

FLGR
turned **18**



ANNUAL REPORT 2012

Foundation for Local Government Reform



FLGR is an independent professional resource centre, supporting local democracy.

Mission of the Foundation for Local Government Reform is to support local democracy and promote effective, partnership-based local development, based on democratic values, social inclusion and prosperity.

FLGR Governing Body

Lachezar Rosenov, Mayor, Municipality of Dobrich (1995 - 2003), Chair of the Board

Deni Kamenov, Mayor, Municipality of Vidin (1991 - 1995), Vice-Chair of the Board

Ginka Kapitanova, Mayor, Municipality of Zlatograd (1991 - 1995), Executive Director of FLGR (1995 - 2007), Board Member

Roumen Draganov, Director, Institute for Analyses and Assessments in Tourism, Board Member

Zdravko Sechkov, Executive Director of FLGR, Board Member

The Team of FLGR

Zdravko Sechkov, Executive Director of FLGR

Dessislava Tencheva, expert

Gergana Stavreva, expert

Rositsa Raycheva, expert

Demir Deyanov, expert

Elvira Koleva, accountant

Contact Information

Foundation for Local Government Reform

Yerusalim str., bl. 51

Office building, office 2

Mladost 1

1784 Sofia, Bulgaria

Tel.: (+ 359 2) 976 89 89

Fax: (+ 359 2) 976 89 30

flgr@flgr.bg

www.flgr.bg

For 18 years of existence the Foundation has gained wide recognition at national level. Currently it has a proven record of successfully implemented projects and programmes contributing to the democratization of local government in Bulgaria and enhancement of public awareness on local government issues.

FLGR has a 5-member Governing Body.

The main spheres of expertise of FLGR are:

- **Training** - FLGR has delivered more than 800 topical seminars concerning various aspects of local development with overall 15 000 participants.
- **Participatory Local Governance** – FLGR has worked for 6 years on Community Forum Programme in 30 municipalities throughout the country, with the objective to consolidate citizen’s participation and mobilise municipalities’ development resources and initiatives in order to promote a more pluralistic vision and a multi-dimensional strategy for local development.
- **Good Governance and Integrity** – FLGR has worked for 4 years on revision and improvement the performance of the local administrations and leaderships in terms of internal administrative procedures and rules based on recommendations from the citizens and local businesses and within the context of the good governance principles.
- **Better Administrative Services** - FLGR has been implementing a programme for improving services to citizens by establishing municipal customer service centres at local level, and integrated administrative services at regional level; FLGR provided technical assistance to municipalities for setting up and running Centres, training of the staff, preparation of information kits and IT consultations, and has assisted more than 100 municipalities (2001 – 2010).
- **Local Economic Development** – FLGR has assisted for 10 years Bulgarian municipalities in the process of policy-formulation and implementation; the preparation of the municipal long-term strategic economic planning documents, promotion materials, networking; provision of international expertise to the Bulgarian municipalities.
- **Innovative Practices** – since 1998 FLGR has gathered and disseminated good practices of Bulgarian and European municipalities and their socio-economic partners; the online data base includes more than 1,200 practices.
- **Grant Management** - In the period 2008 – 2011 FLGR administered Bulgarian NGO Fund within the Financial Mechanism of EEA (2.06 mln Euro).
- FLGR through study tours and exchanges supported the development of local democracy in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro, Georgia, Kosovo, Romania and the Kaliningrad region.

FLGR has established a countrywide network of external experts.

FLGR was part of the European network of local authorities for exchange of experiences LOGIN since its creation in 1999 until its closure at the end of 2011.

FLGR is a founding member of Donor Fund Bulgaria.



►► **FLGR website www.flgr.bg**

In the FLGR website one can find:

► **Online Library**

The online library in 2012 published in electronic form 50 new editions of which the ones that arose the biggest interest were:

- Methodology for elaboration of National Strategy for Regional Development of Bulgaria (2012-2022),
- Regional development plans for NUTS 2 (2014-2020), Regional Development Strategies (2014-2020) and the Municipal Development Plans (2014 -2020) (558 downloads);
- Helping NGO Management and Development Handbook (378 downloads);
- Analysis of the environment of the development of civil society and the partner's experience with local authorities in education (287 downloads);
- Effective management and sustainable development of the civil society structures in the context of local fiscal policy (209 downloads);
- Handbook for assessing the performance of local services (189 downloads);
- Handbook for public records (159 downloads);
- EU rural areas policy development - Commission proposal for the 2014-2020 programming period (130 downloads);
- Antidiscrimination law - criminal aspects (127 downloads);
- Citizens decide. Forms of citizen participation in decision-making at the local level (123 downloads);
- Crisis in the systems of procurement, implementation and monitoring of public procurement in Bulgaria (118 downloads);
- Local and regional democracy in Bulgaria (116 downloads);
- A new approach to the integration of people with disabilities in Bulgaria (110 downloads);
- Citizen Monitoring of local level - best practices (109 downloads);
- Evaluation of the National Integrity System (109 downloads);
- Sofia - a city of diversity, Manual (106 downloads);
- Implementation of the European Label for Innovation and Good Governance in Bulgaria Guide to Municipalities (100 downloads).

► **Online database of innovative practices**

14th year in a row FLGR consistently promotes, collects, publishes and widely disseminates innovative practices that foster ingenuity and exchange of experience among Bulgarian local governments and NGOs through its project "Innovative Practices in Bulgaria". Launched in September 1998, the project creates a sustainable model for the collection and dissemination of innovative practices in local government. Since the end of 2001 FLGR awarded local governments for being innovative in different thematic areas, in the period of 2002 – 2009 – with the annual award "Innovative Municipality".

Online database of good practices in 2012 was enriched with 43 new practices.

The total number of published good practices since 1998, reached 1253.

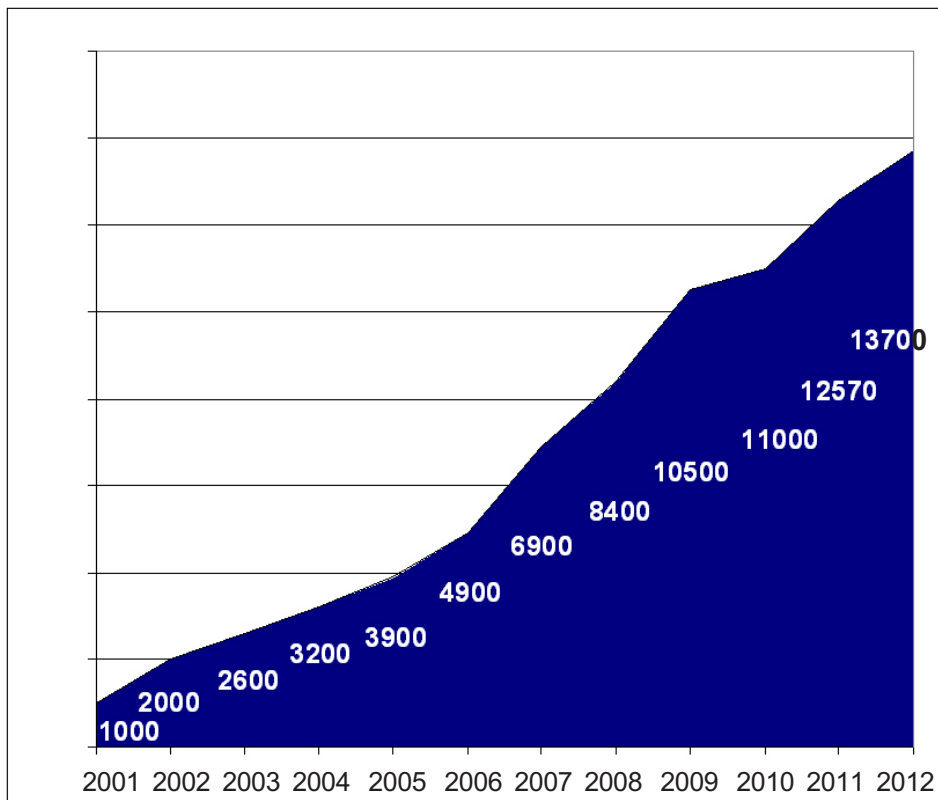
In 2012 FLGR issued "Citizen Monitoring at local level - best practices" presenting 29 practices of citizen monitoring of public services at the local level implemented in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, USA, India, Tanzania.

▶e-Weekly

E-Weekly in 2012 had 47 volumes and presented:

- 594 funding opportunities and competitions;
- 163 training opportunities and internships.

Subscribers to the FLGR weekly increased from 12,570 at the end of 2011 to 13,700 at the end of 2012.



E-weekly subscribers

For several years I receive the online edition FLGR e-weekly. I am extremely pleased and look at it regularly. I have found a lot of useful information in it.

Milena Stanislavova, January 2012

Electronic weekly is one of the few useful and sound electronic services in our country! Interestingly, most organizations in the NGO sector, we work with, are also subscribed and we often comment on and discuss the information offered, which saves us a lot of time and effort!

Martin Hristov, ICTD Bulgaria Association, January 2013

FLGR
turned 18

▶▶ Trainings

The Centre for Training and Qualification within the Foundation for Local Government Reform was established in 2003 aiming at institutionalizing the training activities offered by FLGR.

▶ Distance Learning

In 2012 r. the team of FLGR held 2 Internet-based training courses:

- **Good Governance Principles at Local Level Course**, 9 March – 3- April 2012. The course was based on the 12 good governance principles, formulated in the Strategy for innovation and good governance at local level (Barcelona 2007). The course defines the 12 principles, the legal framework for their application and showcases good practices from Europe, USA and Bulgaria. The course was successfully completed by 46 participants.

- **Prevention of the Corruption at Local Level Course**, 9 March – 23 April 2012. The course was developed in accordance of the Methodology of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT). The course introduces anti-corruption measures in the field of public procurement at local level. The course was successfully completed by 29 participants.

Participants of the courses were municipal experts, representatives of municipal institutions, community centres, academia throughout the country.

The course graduates were certified by FLGR.

What the participants in the courses say:

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Good Governance Principles at Local Level Course. Even during the course I started to use the new knowledge in practice. I was preparing a project proposal for the municipality to apply for Operational programme “Administrative Capacity” concerning optimization of structures and the information from the lectures was extremely useful to me. Furthermore, I participated in a meeting with colleagues from the NGO sector, where the Strategy for innovation and good governance at local level was discussed and the direct involvement of NGOs in the processes of governance at local level. I am very pleased with the training and I would love to be included in the future in similar initiatives.

Cvetelina Neshkova, ARG1

Positive aspects of the course in my opinion are: well structured content, up to date information; good practices in the field (extremely important), easy and accessible reports on the results of the training.

Iliana Mirazchiska



►► Citizen Monitoring towards Effective Management of Public Resources (2010 – 2012)

In 2012 FLGR completed work on the project “Citizen Monitoring towards Effective Management of Public Resources” funded by America for Bulgaria Foundation.

Project goal was:

- Citizens capacity building for monitoring and evaluation of the production and the provision of selected public services;
- Establishment of working relationships between citizens, municipal leadership and administration to achieve improvement of public services.

Project objectives were:

- Introduction of effective and multipliable models for citizen monitoring of the municipal council and administration performance as well as quality of selected public services;
- Initiation of public debates and increasing citizen awareness on the effect of citizen service monitoring;
- Increasing citizen participation and control;
- Improvement of the municipal council and administration performance and the quality of public service production and delivery.

As partners of FLGR in the project on a competitive basis were selected municipalities:

- Kyustendil (74,000 inhabitants),
- Gotse Delchev (31,236 inhabitants) and
- Knezha (13,803 inhabitants).

In each municipality a local organization - partner was chosen.

Through a process of extensive public consultation - a survey among local businesses, focus groups with representatives of NGOs and citizens and public discussion - were defined four public services (instead of the planned 3) provided by the municipalities, to become subject to public monitoring, as follows:

- Green areas maintenance - Kyustendil Municipality;
- Cleanliness of streets, public places and the quality of garbage disposal - Municipality Gotse Delchev;
- Home social patronage (food delivery to elderly and lonely) - Municipality Knezha;
- Maintenance of municipal roads and street network - Municipality Knezha.

FLGR developed methodologies for monitoring of the four services and questionnaires to the citizens.

Information brochures and posters were prepared and distributed.

The objectives of the civil monitoring were:

- Through regular feedback to the municipal administration to coordinate the services provided with the will of citizens;
- Through citizens propositions the municipality to harmonize its priorities with the priorities of citizens;
- To achieve active citizenship and civic participation in the areas of work of the municipality that are significant to citizens;
- To establish and implement a working model for interaction

FLGR
turned
18



between citizens and the municipality with the goal to improve the public services provided and better ratio “price – quality”;

- To build relationships of mutual trust between citizens and the municipality.

Civic monitoring was completed within 6 months (July - November 2011). 6 monthly and a summary report for each service monitored were prepared and reported to the leadership of the municipality and its citizens in the three municipalities. In the process of monitoring in Kyustendil 236 citizens participated, in Knezha in the monitoring of HSP took part an average of 32% of service users (124 people). Maintenance of municipal roads and street network in Knezha was monitored by 94 people. Feedback cards submitted in Gotse Delchev were 455.

In the course of the project improvement of the services according to the recommendations given by the citizens was achieved as follows:

- In Kyustendil: Unification of the vision of the municipality and the public on green areas which have to be a priority, the construction of a playground in the district of Zapad;
- In Gotse Delchev: the contract with the company responsible for separate collection was terminated because of its unsatisfactory level;
- In Knezha: enriched assortment (depending on user); the municipality initiated regular feedback on service quality;

- In Knezha: within the financial capabilities the streets pointed as priority by citizens were repaired.

As part of the project FLGR held trainings for representatives of local NGOs and community centers in citizen journalism. The concept of citizen journalism was presented to the participants. Workshops (learning by doing) were conducted on the technical requirements for the communication tools on the Internet: blogs / Facebook / Twitter. The training ended with workshops on “How to write for the Internet”.

Within the project two two-month distance learning courses were held for





active citizens and representatives of the municipal administration. In the Good Governance Principles at Local Level Course 35 participants from the three municipalities took part. In the Prevention of the Corruption at Local Level Course enrolled 33 participants from the three municipalities. Those who successfully graduated the courses received certificates from FLGR.

In each of the three municipalities Day of Volunteering was held, in which hundreds of volunteers took part. They worked on improvements in parks, on playgrounds, green areas. Grass, petunias, shrubs and trees were planted. Decorative bins were placed. Benches, gazebos, slides were painted. Work gloves, brushes, bin bags, sandwiches and mineral water were secured for all volunteers.

In the framework of the the project a collection of best practices in was released, which presented 29 practices of citizen monitoring of public services at the local level implemented in Bulgaria, Romania, Slovakia, USA, India, Tanzania.

On May 30, 2012 in Sofia Foundation for Local Government Reform held a National Conference “Monitoring of public services at local level” as a closing event of the project. The event was attended by over 80 representatives of NGOs, municipalities and regional authorities, local action groups across the country: from Varna, Svishtov, Smolyan and Varna, Silistra and Sofia ...

FLGR presented for discussion conclusions and recommendations why the local authorities in Bulgaria should make citizen monitoring of public services at local level frequently used tool of governance:

1. Citizen monitoring is important for improving the quality of public services at local level, especially those that are natural monopolies.
2. Citizen monitoring works in communities of any size - small, medium, large.
3. To achieve real and quick results in provision of services of high quality and in a faster way it is important the citizen monitoring to be initiated or supported by the municipality.
4. Citizen monitoring can be organized and conducted by the municipality, without undue burden of the municipal employees.
5. By citizen monitoring the citizens and the municipality harmonize views and priorities.
6. Citizen monitoring of each service is specific and requires consideration of appropriate tools and duration of the monitoring.
7. Citizen monitoring of public service is a useful tool for the municipal administration to obtain feedback on the level of citizen satisfaction with the service provided.
8. Through regular feedback municipality can assess whether a public

FLGR
turned
18

service is expedient.

9. By getting propositions from the citizens municipality can improve the quality of the services provided. Conditions for solving emerging problems quickly are created.

10. When local government is responding to proposals made by the community, the citizens are more motivated to participate in the monitoring of the services. This contributes to the establishment of a working model for interaction between citizens and the municipality.

11. Civic monitoring allows the renegotiation of the terms with the service providing companies - both by the citizens and the municipality.

12. Municipality and service providers see the services with the eyes of citizens.

13. Civic monitoring indicates to what extent the conceived and planned by the municipality is functioning and achieves the set goals.

14. Civic monitoring achieves improvement of the service provided by the fact that the provider feels in focus of interest of the citizens. Improvement can occur in the course of the civil monitoring. Thus the management of service delivery companies is improved. Also more efficient spending of public funds is achieved.

15. Civic monitoring allows the justification of budget expenditures.

16. Civil monitoring is important to establish the municipal budget for next year.

17. Civil monitoring and voluntary participation assists the employees of the municipal inspectorate.

18. It turns out that in the cases of some services people are willing to pay more to achieve quality improvement.

19. When involved in citizen monitoring, the members of the community become familiar with the parameters of operation of the service (when, how much, how), which increases the transparency of the municipality.

20. Citizen participation in monitoring and implementation of the recommendations of the people lead to greater civic activism at local level, civil sector involved in decision making, greater trust between citizens and the municipality.

The FLGR project has already two replica:

- Ruse Regional Administration launched a civil monitoring of maintenance of the road network in all municipalities in the region, which started in June 2012 and was based on the methodology developed by FLGR.

- The Timok Club from Knjahevac, Serbia, and Society "Knowledge" from Lovech, Bulgaria, funded by EU Civil Society Facility Serbia Programme, carry out the project "Neighbour Watch" which replicates FLGR project, aiming to develop sustainable NGO mechanisms for ensuring greater transparency of the local governments in South East Serbia and to enhance regional cooperation between Serbian and Bulgarian NGOs in the field of capacity building for monitoring and evaluation of the public services.

▶▶ Other Activities

In 2012 the FLGR team participated in:

- Bulgaria GIS Day, November 14, 2012 as co-organizer. Celebration of World GIS Day in Bulgaria promotes geospatial technologies; enables businesses, public administrations and academia to meet and exchange experiences and share their achievements and visions for the development of GIS in the country;
- Development of Regional Plan for the Development of South Central Planning Region for the period 2014 - 2020;
- Development of a Regional Strategy for the Development of Smolyan Region for the period 2014 - 2020;
- Update of the categorization of administrative and territorial units based on the results of the census of population and housing in 2011, commissioned by the Ministry of regional development and public works;
- Development of specialized software for the creation and maintenance of a register of agglomerations, commissioned by the Ministry of regional development and public works;
- Evaluation of the implementation of the Regional Development Act commissioned by the Ministry of regional development and public works;
- An interim evaluation of the implementation of the Municipal Development Plans 2007-2013 and subsequent update, trainings;
- Trainings, researches and analysis commissioned by the Local Action Groups in Bulgaria;
- Management and informational activities in the functioning of the National Rural Network in Bulgaria.



Foundation for Local Government Reform

Yerusalim str., bl. 51

Office building, office 2

Mladost 1

1784 Sofia, Bulgaria

Tel. (+ 359 2) 976 89 89

Fax: (+ 359 2) 976 89 30

flgr@flgr.bg

www.flgr.bg

