

BEST PRACTICE IN BULGARIAN LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENTS 2016 / 2017

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The Best Practice in Bulgarian Local Self-Governments 2016/2017 Programme has been developed by the Council of Europe's Centre of Expertise on Local Government Reform and was implemented in Bulgaria with the support of the Ministry of Regional development and Public Works and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. The Programme has been implemented successfully in a number of European countries: Armenia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Ukraine, Switzerland.

In Bulgaria the Programme was implemented by the Foundation for Local Government Reform in the period October 2016 – May 2017 and aimed at identifying, achieving public recognition and dissemination of best practices among municipalities in Bulgaria. The Programme was focused on new practices that had been implemented over the past 18 months and on sustainable practices that had been applied for a longer period of time but had undergone a qualitative upgrade over the past 18 months. All Bulgarian municipalities were invited to participate in the Best Practice Competition 2016/2017. Each municipality could take part in the competition with one practice in each thematic area.

In the first edition of the Best Practices Programme in Bulgaria, **three thematic areas** were selected:

- I. Municipal support for civic initiatives
- II. New management technologies and solutions
- III. Social innovation and partnerships

29 practices from 19 municipalities and one district participated the contest, two of the practices competed in two categories.

The criteria for practices evaluation were:

1. Relevance and Impact
2. Openness and transparency
3. Innovation
4. Sustainability

The authors of the winning practices in each category will visit Council of Europe, Strasbourg, France, on a trip organised and financed by the Council of Europe.



I. MUNICIPAL SUPPORT FOR CIVIC INITIATIVES

WITH TUNDZHA IN THE HEART – MUNICIPAL SUPPORT FOR CIVIC INITIATIVES

PRACTICE OF TUNDZHA MUNICIPALITY

FIRST PLACE

The “With Tundzha in the heart” platform unites the efforts of the local community in the 44 settlements of the municipality to solve important public issues through partnerships and positive constructive dialogue. It encourages and supports the involvement of local structures, organizations and business representatives in initiatives that provide for tangible and lasting change in the living conditions.

The platform includes several initiatives. One of them is “The Spirit of My Village”, which supports the cultural centres (chitalishte) in creating new or enriching the existing ethnographic and local lore collections in Tundzha Municipality with the joint efforts of the local community, institutions, NGOs and businesses. The goal is to enhance civil patriotic self-awareness and volunteer participation in initiatives.

The second initiative of the platform, entitled “Let’s remember the feat and to honour the memory of the heroes”, deals with taking care of the green areas around the many monuments of the heroes who gave their lives for freedom built on the territory of the municipality. With this youth initiative the municipality of Tundzha created a successful model of shared responsibility for preserving the historical heritage and, in particular, the monuments of the perished in the wars.

The third community initiative is “Together with Tundzha municipality”, which enables the local community to identify specific problems and to implement solutions on competitive basis with the financial support of the municipality and through volunteer work. The idea of this initiative is to support the participation of the people directly in the implementation of their initiatives.

The idea of the platform is provoked by the young people, the secretaries of the cultural centres, the directors of the educational and childcare facilities, the sportsmen and the artists in the municipality. It united the efforts and resources of all for the sake of one cause – the municipality of Tundzha and its inhabitants.

Most of the projects and initiatives included in the “With Tundzha in the heart” are already a reality. Immediate and fruitful communication with local communities, as well as the usage of a mechanism for implementing innovative and socially meaningful initiatives, gave valuable results.



Cultural centres, mayoralities, church trustees, schools, kindergartens, youth NGOs and inhabitants of the settlements united their efforts and realized their initiatives: they gave a more beautiful look to the squares in the villages; honoured the memory of the heroes who died in the wars, cleaning and caring about the areas around the monuments; preserved their way of life and culture in the ethnographic collections; created new spots for sports and recreation. A series of public initiatives were launched within the framework of the call for proposals “Together with Tundzha Municipality”.

More than 30 settlements in different forms joined the platform. Agreements were signed to support 41 public initiatives provoked by the local communities of the villages of Tundzha municipality, totaling BGN 62,435.



LET'S TOGETHER FULFIL THE DREAMS OF THE CHILDREN
PRACTICE OF DOBRICH MUNICIPALITY
SECOND PLACE



The Municipality of Dobrich, together with the local businesses is committed to fulfil a childhood dream – a suitable urban environment for life and play.

Children living in the districts of Dobrich remain far away from the sports facilities and recreational and play areas. There are many children's playgrounds in the city, but some of them are neglected and the facilities are not well

maintained. In 2016, children from two of the districts of Dobrich made a personal request to the mayor for suitable playgrounds.

In response the municipality of Dobrich, in partnership with two companies, succeeded in renovation of inter-bloc spaces in two of the distant neighbourhoods. The initiative came entirely from the children living in the respective areas. The role of the municipal administration was to design the spaces and attract local businesses. The aim was the kids to be part of the process, to care about the playgrounds, and the companies – to contribute financially.

As a result, all interested parties united for the cause, meetings were held with the residents in the neighbourhoods to hear their opinion on renovating the spaces. The design was carried out according to the specific needs of the areas and the requirements of the users themselves – the children living in the neighbourhoods. As a result of the reconstruction and improvement of the urban space, good conditions for sport, play and recreation of the children were provided, their parents were involved in the discussion process, and the businesses helped financially the realization of the idea.



II. NEW MANAGEMENT TECHNOLOGIES AND SOLUTIONS

COMPLEX ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICE DELIVERY, THE USE OF REGIX-REGISTERS FOR INTER-ADMINISTRATIVE DATA EXCHANGE AND VPN CONNECTIVITY WITH MAYORALTIES AND MAYORALTIES

PRACTICE OF TROYAN MUNICIPALITY
FIRST PLACE

In 2015 Municipality of Troyan carried out the project “Upgrading the existing and building new central electronic governance systems with the goal to improve the information and communication environment for better administrative service to the citizens and the business”. A module is implemented in 2016, which extracts data from over 30 registers of the central administration. By accessing the municipality, the complex administrative service delivery offered the majority of administrative and technical services, and citizens were no longer required to provide information that was available in the registers.

At the beginning of 2016, the municipal administration of Troyan introduced in all 21 mayoralties on the territory of the municipality VPN devices that transfer data and secure internet access in all the settlements in the municipality.

This type of connectivity improved the services provision to the people in the municipality. The built VPN connection made it possible to fully utilize the existing several electronic document systems, thus helping service users in remote settlements and exercising more control over the work of mayoralties.

By building the virtual network, more efficient and easily accessible electronic services for citizens and businesses are provided. All residents of the respective settlements have the opportunity to submit applications, requests, complaints and other letters from citizens without having to travel to the city – municipality centre. With the introduction into the electronic system of the municipality, the documents submitted through the mayoralties reach the respective department or division. Citizens may receive their services through a licensed postal operator, by e-mail or in a manner that they have indicate in their convenience.



ASSISTING MUNICIPAL SCHOOLS TO IMPLEMENT NEW EDUCATIONAL TECHNOLOGIES AND DIGITIZATION OF THE LEARNING PROCESS

PRACTICE OF PLOVDIV MUNICIPALITY
SECOND PLACE

Municipal administration – Plovdiv provides assistance to the schools in its territory to introduce modern cloud technologies in the educational process. The G-suite and Microsoft Office 365 platforms are available in Bulgarian and are free of charge for all educational structures. The co-operation consists in organizing and co-financing the training of school teams for the use of platforms. Innovation is even more valuable for modernizing otherwise conservative educational system.

Introduction of the platforms includes: informational meetings, polls among teachers and directors, identification of school teams, identification of the necessary technical solutions, registration and setting up of domains, theoretical and practical trainings, introduction to the educational process and in administrative activities, certification of teachers according to the new educational standard.

Up to now, 80 teachers and directors from 7 schools from the municipality have joined the trainings.

The main benefits for students and their teachers and parents are related to the easy communication between them, to conducting of entertaining virtual lessons, setting the homework in an interesting and accessible way, tracking the results by all interested. Teachers easily and

quickly create, review, and evaluate homework and other tasks. Students have access to the apps at classroom and at home, studying is made interesting and fun for them. Parents can track the development of their children online.

In January 2017, Municipal Council of Plovdiv adopted the Municipal Educational Programme 2017-2019. It provides for the subsequent development and extension of the Programme “Digitalization of the Educational Process” and co-financing annually from the municipal budget in the amount of BGN 30,000 for three consecutive years.





III. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

WITH CARE FOR THE ELDERLY

PRACTICE OF VELIKO TARNOVO MUNICIPALITY

FIRST PLACE

The practice is aimed at the elderly people from the small settlements in the municipality of Veliko Tarnovo and is based on complex methods of crime prevention and reduction of the risk of social exclusion.

Practice activities include:

- » Constant contact between the elderly and the lonely people and the representatives of different institutions in the sphere of their competences;
- » Developing “risk maps” that include specific issues that could create conditions for crimes against elderly people, and measures to prevent them (such as improving the street lighting, etc.) ;
- » Elaborating cooperation plans between the police and the private security companies and attracting private security mobile groups to protect the elderly;
- » Creation of information registers / records of elderly and elderly people without relatives, as well as those in risk health; Organizing visits to them by police inspectors, volunteers;
- » Creation of registers of the property of lonely people; registers of houses / apartments, uninhabited for more than a year, for the purpose of monitoring and preventing theft;
- » Building video surveillance systems;
- » Creating volunteer groups that care for elderly people, with a quick response to phone calls, escorting when needed, product delivery, and more;
- » Meetings at the retirement clubs with representatives of municipal administration, police and fire departments.
- » Campaign, in which children voluntarily visit and care for elderly people;
- » Free delivery of firewood, clothing and food for the elderly with the support of local businesses;
- » Emergency telephone line between municipal / emergency centres;
- » Regular meetings of the Municipal Committee on Public Order and Security, which monitors the implementation of activities by all partners.
- » The main partners in the implementation of the practice are the Municipality of Veliko Tarnovo, the Police Department of Veliko Tarnovo, the Association of Mayors “Yantra 2001”, the Charity Association “St. Ivan Rilski”.

Other important partners are: Regional Fire Safety and Population Protection Directorate; Local volunteer groups, local public councils; Children and youth from the 19 centres for work with children and young people on the territory of the municipality; Adult schools in 8 small settlements; Retirement clubs; Media; Private security companies; Representatives of the private business.

The broad and fruitful partnership between the main institutions, civil society, the non-governmental sector, the private sector and the volunteers, based on transparency and accountability, respecting human rights and dignity, leads to a more secure environment and an increased sense of security among the elderly, also to increased public confidence in the responsible institutions. More 250 elderly or living alone people are cared for. The level of crimes against the elderly in the municipality is decreasing and the detection of these crimes is increasing.

The practice is innovative because it affects different aspects of the care for the elderly, especially in the small settlements in Bulgaria. Good communication and coordination between the large number of partners, the clear assignment of tasks and the responsibility for their implementation ensure the good results. The practice is sustainable and is financially supported by the budget of the municipality and other institutions, organizations and private businesses.



CRISIS CENTRE AT THE OVCHA MOGILA MAYORALTY

PRACTICE OF THE SVISHTOV MUNICIPALITY

SECOND PLACE



In October 2016 the first in Bulgaria Crisis Centre for Combating Fires and Disasters was opened in the village of Ovcha Mogila, municipality of Svishtov. The aim of the crisis centre is to react quickly and adequately to address emergency situations in the more remote settlements of the municipality.

The centre is located 5-10 minutes away from five villages, which together with Ovcha Mogila are distant from the municipal centre – town of Svishtov. The centre is an adequate solution to the problems of the local community – 5000 people. Its activities coordinate the efforts of various institutions and organizations: fire-fighters, medical personnel, Red Cross, Volunteer formation at Svishtov Municipality and the Crisis Centre in Ovcha Mogila itself. Its activities increase the sense of security and protection of the people.



The centre has elements, equipment and personnel of emergency and fire-fighting unit. It has a fire truck and an ambulance. Specialized vehicles are second-hand but have undergone full maintenance, and the ambulance is completely retrofitted with new modern equipment. In the centre work two drivers of the specialized equipment, former fire-fighters, and four nurses.

Innovative is the approach of combining budget and project funding and donation as well as inter-institutional cooperation in organizing the activity. The practice is the first of its kind in the country.

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