM implemented the fourth study-visit, this time to Italy, which proved to be the most enjoyed and appreciated. It came as a result from the several-year partnership with the Municipality of Vigonza, Padua. The main focus of the trip was to build on the already established contacts and to expand them by involving other Bulgarian and Italian cities. On 17th April the cities of Bovolenta, Italy and Nikopol, Bulgaria presented by their Mayors, respectively Mr. Antonio Sorgato and Mr. Luiben Lakov, officially signed a partnership agreement.

The Bulgarian delegation included a variety of professionals, but mainly representatives from local authorities, organizations and institutions from Belene, Svishtov, Nikopol, Pleven, Vetovo, Tsenovo and Rousse. A meeting with the District Manager of Padua was also held. On the next step some presentations on the Bulgarian-Italian business possibilities were performed, initiated by the Bulgarian Economic Counselor in Padua Mr. Garbis Agopian.

Results

The Association of Danube River Municipalities established a tradition for organizing study-trips abroad for its members.

Totally **114** representatives of the city administrations, Councils, NGOs and local businesses from the Danube region took part in the trips. They acquired valuable experience and knowledge on the local positive practices in Hungarian, Italian and British cities.

The Danube municipalities and the local businesses established a number of partnerships, which will enrich the experience of our members in developing and applying with project proposals under the EU funding instruments. The cities will also benefit in attracting foreign investments and in fostering the economic development.

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GUIDEBOOK FOR MUNICIPAL SECRETARIES



Background

The described initiative was called by the necessity to classify all the documents, practices and papers produced by the daily routine functions of each municipal secretary. Thus the content of the Guidebook fully reflects not only the secretary's responsibilities as set by the Law on Local Self Government and Local Administration, but also the assignments set by the different authorities and administrations. The Guidebook has proved to be 'a Bible' for any secretary especially for newly appointed, secretaries of small-scale municipalities or those who admit lack of administrative and managerial experience.

Practice

Implementation stages:

- Identification of needs - the target group needs were identified with the help of the NASM staff and management personnel and the regional coordinators;
- Setting up of a six-member team comprising secretaries from the following municipalities: Valeri Radev - Provadia, Gulten Eminova - Razgrad, Dimitar Hrisimov - Gotse Delchev, Zoia Tsviatkova - Stara Zagora, Ivan Varbonov - Valchedrum, Margarita Kovacheva - Gorna Oriahovitsa and Vasil Pancharov - Executive Director;
- Evaluation of the needs, drafting the content of the Guidebook, typing and editing of the publication materials;
- Design layout and publishing - This stage was accomplished in 2005;
- Update of the content and issuing the second publication in 2006;
- Processing of the materials and producing a CD in 2006;

The Guidebook for Municipal Secretaries, which used to be our long-term dream, became reality during the current mandate 2003 - 2007. This happened due to the financial support of the USAID through FLGR and thanks to the team's professional commitment. We also need to acknowledge the contribution of other secretaries and colleagues, who got involved in the publication.

The book complies with the legislation covers the period up to March 2005 and was periodically updated by the team. The Guidebook can be regularly updated and expanded

The Guidebook aims at assisting the municipal secretaries in their every day work. It attempts to classify and publish comments on the most common legislative regulations and activities, concerning professional daily routines. In order to be really helpful, the publication also offers some effective procedures and positive practices, successfully implemented in different municipalities. For newly appointed colleagues, the Guidebook presents samples of application forms and operational documents, necessary for the elaboration of procedural functions and practices. Furthermore, this book has as supplements examples of ordinances, regulations and instructions, related to the secretary job assignments. Such documents not only bring quality to the secretary's work but they are of paramount importance for the functioning of the whole city administration.

Results

- First publication in 2005 - 160 copies, 300 pages;
- Second publication in 2006 supplied with additional chapters;
- 180 copies of CD with an envelope and a sticker;

These activities were implemented under the USAID/FLGR program for 2005 - 2006.

As the final beneficiaries expressed increasing interest and desire to have the book, we are planning to annually update the set of documents in the Book and publish new editions. What is more, the warm acceptance and appreciation of the Guidebook on behalf of the audience proves the long-term project sustainability.

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DAY CENTER FOR REHABILITATION AND REINTEGRATION OF ADDICTS - SOFIA

Background

The Day Center 'Solidarity' has been functioning in Sofia since 2003. Its mission is to inform and consult young addicts and their families, as well as to motivate them to participate in the rehabilitation and treatment programs. Our main goal is to ensure our customers' independent life and social reintegration.

The 'Solidarity' program builds on the community treatment therapy model, which is tailored to the conditions in the Center. It functions successfully due to the support of the community therapy from Trempolin, Belgium. The program participants meet every day at 9 a.m. and go back home at 5 p.m. Thus the Center activities present the model of a 'flexible non-residential program'.

Practice

The Day Center services comprise two main categories: non-rehabilitation and rehabilitation. The first type includes personal consultation and motivation discourses in the Information Center 'Ambassadors of Hope', which was opened in June, 2006. Youngsters and people of age together with their families find support and consultation there. The program is socially oriented as to provide equal access to anybody in need.

The rehabilitation program takes two directions: training in art workshops (cooking, cleaning, creativity training, sports and social skills) and therapy work in groups. The two sections of the program are interrelated. The workshop trainings follow a model of real-life community activities and thus prepare the participants for real life. At the same time the workshop interactions facilitate the therapy work in groups. That's how social reintegration is achieved.

The program involves boys and girls of age, independently of their education. Their parents and relatives also become part of the rehabilitation and are additionally trained by a specialized service unit. Moreover, there is another group, which involves working people, already covered by other rehabilitation programs but in need of support and assistance.

Results

As a long-term initiative, the Day Center program plans for a further development of the reintegration program as well as setting up of a specialized service for reintegration of youngsters. The project team is highly motivated to carry on the current activities. The 'Solidarity' Center is a partner in a Trempolin project under Leonardo Program for mobility actions, named 'European companionship in education, training by travel'.

In 2006 the Center helped 86 people in different programs. As a result those who have been involved for more than 6 months are reported to be stabilized and reintegrated. They sustain their jobs, stay away from drugs, and enjoy improved family and interpersonal relations. In addition they don't have any charges against them or any criminal acts.

In order to bring in community members in the project implementation, we encourage and involve volunteers, who participate in the communication campaign and other events. We take pride in the fact that our initiative 'Ambassadors of Hope' was acknowledged and supported by Belgium. That's how we managed to organize two fundraising exhibitions, the first of which was backed up by the Region Wallonne. We are deeply thankful to the artist Nikolay Rusev, who donated part of the raised money to our Center.

On implementing our activities focused on addicts, our major partners include: Prevention and Information Center on Drug Habits - Sofia, Foundation 'Initiative for Health', the hospitals in Suhodol and Radnevo.

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THE TRAVELLING 'CLINIC' FOR ENTREPRENEURS HIT THE ROAD

Background

The idea is to set up a mobile center to provide information and assistance to different companies in the border area. In this case, experts are visiting the main municipal cities to consult the local companies on the spot.

Practice

On Tuesday, 19th June 2007 representatives from the city of Konstantsa, Romania were introduced to the possibilities of doing business in Bulgaria.

At the meeting, organized by the Bulgarian-Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the participants received a specialized Guidebook with information on how to set up and manage a business in Bulgaria. A similar Guidebook with information about Romanian market will be presented to the Bulgarian companies in September. These two publications are issued under the framework of the above-mentioned project. The travelling cross-border clinic/helping center is an innovative approach to SMEs consultation on the spot. Its office in Rousse has already been functioning as a consultation unit, also part of the PHARE program. The experts, hired by the Chamber, provide business advice and information individually and free of charge on the following issues:

1. Economic development, economic indicators and prices in the real estate market in Bulgaria border regions along the Danube: Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Veliko Tarnovo, Pleven, Rousse, Silistra and Dobrich and in Romania: Mehadintsi, Olt, Dolge, Teleorman, Calarasi, Gurgue and Konstantsa;
2. Consultation on trading on Bulgarian or Romanian market, depending on the type of the production and the business sector;
3. Legal advice on company registration, tax bases, non-tariff barriers and etc.;
4. Company information, including contact information for Bulgarian and Romanian businesses already registered in the border region;
5. Contact information on local institutions and organizations as well as accounting and legal advice companies and etc;
6. Advice on participation in trade shows and exhibitions;

The 'clinic' functioning is targeted at supporting the border companies in both countries. The experts will be visiting the main municipal cities so that they can personally advise the owners of SMEs, located away from the regional centers.

The project 'Travelling Cross-Border Clinic for Entrepreneurs' is implemented under the PHARE Cross-Border Cooperation Program between Bulgaria and Romania. The travelling 'clinic' (helping center) presents an innovative and flexible model on how to assist small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) on the spot. This approach will be applied to SMEs in the border area between Bulgaria and Romania.

Results

The project coordinators expect that the benefits of the travelling 'clinic' functioning will be shared by over 1000 SMEs in the cross-border region. The total project amounts to 25 949 EUR, funded by the PHARE program and 3536 EUR partners' contribution, including the Bulgarian-Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and 7 other business organizations from Romania.

The next two stops of the travelling 'clinic' were in the cities of Slatina and Drobeta, Turnu Severin on 26th June. The list of the Bulgarian cities, which will be visited by the 'clinic', is to be defined in September.

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BULGARIAN AND ROMANIAN COMPANIES IN JOINT INTERNET NETWORK

Project 'BRAVO - Bulgarian-Romanian Actions for Viable Organisations'

Background

Open Society Club in Rousse has already collected 200 profile questionnaires from companies and organizations in the cross-border area Bulgaria - Romania, based on which the interactive Internet network will be set up. The latter is being developed under the BRAVO project - **B**ulgarian-**R**omanian **A**ctions for **V**iable **O**rganizations.

Practice

The project aims at assisting the process of local businesses and organizations' needs identification, at suggesting possible solutions to common challenges, at evaluating the cross-border resources, at expanding the means of funding and at setting up effective partnerships in the districts of Vidin, Vratsa, Montana, Veliko Tarnovo, Plevna, Rousse, Silistra and Dobrich and in Romania: Mehadintsi, Olt, Dolge, Teleorman, Calarasi, Gurgue and Konstantsa.

The next project stage will get together 100 experienced organizations from the whole cross-border area to participate in six Forum meetings. The latter will be held in the cities of Rousse, Vratsa, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria and Gurgue, Calarasi and Kraiova, Romania.

The BRAVO project is funded by the 2004 PHARE Cross-Border Cooperation Program between Bulgaria and Romania. Its duration is 12 months and the total project amounts to 25 433 EUR, 15% of which is project partners' own contribution. These partners include: the Open Society Club - Rousse and the Bulgarian-Romanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

The main activities include:

- Information campaign to encourage the participation of 100 organizations from the border region in the project.
- Conducting of 6 Forum meetings (3 in Bulgaria and 3 in Romania), gathering the selected organizations. The participants will be introduced to the Bulgaria-Romania strategic program documents and will work in groups to jointly brainstorm project ideas.
- Setting up of an interactive partners' Internet network. It will contain profiles of all the project participants and will secure reliable data search, based on preliminary set indicators.
- Elaboration of analytical report on the project ideas, discussed during the Forum meetings as well as description of the civil society identified problems and needs.
- Promotional activities.

The goal of the project is to set up a database on the border companies and secure reliable data search, based on preliminary set indicators.

Results

Setting up of an interactive partners' Internet network is one of the five activities, which are being implemented under the BRAVO project. The functioning of the network will be sustained by the Open Society Club - Rousse. Such an asset as the network will significantly contribute to establishing contacts and partnerships between the institutions in both countries even after the PHARE Program ends up.

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INTRODUCTION OF A COMPOSTING PROGRAM IN RURAL AREAS

Background

The project is a continuation of the pilot composting program implemented in 2002 - 2004 by Tundzha, Elhovo and Bolyarovo. The successful implementation of the pilot resulted in its further replication in Phase V of the FLGR/ICMA Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program, with the assistance of Bulgarian Association of Municipal Environmental Experts (BAMEE) specialists and the environmental experts of Tundzha and Bolyarovo. To provide for better use of the composting techniques and for the successful dissemination of project results, experts from MOEW and from NGOs were recruited.

Practice

Project replication covered 19 new municipalities. In 2005 - 2006, **Maritsa, Sliven, Chirpan, Panagyurishte, Karlovo, Radnevo, Pravets, Rakovski, Knezha and Straldzha** successfully implemented composting programs and established 16 composting sites. By the end of 2007, **Varshets, Hisarya, Veliki Preslav, Smyadovo, Novi Iskur (Sofia), Rodopi, Pazardzhik and Kaloyanovo** are also expected to introduce composting programs.

The technology is simple: open-air windrow composting. It meets completely the needs of the small communities and is consistent with project objectives. All municipalities have purchased containers which were located at the composting sites for the purpose of solid waste separation. The sites were cleaned and leveled. In many cases, the municipal environmental experts have planted fast-growing vegetation to designate the composting sites and, at a later stage, to serve as a natural fence. The results were better where there were guards and where an adequate information campaign was organized, preceding the implementation of the program. The need of shredding equipment was apparent in municipalities where orchards and gardens generate a significant quantity of waste. The optimal option is to provide small shredders at each site, or larger mobile equipment.

Six information seminars were organized for the environmental experts of the municipalities included in the program. Each municipality under the project has organized an information campaign. Some 12,500 leaflets were published and disseminated to that end. Many of the municipalities used the local media for the purposes of the information campaign. As a whole, the residents demonstrated understanding and cooperated in waste separation.

Compost is available at the sites for use by the residents. The sites have signage and some are even guarded.

The project is aimed at the implementation of composting programs in areas of developed agriculture. Each municipality decides how many composting sites to establish and where to locate them. A citizen information campaign is implemented as the sites are being prepared and equipped. Residents' participation in the separation of solid from organic waste is decisive for the success of the project. The purpose is to reduce the solid waste disposed at landfills and to eliminate the small illegal dumps in the villages.

Results

The municipalities that implemented the project have reduced the quantity of solid waste disposed at landfills. The greater portion of the organic component was separated from the overall waste flow. This helped not only meet the modern environmental and legislative requirements, but also provide a valuable material that may be used to improve soil quality.

The project proved that solutions that are not expensive or complex may be used to achieve good results in solid and agricultural waste management.

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SUCCESSFUL RECRUITMENT OF INVESTMENTS TO YAMBOL



Background

The Municipality of Yambol joined the FLGR/ICMA Local Economic Development and Marketing of Bulgarian Municipalities Project in early 2005. The Municipality defined the recruitment of investors as a major priority. An analysis of the needs of the municipality, conducted by trained local economic development specialists, indicated a need to improve the investment climate and attract new investors. The high unemployment rate at that time was another important problem faced by the municipality. The lack of large foreign investments over the past years was also a concern.

Practice

A marketing profile of the municipality was developed. The profile contains information of interest to prospective investors, which provides an orientation in the economic environment and the business development opportunities in Yambol. The municipality got its page on www.invest.bg, where it is publishing information in English and Bulgarian.

From the very first meeting with the Japanese investors, the Municipality has dealt in a professional manner with the prospect. Maximum efforts were invested in creating trust and generating interest, all advantages and opportunities available in Yambol were presented. The economic features of the region and all other aspects that could have a positive influence on the investor's final decision were presented as well.

FLGR and the American experts helped the Municipality prepare special incentives for the Japanese company: the permitting and registration process was accelerated; individual administrative services were provided by the local economic development specialist; assistance in workforce selection and training was rendered; the municipal leadership supported Yazaki by amending public transport routes and by representing the company before the different institutions. Following a year of negotiations and multiple meetings, provision of information and cooperation by municipal leadership, the investor decided to locate in Yambol.

Results

The Municipality of Yambol is transforming the proactive, professional approach to business recruitment and the support to local companies into a policy. The Municipality is also making targeted efforts to create a favorable investment climate.

FLGR and the American experts helped the Municipality prepare special incentives for the Japanese company, which was planning to invest EUR 25 million and to create some 2,700 jobs by 2009.

The Municipality of Yambol is transforming the proactive, professional approach to business recruitment and the support to local companies into a policy.

The technical assistance and the efforts under the project helped the municipality recruit a large foreign investor, Yazaki, (Japan), which was planning to invest EUR 25 million and to create some 2,700 jobs by 2009. By July 2007 500 people are already working at Yazaki - Bulgaria.

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IN PAZARDJIK, THIRTEEN ROMA FAMILIES ENJOY NEW FAMILY HOMES

Background

These 13 socially disadvantaged families resided in unhealthy and illegal housing in the Industrial Area in the city. The inhabited buildings were in bad conditions and extremely unhealthy and thus they presented a potential threat to the life of the people.

On 21st February, 2007, 13 Roma families received their Housing Orders and the keys to their new homes. Being socially disadvantaged, they fully enjoyed their first real houses with normal living conditions, provided by the Municipality of Pazardjik.

The Municipal leadership envisioned the change of living conditions in the Roma residential area 'Iztok' to be implemented from the periphery to the center in order to stop the illegal construction activities and to legalize some of the already existing buildings.

Practice

Ten new houses were built in Pazardjik and the financial cost of 310 000 leva was paid by the municipal budget. Currently 53 Roma people are living in them. They pay a rent of 0.30 leva per sq. m. to the Municipality as set by the Municipal Ordinance, adopted by a City Council Act. The newly built homes are one-family houses and offer two bedrooms, a small kitchen and sanitary premises. They are also supplied with sheds for wood and coal storage.

Results

The families, who reside in the houses, are socially disadvantaged. As they don't have the financial means to build their own houses, the Municipality took that responsibility and provided the premises to secure healthy living conditions to 13 families in need. This proves to be a successful approach to overcoming Roma housing problems. The Municipal leadership envisioned the change of living conditions in the Roma residential area 'Iztok' to be implemented from the periphery to the center of the residential area in order to stop the illegal construction activities and to legalize some of the already existing buildings.

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