



BIENNIAL

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In this second for the year 2004 edition of the Biannual English Digest of the Foundation for Local Government reform we are pleased to present to you articles, published in the FLGR's monthly information newsletter in the period June – December 2004. The newsletter is disseminated to all Bulgarian municipalities, a great number of local and national NGOs, ministries, the National Assembly, institutions and organizations, working with local governments in Bulgaria.



Within the last year many of the monthly newsletter publications were focused on the challenges at local and regional level related to the forthcoming membership of Bulgaria in the European Union.

For you, our international readers, we have selected articles outlining FLGR work for and with the Bulgarian municipalities: the Technical Twinning Program and the established in its framework Local Economic Development Partnership; training seminars on preparing successful municipal project proposals funded under the EU financial instruments; FLGR activities in the field of social environment improvement in small settlements; 2004 enrichment of Innovative Practices database with 150 new practices and the results of the National Innovative Municipality Award competition held for third time; preparation and organization of Sofia's Green Areas Roundtable, attended by 35 civic organizations, municipal and central government institutions; presentation of the Transparency in Local Government Campaign, conducted by FLGR for the first time in 2004.

We believe that this edition would provide you with insights regarding the most current issues and challenges that local and regional governments in Bulgaria are facing, as well as on the efforts, creativity and effectiveness of FLGR's work in 2004.

We hope you will find the digest interesting and useful!

*Ginka Kapitanova,
Executive Director, FLGR*

GREATER PROFESSIONALISM IN THE BULGARIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Tatyana Dimitrova

Issue 7/2004

The cooperation between Bulgarian and American municipalities will continue with the expanded number of participants in the upcoming fifth phase of the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program, supported by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). In this way, a greater number of Bulgarian municipalities will have the opportunity to use and implement the successful management practices developed so far under the program. This became clear at the final seminar of Phase IV of the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program, held at the Sunny Day Resort, Varna, on June 28 - 29, 2004.

The event was organized by the Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR) and the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), Washington, D.C. More than 100 representatives of 35 Bulgarian and 7 American municipalities attended the seminar. The purpose of the event was to more widely disseminate the best practices and models implemented by Bulgarian municipalities in cooperation with American partners over the last two years.

The seminar was opened by FLGR's Executive Director, Ginka Kapitanova, USAID/Bulgaria representative, Gene Gibson, and ICMA's Resource Cities Program Director, John Bormet.

In her address to the participants, Ginka Kapitanova stated: „As local economic development was identified as a priority of almost all bilateral partnerships, our efforts over the past two years were focused on this particular area.“ She listed some of the major results from Phase IV of the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program, and namely:

- development of a new understanding by local governments on their role in the creation of a business-friendly environment, something that would be very important in the long run;
- knowledge about, and a new attitude to, existing local business and business retention and expansion tools;
- analysis of municipalities' existing economic development potential and a pro-active marketing policy;
- local economic development advisory boards established; codes of ethics in dealing with businesses adopted;
- targeted economic development plans.

„All of us, the direct participants in the program, believe that the greatest wealth of these two years is the network of business development specialists that was established“, said Mrs. Kapitanova and advised the mayors and the chairs of municipal councils: „Rely on these experts! They have accumulated a lot of advise, a lot of first-hand information. Allow them to implement that knowledge in practice! We all know that the mayor and the municipal council formulate the municipal long-term vision and economic development policy, but the role of these business development experts is to help you in the implementation of that policy in a profes-





ery and win citizens' trust."

In his opening speech, USAID/Bulgaria representative Gene Gibson defined the forum as one of the most productive USAID-supported events in local government in Bulgaria, and commended its excellent organization. „Ambassador Pardew and I are proud with the American cities that worked with their Bulgarian partners under the Bul-



sional way, so that you'd negotiate with potential investors on equal basis." To the new municipalities that were invited to hear about the achievements of their colleagues during Phase IV, Ginka Kapitanova said: „I'm convinced that by the end of this conference you'll be motivated to do whatever it takes to motivate your municipal councils, to create economic development units and to become a part of the family which is working professionally to create many new jobs, increase municipal revenues, improve municipal service deliv-

garian Technical Twinning Program", said also Mr. Gibson and praised the managements of these cities for dedicating their time, skills and resources to achieve the goals of the program. He commended the mayors of the Bulgarian partner municipalities for taking advantage of the opportunities provided by the program. „The success of the program reflects areas critical to the Bulgarian municipalities. Through the exchange of information, innovative ideas and approaches to municipal development and management, the program is strengthening the capacity of Bulgarian local authorities to deliver services and to more effectively manage resources", said Gene Gibson, adding: „The results that you've achieved help your municipalities develop and grow, and the lessons and the practices that you've learned during the process need to be disseminated all over the country."

At the opening ICMA's Jon Bormet said that the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program is one of the fifteen inter-municipal cooperation programs that ICMA is implementing worldwide. „Over the last five or six years we've supported more than 70 partnerships and I'm happy to share with you that the Bulgarian program is the best one! It is an example of effectiveness and excellent results to all other programs we have", said Mr. Bormet in his speech and commented that this is due to the exceptional support of USAID for



local government in Bulgaria, the diligent work of FLGR whose role in program management will grow over the next three years, and the serious efforts and the political reason of Bulgarian local governments.

Since 1997, the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program has went through four phases, implemented with USAID

support and with the coordination of FLGR and ICMA. Each phase has expanded and enriched the program, building on the experience accumulated during previous phases. In Phase IV (2002 - 2004), apart from support to direct cooperation with American partners, the participant municipalities were also granted \$80,000 for the implementation of specific projects, initiatives, expert training, information and marketing materials.

Successful management practices and projects resulting from the two-year efforts of the 21 Bulgarian municipalities and their American partners were presented at the final seminar. During the first day the focus was on the achievements in local economic development and municipal marketing. During the second day, the participants presented the results from waste management, infrastructure management and tourism development projects.

At an official ceremony by the end of the seminar, FLGR and ICMA awarded several types of certificates and prizes to the participant municipalities.

Ready for Business certificates were awarded for the first time to 12 Bulgarian municipalities. The municipalities of **Silistra, Dobrich, Gabrovo, Pleven, Montana, Sliven, Panagyurishte, Stara Zagora, Haskovo and Blagoevgrad** were awarded one-year certificates.

Six-month certificates were awarded to the municipalities of **Pazardzhik and Razgrad**. All these municipalities had successfully passed an evaluation procedure. The municipalities were assessed by nine criteria, according to which





ready for business is a municipality which:

- ☐ is competitive;
- ☐ implements planned and targeted local economic development initiatives;
- ☐ supports local business retention and expansion and implements effective measures to recruit new business;
- ☐ knows its resources and potential well and successfully markets them;
- ☐ is capable to provide professional services to domestic and foreign investors.

FLGR and ICMA also awarded professional certificates to 18 municipal local economic development specialists who had passed a long-term training course under the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program.

FLGR, ICMA and USAID announced **awards in 8 categories** for 13 of the participant municipalities, as follows:

- ☐ Best Presentation in the Ready for Business Evaluation - Dobrich, Gabrovo and Panagyurishte;
- ☐ Best Business Website - Haskovo and Silistra;
- ☐ Best Marketing Program - Stara Zagora and Haskovo;
- ☐ Best Marketing Brochure - Silistra and Karlovo;
- ☐ Best Interaction with Local Business - Pleven, Gabrovo and Panagyurishte;
- ☐ Best Local Economic Development Project - Panagyurishte and Silistra;
- ☐ Best Community-Related Economic Development Initiative - Dobrich;
- ☐ Best Phase IV Project - the Veliko Turnovo/Plovdiv/Golden partnership and the Elhovo/Bolyarovo/Toundzha partnership.

At the end of the event, the USAID representatives officially announced their support for the extension of the Bulgarian Technical twinning Program into the next, fifth, phase, which will be implemented by FLGR and ICMA from September, 2004 through September, 2007.



WHAT HAVE WE ACHIEVED SO FAR IN THE SECOND PHASE OF THE BULGARIAN MUNICIPALITIES: COMPETENT PARTICIPANTS IN THE UTILIZATION OF EU FUNDS PROJECT?

Marina Dimova,
Project Coordinator, FLGR
Issue 7/2004

The implementation of the activities under the **Bulgarian Municipalities: Competent Participants in the Utilization of EU Funds Project** continued. The project is funded by the Open Society Institute. So far, FLGR has organized and held 4 training modules on EU-related topics and European funding programs, as well as two practicums that provided municipal and regional administration representatives opportunities to develop specific project proposals within the practical trainings.

The training of the first group under the project was completed successfully. The group was comprised of representatives of the following municipalities: Ardino, Dzhebel, Momchilgrad, Rakovski, Kouklen, Krichim, Perushtitsa and Cheornochene, in partnership with specialists from the Kurdzhali and Plovdiv regional administrations and NGOs. The effect from the long-term training is obvious: on one hand, the specialists from the different administrations and organizations establish lasting contacts; on the other hand, they start to realize the necessity for in-depth knowledge, access to information and change of attitude. The project targets mainly the small municipalities in the Kurdzhali, Pazardzhik, Plovdiv and Sofia regions. It turned out that these municipalities feel to a great extent neglected in the enthusiasm related to our country's preparation for EU accession; it seems that these municipalities do not possess sufficient human capacity and lack an overall idea about where the country is going, what's coming for local governments and what should they be prepared for.

On the positive aspects of the involvement of the municipalities, the regional administrations and the NGOs: they all believe that such projects provide an opportunity to the specialists to improve their EU-related knowledge, to form a detailed understanding of the essence of the Structural Funds and of the different aspects of the funding programs to which Bulgaria, respectively the municipalities, are eligible applicants. And last but not least, they highly appreciate the training module on project development, which is the link between theoretic knowledge and practical implementation.

An idea shared during the training on *EU Financial Instruments* resulted in the development of a brief **reference guide** of websites providing useful information about EU, its common policies and funding programs. The guide is avail-



able on FLGR's website.

The project includes two more long-term training cycles targeting two groups of representatives of municipalities, regional administrations and NGOs from the Plovdiv and Sofia regions.

For more information and current news about the project, please visit FLGR's website at www.flgr.bg. ◆

Reactions of participants in the first long-term training:

I find most useful the newly established contacts, the experience shared and the practical work on the development of a specific idea into a project...What I intend to do when the project is over, is to develop a list of project ideas and prioritize them."

Nikolay Dimitrov, Municipality of Kouklen

I'm happy with what I've learned, the practical exercises, the good professional skills and the experience of the facilitators and the new partnerships.

Shenay Redzheb, Regional Economic Development and Investment Agency, Kurdzhali

The practical experience acquired with regard to project development, as well as the information on the different EU funding mechanisms, were most valuable to me.

Anka Subleva, Municipality of Rakovski

What was most valuable to me was the training itself, the building of skills and confidence that we are capable of achieving the goals we've identified.

Selyami Moustafa, Municipality of Chernoochene

NATIONAL SEMINAR ON THE SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF THE SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM



On June 20, 2004, in Sofia, the Foundation for Local Government Reform held a **National Seminar on the successful completion of the Social Environment Improvement Program**. The Program was implemented by FLGR with the financial support of Charles Stewart Mott Foundation. FLGR's partners in the implementation of the program included 10 pilot municipalities: Peshtera, Batak, Bratsigovo, Godech, Dzhebel, Kirkovo, Kresna, Momchilgrad, Svoje and Strumyani.



The seminar was attended by 70 representatives of more than 35 municipalities countrywide, local and national NGOs operating in the social area, national agencies, Bulgarian and international donors.

Petya Demireva, Head of Local Social Services Department, Social Assistance Agency, presented the new aspects Bulgaria's social policy.

Marieta Dimitrova from the Bulgarian Non-Profit Law Center presented the legislation framework in the social area and recommendations for its improved enforcement.

The coordinators of the 24 projects implemented under the program shared successful practices developed by the pilot municipalities and NGOs to: solve problems, develop municipal social policies, deliver services and provide for the social integration of disadvantaged people, develop alternative forms of social care for adults and youth, develop employment encouragement and creation programs, create communication opportunities, provide education and professional training, initiate joint cultural initiatives, provide institutionalized and informal cooperation methods, create interest and understanding of the cultural diversity in the community.

The topics presented generated a lot of questions and opinions. The contribution of the program to the development of small communities, which so far had been neglected by donors and trainers and in which the people had managed to prove their potential, was highly appreciated.

The degree of local resources mobilization, which contributed to the achievement of the impressive achievements of these otherwise low-budget projects, also created a great interest among the participants.

The projects implemented by the pilot municipalities are presented in FLGR's publications. This will provide a wider circle of municipal experts, local government managers and NGO representatives in the country an opportunity to learn about the innovative solutions developed under the Social Environment Improvement Program.

The municipal managements can borrow many ideas about the implementation of the principles of decentralization in the delivery of social services, as stipulated by the Social Assistance Act.



MUNICIPALITY OF DOBRICH WON FLGR'S INNOVATIVE MUNICIPALITY AWARD 2004

Issue 10/2004

On October 7, Thursday, at an official ceremony on the occasion of Bulgarian Municipalities Day October 12, Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR) awarded its **2004 Annual Innovative Municipality Award**. The Foundation's award for innovation in local government was awarded for the third consecutive year. **More than 160 innovative practices** were presented by the municipalities and their civic partners.

The national prize was won by the **Municipality of Dobrich** that shared 31 innovative practices on various topics!

It was awarded a unique statuette, masterpiece of the sculptor Christo Michaylov that symbolizes climbing the spiral way to a better future.

As an additional award Dobrich Municipality got **two airplane return tickets** for European destination. It is an opportunity for 1 municipal employee and 1 NGO representative to participate at an international innovative event. Tickets are provided by CARLSON WAGONLIT Travel. **PC**, provided by Index Bulgaria, was also awarded to the contest winner for 2004.

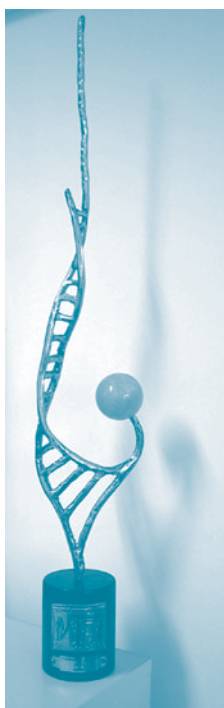
The **second place winner** with 20 innovative practices is the **Municipality of Mezdra** that got a **printer** provided by Office 1 Superstore Bulgaria Kutsarov 2000 Ltd. and a **laminator**, provided by Allegro.

The **third place** shared 2 municipalities with 17 innovative practices: **Mizia Municipality and Svishtov Municipality**. They got a **programme product** for administrative activities in their municipalities, provided by the Central Laboratory of Computer Graphics and Information Systems Axter, Technical University Sofia.

Seven municipalities are honored for their innovative achievements in 2004:

Razgrad Municipality with 11 practices
Botevgrad Municipality with 7 practices
Peshtera Municipality with 4 practices
Silistra Municipality with 4 practices
Strumyani Municipality with 4 practices
Bracigovo Municipality with 3 practices
Kresna Municipality with 3 practices

FLGR would like to thank everyone who have contributed to the expansion of the Innovative Practices Database for their efforts, readiness and willingness to be innovators!





**SASHKA NACHALNISHKA,
DEPUTY-MAYOR, MUNICIPALITY OF MIZIYA:**

I'd like to thank the Foundation for Local Government Reform for this award, which is a great credit of confidence awarded to a small municipality. Despite being a small municipality, we have a team motivated to make innovations a style of work. Today's event has further motivated us to be innovative in the remaining years of our term.

Social activities, culture and education, and citizen participation - these are the areas in which we have significant innovations; we also have practices in other areas, which we'll share during the next year, once we ensure their sustainability.

The key to our success are most of the people, their motivation and willingness to work to provide models applicable in other municipalities. Furthermore, we want our innovations to reach every individual citizen and, by involving the citizens in our efforts, to make their everyday life easier and better. So that they would live with the confidence that we, the municipal administration, together with our partners, are working to the benefit of the people. They mean everything to us, which is why we have dedicated our efforts to the benefit of our residents.

To my counterparts in Bulgaria's local governments I wish to be willing to share everything they do on the pages of the Innovative Practices publications of the Foundation for Local Government Reform, as thus they'll join the large family of the innovators. Having won the prize this year, we are really proud to have become a member of that family and we'd like to see more experience shared on the pages of the Innovative Practices - experience that we may learn from to get prepared for the demands of life, for the demands of our European membership, as we'll have to prove that we deserve to become a part of the European family.

We believe that the constant aspiration towards new ideas and development would encourage every municipality to apply for the 2005 Innovative Municipality Competition!



**STANISLAV BLAGOV, MAYOR,
MUNICIPALITY OF SVISHTOV:**

We are very happy that we're among the winners for the second year in a row! First of all, I'd like to thank the Executive Director and the Chair of the Foundation for establishing this award. It is an additional incentive not only for our municipality, but also for all Bulgarian municipalities, to implement new approaches in local government, a critical task given the challenges we face on the way to EU accession.

This year we had the most innovations in the social area and in infrastructure, in which our municipality is facing great problems. Combining the interests in these two areas is difficult but I believe that we've managed to find the balance by provoking civil society involvement in the identification of solutions to infrastructure issues.

In my opinion, the people are the main and most important factor that contributes to the development of an innovative municipality. Due to the fact that the municipality of Svishtov is an academic hub, its residents are mostly young people, which is one of the basic factors that define the behavior of the municipal administration and the public.

I think that our colleagues in the Bulgarian municipalities have accumulated sufficient capacity and that they deserve, as much as all of us, the prize that was awarded to us today. I wish them to be as ambitious as they have been so far!

**IVAN ASPAROUKHOV, MAYOR,
MUNICIPALITY OF MEZDRA:**

Last year we ranked third in FLGR Innovative Municipality National Competition. This year I'm happy that we won the second place for the practices we've implemented and which we applied with for the competition. Now, there is only one peak remaining to be conquered – the first place in the Innovative Municipality Competition. However, as more and more municipalities aspire to that peak, we'll have to increase our efforts in order to prevail.

Most of our innovations for the past year were in the areas of transparency, awareness, access to information, providing the people opportunities to get involved in the identification and the making of certain decisions.

Examples of such practices include the opportunity to use open source software, the holding of municipal council meetings in different communities, the open days of the municipal administration in partnership with another institutions, for example in education, as well as many others. I'd like to thank the team for managing to implement twenty positive, working practices over the course of the year!

The key to our success is probably the aspiration to act, to implement. Our motto is: Every good idea must be implemented. The motivation of municipal staff to implement their

ideas is the key factor.

To my colleagues I'd like to wish to use the experience accumulated by FLGR on positive local government practices, and to share every single thing they do in their municipalities with the others.

**DETELINA NIKOLOVA,
MAYOR, MUNICIPALITY OF DOBRICH-CITY,
NATIONAL PRIZE WINNER:**

The award is a recognition for the efforts of the team of Dobrich specialists who were actively involved in our ambitious plans to effectively change Dobrich. For the confidence, the responsibility and the willingness that we invest in our work, in order to revive our city. For the compassion and the human attitude we adopted in proving ourselves and winning this prestigious prize.


I feel proud that my municipality has staff who work towards innovation and an effective change of our city, towards making it a truly European city.

The practices we shared target service delivery and the integration of people of unequal status, alternative social care forms for children and youth, development of partnerships in various areas, joint cultural initiatives, new international cooperation models, encouragement of interest and awareness about the cultural diversity within the community, use of financial instruments to generate additional revenues, encouraging citizen participation, etc. The proposed solutions are based on our understanding that there is a need for coordination of the efforts of different institutions in solving local issues, in order to increase the trust in local government.

The professionalism and compassion that we invested to prove that we're working for an effective change – improvement of municipal service delivery, quality of life and living environment – were the key to our success.

We'll continue to implement activities to reform the Dobrich municipal administration and we've mobilized the support of our staff at all levels. We'll use all tools and mechanisms available to ensure transparency and accountability of administration's activities, in order to return people's lost confidence in the institutions, to change the negative attitudes of the public and to provide everyone an opportunity to feel the change.

I'd like to thank the team of the Foundation for Local Government Reform for their valuable partnership to the benefit of the Bulgarian municipalities, which I believe will continue to be as strong in the future as it was so far.

To my counterparts in the country I wish to continue to be involved in FLGR's significant projects which prove that hope can only be inspired by a policy which is oriented to the people and which gives precedence to human dignity. 

A.V.E.C. MEMBERSHIP WILL TEACH US HOW MONUMENTS OF CULTURE ARE MAINTAINED AND USED TO GENERATE PROFIT IN EUROPE

Issue 11/2004

One of the most pleasant duties of the Foundation for Local Government Reform is to track where the award tickets have taken the winning municipality in FLGR's Innovative Municipality National Competition. The 2003 winner was the Municipality of Sliven. Therefore, we contacted Svetomir Minchev and Svetlana Koycheva. On October 7 - 10, 2004 they were in Pecz, Hungary to present Sliven's application to the Board of the Association of European Heritage Cities (Alliance de Villes Europeennes de Culture - A.V.E.C.). The organization represents historic cities and regions that have a significant contribution to world heritage. A.V.E.C.'s plans are to place this heritage in service of long-term regional development. The network's members established an association to expand their knowledge, exchange experience, organize programs and mobilize funds for comprehensive utilization of heritage values. A.V.E.C. is open to every city and region in Europe. The invitation to Sliven to become the first Bulgarian member city was sent by A.V.E.C.'s vice-chairman, Mr. Enyo Uyvari.

Sliven is not the only Bulgarian city that has a significant heritage. How would Sliven's invitation to join A.V.E.C. be perceived by cities such as Plovdiv, Nesebar, Troyan, Koprivshtitsa and many others that have preserved cultural heritage of immense value to Bulgaria?



Svetomir Minchev: The purpose of Sliven's membership in the organization is to have a network of partnering Bulgarian cities developed. All cultural monuments in Bulgaria, regardless whether Thracian, Roman, Renaissance or other, are a source of common pride. We could benefit from each other, we could share our experiences and make our culture accessible and understandable to our nations. And last but not least, we could do so as to make tourism a profitable industry. A.V.E.C. membership can teach us how the European heritage is maintained and used to generate profit. In terms of significant heritage, settlement mounds have been discovered in the Sliven area, such as the Karanovo mound

which attract Thracian scientists from all over Europe. The „Small Holy Forest“ was located here, comprised of scores of small mediaeval monasteries in the mountains. Today Sliven may not be the most important industrial city in Bulgaria, but it was here that the foundations of Bulgarian industry were laid in 1834, when Dobri Zhelyazkov established his fabric factory.

How would Sliven benefit from its membership in A.V.E.C?

Svetomir Minchev: The membership in the association will provide a basis for joint implementation of projects that would apply for funding from large European commission programs and funds that provide A.V.E.C.'s members financing for restoration, youth training to increase their sensitivity to heritage preservation.

A.V.E.C. is a non-governmental organization. Do you think that Sliven's non-governmental sector has the capacity to partner with such an organization?

Svetomir Minchev: I think that we have somewhat forgotten the will of our ancestors and have neglected our attitude to Sliven's values. Our city is the cradle of the Bulgarian Renaissance. Currently, there are several organizations that can be our partners. Sliven's membership in A.V.E.C. will provide not only the city, but the country as a whole, an opportunity to better utilize funds from foreign sources.

When would you know whether Sliven's application has been approved?



Svetlana Koycheva: We should be notified whether our application has been approved by mid-November. Then there will be an official ceremony for the signing of the membership documents. The Municipality of Sliven will be leading partner in the project. The Municipality will pay the membership dues, which are calculated on the population of the community and the financial capabilities of the respective country. It is expected that our city will join the Association after A.V.E.C.'s Board meeting in Ubeda, Spain in January, 2005.

How did the current A.V.E.C members react to your presentation on October 8 in



Hungary?

Svetlana Koycheva: While Svetomir Minchev was delivering our presentation, I had the opportunity to watch the reactions of the attendees. They were all impressed by the movie that was developed specifically for this purpose by a team presided by Veselina Sedlarska and Costas Anastasiou, as well as by the sites it presented. I think that the approval of the attendees is a proof that the application will have a positive outcome. ◆



A strange monument of culture - the old elm, a 1000-year-old tree.



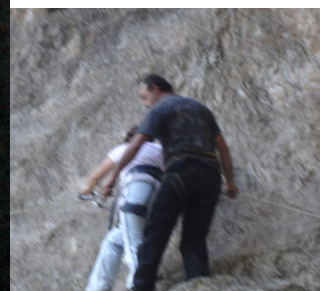
The foundations of an administrative building believed to have been an official residence in the ancient town of Tuida. The Hisarluksa fortress at Sliven dates back to pre-Byzantine times; later, it played a significant role in the structure of the Bulgarian nation-state.



This is the building where in 1834 Dobri Zhelyazkov started the first textile factory on the Balkans.



Three caves at Devin (a town in the Rhodopi Mountains) were conquered by the FLGR team (or at least some of its members) at the end of July. Some photos are unfocused - due to the tremors induced (sometimes) by extreme experiences :))



ROUNDTABLE ON SOFIA'S GREEN AREAS

Issue 11/2004

The forum was held on October 5, 2004 in Sofia, under the aegis of US Ambassador James Pardew. The roundtable was initiated by Citizens for Green Sofia Civic Initiative, an organization uniting 35 associations and steering committees. The United States Agency for International Development, in partnership with the Foundation for Local Government Reform, were the organizers of the event.



The significance of this roundtable was confirmed by the attention demonstrated by the press (*The Culture*) and by other representative forums organized by NGOs (*Visual Seminar*).

To the FLGR team:

The citizen associations united within the Citizens for Green Sofia Initiative thank the young, energetic and enthusiastic team of the Foundation for Local Government Reform for the preparation, organization and assistance in holding the **Roundtable on the Preservation of Sofia's Green System** initiated by the US Ambassador to Bulgaria, His Excellency James Pardew. The roundtable is the first of its type in the country and we hope that the results it achieved and their subsequent implementation will provide a positive example for the identification of solutions in other cities facing similar problems, not only with regard to green areas but also with regard to urban development and civil society development.

The mediation of the FLGR team helped the representatives of central and local authorities, the prosecutor's office, the academic institutions and the citizens, reach consensus on a series of issues on which there were no common vision and ideas so far. The consensus proposals developed by the work groups were widely disseminated among the public and through the support expressed by the Sofia Municipal Council and the municipal administration will, hopefully, form the basis of these institutions' efforts towards the preservation of the city's green system.

We also value highly the non-consensus proposals formulated during the preparation stage and will continue to promote them and to convince the institutions that they should revise their positions and views. In this respect, we'd like to rely on your cooperation and experience in the future, as the real work on transforming the Bulgarian capital into a better place for this and the next generations is yet to come.

We are convinced that by common effort we'll manage to improve the quality of life, consistent with their constitutional right to a healthy and favorable environment.

Citizens for Green Sofia Initiative
October 25, 2004



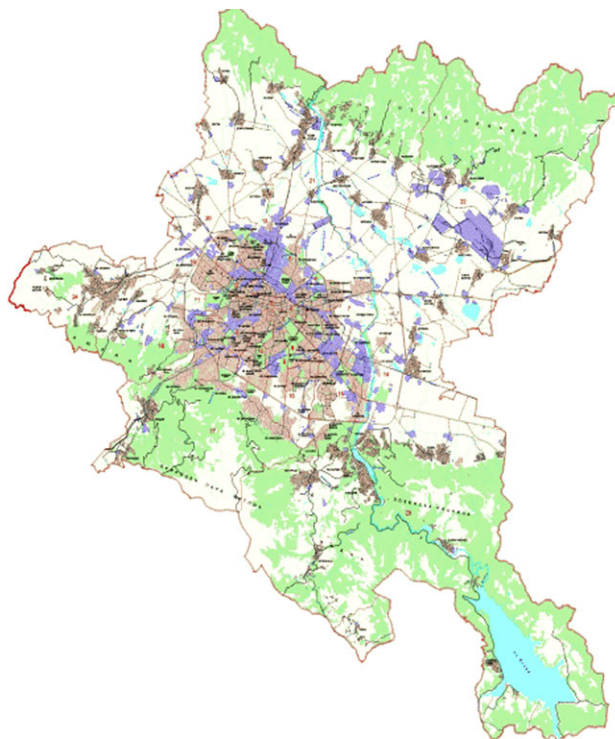


**ANTOANETA TSONEVA,
SOFIA'S OMBUDSMAN,
2001 - 2004:**

The process, which continued for about three months and of which the roundtable was a part, proved the following: there was a pressing need for the initiation and the maintenance of a dialogue between civil society and the administration. What was achieved over these three

months, as a result from a lot of efforts on behalf of the administration and the responsible institutions, on one hand, and the citizen organizations, on the other hand, were many consensus proposals that will provide an opportunity to improve the environment as a whole, the dialogue, on one hand, and at the same time, to initiate measures for the preservation of Sofia's green system. I believe that this was an unique process. I can't think of anything like it. It has no analogue. So many institutions, from national to local, including the Supreme Cassation Prosecutor's Office, and so many citizen organizations at the same time, sat at the same table and agreed upon what needs to be done about our city from now on.

Many important proposals were made, some of which I already see are being implemented. What remains now is to have the other proposals, related to civic control mechanisms, implemented. And namely, access to the complete texts submitted by municipal councilors. This would guarantee that the civil society representatives will be able to receive relevant information they need to react on time, make their alternative proposals and, if necessary, support some political representatives in moving the process forward. ◆





THE NEXT ENLARGEMENT OF THE EUROPEAN UNION: THE ROLE OF THE REGIONS AND THE CITIES

Issue 12/2004

On December 1, 2004 Program Horizont of the Bulgarian National Radio aired the next issue of the Municipal Radio Forum, a broadcast that for three years has been trying to inform the public on the role, the responsibilities and the successes of local government in Bulgaria. The series is a joint initiative of the Bulgarian National radio and the Foundation for Local Government Reform. The topic of the broadcast was the one-day conference on **The Next Enlargement of the European Union: the Role of the Regions and the Cities** held by the EU Committee on Regions on November 5, 2004 at Hatfield Heat, a small town close to London, Essex.

The conference was opened by Lord Haningfield, Chair of the Essex Regional Council, Vice-President of the Commission on International Relations at the Committee on the Regions and Co-Chair of the Joint Advisory Committee of the Committee on the Regions and NAMRB, and by Roger Khalif, Vice-President of the Commission on International Relations at the Committee on the Regions.

In the presence of representatives from the EU Committee on the Regions and the EU Enlargement General Directorate, the representatives of 4 candidate countries (Croatia, Turkey, Bulgaria and Romania) discussed some key problem areas they face in the European integration process, in the context of local and regional authorities.

Bulgaria was represented at the forum by Mr. Krasimir Mirev, Mayor of the municipality of Turgovishte and Chair of the Board of the National Association of the Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB), Co-Chair of the Joint Advisory Committee of the Committee on the Regions and NAMRB, and by Mr. Lachezar Rosenov, municipal councilor from the municipality of Dobrich-city and Chair of the Board of the Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR). They were also invited to the radio broadcast.

LAZHEZAR ROSENOV, CHAIR OF THE BOARD, FOUNDATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM:

As representatives of Bulgaria, we made two statements. The first one was by Mr. Mirev, on the fiscal decentralization. It should be noted that it was a very comprehensive statement that concentrated the tough Bulgarian experience in the fiscal decentralization process and openly identified the

problems. I spoke more about the interaction between local authorities and the Committee on the Regions and about what we expect from the Committee on the Regions: greater insistence, monitoring, as I should admit that this was our first participation in which, having completed the negotiations, we could honestly describe our problems.

The next meeting of the Joint Advisory Committee of the Committee on the Regions and the Bulgarian authorities will be held in the spring next year in Brussels. At that meeting we'll have to report on our readiness, on the experience we have accumulated, on the administrative capacity of the Bulgarian authorities, on the extent of the involvement in the utilization of the accession funds and on the problems we face.

We are moving in the right direction. The local authorities are allowed access to more and more funding sources and invest more efforts in getting themselves prepared for project development. A growing number of municipalities hire staff to specifically develop projects. Local government organizations have developed various training tools. For example FLGR, which I chair, has not only developed a series of project development tools, but is also involved in training the municipalities. Our opinion is that the Bulgarian municipalities are pretty well prepared. I can't speak for a 100% of them, but the larger municipalities, as well as those willing, have built their own capacity and together with local or national non-governmental organizations are successfully applying to the accession funds.

KRASIMIR MIREV, CHAIR OF THE BOARD, NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF THE MUNICIPALITIES IN THE REPUBLIC OF BULGARIA:

In July we adopted a program on the preparation of local governments for the EU accession and these are the steps by which we need to build capacity - both technical and human - within our municipalities. The large and medium-size municipalities are more or less well equipped but the small ones aren't. We need to develop the required staff capacity for the comprehensive implementation of EU rules and requirements by our local governments. Apart from everything else, they should be able to establish both vertical and horizontal contacts with other municipalities in the EU member countries. These are very tough requirements. And it would take a lot of efforts to meet them within the time we have. ♦



ENCOURAGING FIRST RESULTS

Issue 12/2004

The Municipality of Pazardzhik attended the International Fall Technical Fair in Plovdiv (September 27 - October 2, 2004), together with ten other municipalities and FLGR. This is the second event in which, upon initiative by the Foundation for Local Government Reform, Bulgarian municipalities - through the Bulgarian Local Economic Development Partnership (BLEDP) - attend a fair to establish contacts with potential domestic and foreign investors.

Representatives of the Local Economic Development Department of the Municipality of Pazardzhik, Chief Expert Krum Georgiev and Senior Expert Georgi Hambariski, initiated contact and had meetings with representatives of Albomex Ltd., a German company interested in expanding its operations by investing in Bulgaria. Upon several meetings during the fair, it was agreed that Albomex Ltd. representatives will visit Pazardzhik to study the opportunities to build a factory there.

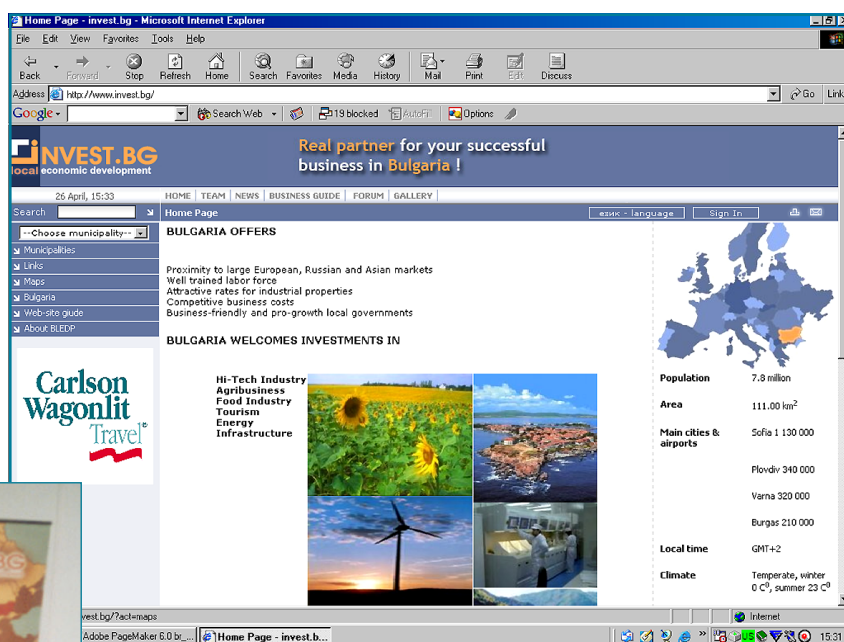
Albomex Ltd. specializes in:

- ☐ cable groups;
- ☐ electronic components;

- ☐ PCBs;
- ☐ design and development;
- ☐ material and technical supplies;
- ☐ testing, packaging and assembly of finished products.

Albomex Ltd.'s headquarters are in Germersheim. The company has contracts with large German and international companies, such as Siemens, Hewlett Packard, Agilent, ABB, Papst, SEW, Klink und Oechsle, Spengler.

During their first visit to Pazardzhik on October 17 - 21, 2004, company representatives studied the opportunities to build a cabling factory. The locations reviewed included the



new economic zone, as well as other sites and buildings. The delegation visited Magnetic Media Mechanics Ltd. and discussed joint business opportunities. Initially, Albomex plans to create 25 jobs, which would increase to 100 within a year. The municipal LED experts fully cooperated with the investor and a second visit was arranged.

During its second visit to Pazardzhik, the company rented 1,000 m² of facilities. At present, municipal employees are helping the company obtain the permits and papers required to commence production. Negotiations are under way for the purchase of a lot for a greenfield cabling and PCB factory.

FLGR is proud with these results and believes that BLEDP's activities show the right way for the Bulgarian municipalities. ♦

FLGR AWARDED PRIZES FOR TRANSPARENCY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Issue 12/2004

The Foundation for Local Government Reform and the Local Government Initiative Program, with the support of the United States Agency for International Development, initiated in early 2004 a **Campaign for Transparency in the Municipalities**. The campaign targets all Bulgarian municipalities. Its purpose is to increase the transparency in the operation of the municipal councils and the municipal administrations, thus increasing citizens' trust in local government and encouraging citizen participation.

FLGR's and LGI's partners in the implementation of the campaign included the National Association of the Municipalities, the regional associations of municipalities and the professional associations of municipal specialists.

This year's campaign included activities aimed at strengthening local government transparency:

❑ A **self-assessment questionnaire** was disseminated

among the municipalities to establish the extent of transparency in their operations;

❑ A **Communications Plan** was developed and disseminated among all municipalities;

❑ A Demonstration Team of 17 pilot municipalities was formed, on a competitive basis, which proved their willingness to apply new transparency practices and transfer their experience to other municipalities.

FLGR established a **Transparency in Local Government Award**, with two categories: Most Transparently Operating Municipality; and Best Transparency Practice in a Risk Area. The start of the Transparency Competition was announced by FLGR's Executive Director, Ginka Kapitanova, at the Second Annual Meeting of Bulgarian Local Authorities (October 6 - 8, 2004).

31 innovative practices from different areas of municipal operations were submitted by December 6, the final dead-



line for the Best Transparency Practice in a Risk Area category. The nominated municipalities included Vulchi Dol, Montana, Razgrad, Silistra, Smyadovo and Strumyani. The Municipality of Vulchi Dol was awarded the third prize and a honorary certificate for the practice *Let's Lift the Curtain on Bids: Transparent and Effective Municipal Property Management*. The Municipality of Smyadovo got the second prize and a honorary certificate for the practice *A New Way of Appointing Bidding Committees: A Method Preventing Corruption Attempts*.

The first prize in the Best Transparency Practice in a Risk Area category was awarded to the **Municipality of Razgrad** for the practice *Effective Control on the Implementation of Contractual Terms in Deals under the Municipal Property Act*.

17 municipalities competed in the Most Transparently Operating Municipality category. These were all municipalities that: apply most of the practices included in the Transparency Questionnaire; have formed municipal teams covering both the municipal council and the municipal administration, citizens, business and media; have implemented an impressive number of new practices in the current year; and have developed and adopted programs and plants with regard to transparency. The following municipalities were nominated in this category: Berkovitsa, Dobrich, Mezdra, Plevn, Razgrad, Stara Zagora and Strumyani.

The third place honorary diploma in this category was awarded to the **Municipality of Berkovitsa**. The Municipality of Berkovitsa is implementing 79% of the practices included in the Questionnaire, has implemented 24 new practices and has planned 12 practices for the near future.

The second place was divided between two municipalities, **Strumyani** and **Stara Zagora**. The Municipality of Stara Zagora demonstrated an exceptionally high percentage of implementation of practices included in the Questionnaire - 92%, while the Municipality of Strumyani registered an extraordinary development in their implementation - from 45% in May to 80% in November. Both municipalities have successfully analyzed their efforts towards transparency, have teams with wide representation and have developed successful programs and plans.

The winner in the Most Transparently Operating Municipality category was the **Municipality of Plevn**. The Municipality of Plevn was exceptionally active during the 2004 Campaign for Transparency in the Municipalities and within the Demonstration team on Transparency. The Municipality is implementing 81% of the practices included in the Questionnaire, has implemented 18 new practices and has planned 25 more practices in its Increasing the Transparency of Municipal Council and Municipal Administration Operations Program. The program is a carefully thought and useful docu-



ment that may serve as a model for other municipalities willing to implement similar actions.

FLGR would like to thank all participant municipalities for their innovative ideas and noble efforts towards establishing transparency as the only way of democratic governance. We would also like to thank the Local Government Initiative team for their support and the valuable experience they shared with the Bulgarian municipalities!

We believe that the Local Government Transparency Award will become a tradition, and that over the following years the Campaign for Transparency will cover more and more Bulgarian municipalities, will continue to build high standards of local government operations and will encourage citizen participation. ◆



FLGR'S MAILBOX



Phase IV of the Bulgarian Technical Twinning Program gave the Municipality of Dobrich-city an opportunity to interact with a wonderful team of professionals and generous people from Auburn, Alabama. Over the past year and a half, we saw how creative people can be when working with enthusiasm and consolidated around a common idea. To observe the dedication of both our American counterparts and the FLGR support staff was a privilege.

Detelina Nikolova, Mayor, Municipality of Dobrich-city

The Municipality of Plovdiv highly appreciates the assistance provided by the Municipality of Veliko Turnovo, the City of Golden, Colorado, USA, FLGR and the United States Agency for International Cooperation and is grateful for the cooperation and the opportunity to develop a public infrastructure management plan for the city of Plovdiv.

Ivan Chomakov, Mayor, Municipality of Plovdiv



The Project Cycle Management manual published by FLGR is one of the most valuable tools ever published. This is an opinion that is also shared by many colleagues, municipal secretaries and other municipal management staff and specialists.

*Vasil Pancharov, Executive Director,
National Association of the Municipal Secretaries in the Republic of Bulgaria*

Dear colleagues! I can't thank you enough for being here throughout 2004 as well. More and more people read your electronic weekly, and you provide a growing volume of information. Thank you for saving us time and giving a strong start to viable projects!

Nelly Kiryakova, December, 2004

Your weekly contains a lot and valuable information. Congratulations and I wish you many years of fruitful work!

Anna Kostova Ivanova, Mizia 2004 Non-Profit Association, December, 2004



Thank you very much for the e-weekly. To me, it is the most useful information source. As a result of the timely information, we developed three successful projects in the second half of 2004 alone. Sincere wishes for health and optimism in 2005.

Ognyan Lazarov, Gotse Delchev Municipal Administration, December, 2004





FLGR'S MAILBOX

Your electronic weekly RULEZ! It contains and effectively disseminates up-to-date information which is a valuable resource for everyone. Thanks to the weekly I learned about a training course, applied and won! I can't imagine what I'd do without your electronic database! I'd like to thank the team creating it!



Thank you on behalf of all my colleagues who eagerly look forward to receiving the 'electronic window to the world' every Wednesday.

Diana Bebenova-Nikolova, Municipality of Silistra, December, 2004



Please, allow me to express mine and all participants' gratitude to FLGR for holding the training seminar for mayors of mayoralities and mayor's representatives. I'm convinced that the theoretical knowledge acquired during the training, as well as the best practices shared will contribute to our more effective work.

Hasan Azis, Mayor, Municipality of Kurdzhali, July, 2004

Please, accept my sincere thanks for the Building Manager's Guide you published for the managers of common property in residential buildings. The dissemination of the guide has greatly enhanced the citizens in solving common property issues in residential buildings and has become a basis for a better dialogue with the ward administration, development of new trust and partnership-building opportunities.



Georgi Savov, Mayor, Ilinden Ward, Sofia, October, 2004



Thank you for providing us the opportunity to participate in the three regional development seminars organized by FLGR.

*Valentina Aleksandrova, Director, Investment and Legal Services,
Bulgarian Investment Agency, October, 2004*

I'd like to thank FLGR and its Innovative Practices Team for the Serving the Citizens Seminar. The way the information was presented, as a combination of theory, practice and entertainment, proved exceptionally useful for our 'frontline' staff, as it provided an opportunity - an a free discussion - to have options, new approaches and specific service delivery improvement measures reviewed, and valuable practical experience shared.

Mincho Kazandzhiev, Mayor, Municipality of Lovech, November, 2004



Sincere thanks for the updated Project Cycle Management Manual. This publication is not only of great interest to the experts involved in European integration, but will also result in better quality and more professional operation of the team assigned the development and management of projects under EU-funded programs.

Penka Dimitrova, Mayor, Municipality of Teteven

I'd like to thank the FLGR team for your participation in the Second Annual Meeting of Bulgarian Local Authorities, October, 2004. Your presence, your assistance, as well as the seminar organized by you, are yet another proof that you are a real supporter and partner of local government and NAMRB.



Ginka Chavdarova, Executive Director, NAMRB