

## INNOVATIVE PRACTICES 2002



FOUNDATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM

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**Dear Colleagues,**

We are pleased to present our new selection of Innovative Practices in local government in Bulgaria from the FLGR database at <http://www.flgr.bg>



In a context of dynamic change, the people implementing these creative solutions are driven by the best principles of work for the public good and are seeking new and more efficient ways to deliver public services.

The Foundation of Local Government Reform, an independent professional resource center supporting local democracy, focused its programs and activities in the past year on initiating innovative approaches and support of innovators' networks, on their expansion and creation of new ones. Effective ways of knowledge management and dissemination have been sought, including the launch of the FLGR electronic weekly bulletin with currently over 1800 subscribers. Work in the Local Government Information Network (LOGIN) has provided an advanced set of tools for sharing innovations in the CEE region and learning from international experience.

A key event was the development of a network of municipal specialists in Bulgaria, working in the field of European integration and international cooperation, as well as setting up the FLGR Innovative Practices Award. Winners were awarded in three thematic areas: European Integration and International Partnerships - Sliven Municipality, November 2001; Marketing your City - Haskovo Municipality and Silistra Municipality, February 2002; Environment and Sustainable Development - Etropole Municipality, and Ecoprocess Company with Dobrich City, June 2002. Special recognition to local government achievement will be made through the FLGR Annual Award for Innovative Municipality, to be given on the Day of the Bulgarian Municipality, October 2002.

We would like to extend our warmest thanks to all innovators who shared their practices, to partner organizations who helped in expanding the database, to our consultants who transferred valuable international experience, and to our donors Open Society Institute - Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative and the United States Agency for International Development for making things happen.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ginka Kapitanova', written over a light blue grid background.

Ginka Kapitanova  
Executive Director,  
Foundation for Local Government Reform

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## Pleven Community Fund „Chitalishta“



Finances & Budget

### Creating a new mechanism for alternative funding of Culture Centers (chitalishta) in Pleven Municipality

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

The Lik Culture Center (Chitalishte) in Pleven is an active organization in the sphere of culture, education and social activities on the territory of Pleven Municipality. The financial difficulties of chitalishta - usually the only civil organization in the small settlements - are the reason for their inability to answer the precise needs of local communities. Enjoying traditional public trust and internal organizational resources, they

need additional funding and adaptation of activities in order to meet the changing cultural, educational and social needs of their clients. The lack of communication and consolidation among the chitalishta in Pleven Municipality hinders the process of renovation, new visioning of their role, and utilization of their capacities - not only for survival but also for adaptation to the new conditions of transition.

#### Summary

Within the project a lobbying campaign was carried out for the creation of a new organizational structure with the participation of Culture Centers (chitalishta), NGOs, citizens and local authorities. As a result of the campaign, they established the first local fund for financial support of chitalishta in Bulgaria, with the direct help of Pleven Municipality. The fund was based on the principle of competitive project proposals for meeting community needs.

#### Practice

The Lik Culture Center (Chitalishte) initiated the formation of an operative coalition of 14 chitalishta, 6 NGOs and 40 citizens (active chitalishte associates). They conducted a serious analysis of the external and internal conditions which underlay the Lobbying Campaign Strategy. A number of meetings were held with key figures from the Municipality and political parties represented in the Municipal Council, followed by an active media campaign and public pressure (signing list, correspondence, workshops and community forums) for the involvement of Pleven Municipality as a partner and co-founder of the Chitalishta Pleven Community Fund. After an agreement, the Municipal Council took the decision to become the co-founder and an active member of the association, supporting it financially through the payment of a membership fee.

The Fund was officially registered on August 8, 2001, as an association acting

for the benefit of society. The Management Board, elected on the principle of equity, included two chitalishta representatives, two NGO leaders, one representative of local administration, one member of the Municipal Council, and three citizens. This election was a guarantee for the protection of everyone's interests, publicity, and transparency. The Code of Chitalishta Pleven Community Fund provided financial support for competitive chitalishta projects in favour of the community, with clearly defined agreements and the opportunity of development and accumulation of social capital.

Further 'steps' of the Fund were related to the organization of a fund raising campaign, the expansion of public resources, the formation of teams of volunteers, the improvement of knowledge and skills of chitalishta teams on project preparation and management. The first call-for-proposals session of the

Fund financed 9 small projects of village chitalishta, aiming to solve acute social, cultural, or educational problems of various public groups in the smallest settlements of Pleven Municipality.

The Chitalishta Pleven Community Fund Association continues its work on fund raising, public needs assessment, raising the competence of chitalishta staff, and funding socially important and efficient chitalishta micro-projects.

The Fund tried to promote its model not only within the region but nationally. At its presentation at the Euro-Bulgarian Culture Center in Sofia, the Fund received support from the attending representatives of Bulgarian Parliament, ministries, Bulgarian and international funding organizations.

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#### Results

As a result of the lobbying campaign, a new organizational structure was born with the help of local government, to support financially and operationally the chitalishta in Pleven Municipality, distribute resources and responsibilities among the civil sector, manage and attract funds to the municipality. The most important results include:

- The introduction of a new principle of financial support for the

chitalishta in the smallest villages;

- Consolidation of the chitalishta network in Pleven Municipality;

- Testing and introduction of new methods of fund raising;

- Acquiring new type of skills and raising the competence of chitalishta staff;

- Stimulating public participation, communication and cooperation with local authorities.





## Municipality of Chepelare Counterpart International Inc. - Bulgaria

### Creating the Chepelare Community Fund

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

The Community Funds Project is part of the Community Funds and Social Enterprises Pilot Program funded by USAID and implemented by Counterpart International - Bulgaria. The Community Fund is a non-governmental organization created for the public benefit, set up by the local people to raise funds in support of citizen initiatives reflecting local needs. It brings together representatives of the business, non-profit organizations, local government

and a broad range of the public.

Chepelare Municipality is one of the three pilot municipalities selected by USAID in 2001 for the implementation of this project. The aim of the project is to stimulate citizen participation in solving problems of the community through creating a Community Fund, which accumulates local resources and allocates them on the basis of achieved citizen consensus on the priorities for local development.



#### Category Finances & Budget

#### Summary

The Community Fund Project implemented by Counterpart in partnership with Chepelare Municipality has provided methodological and technical assistance for the creation and development of the Chepelare Community Fund, as well as managing to double all funds locally raised in the first three years of the Fund's existence. Finances have been collected primarily through donations.

#### Practice

The preparation for setting up of the Community Fund began in March 2001 with individual and group meetings with key representatives of the local government, business and NGOs, by presenting the idea for creating the community fund and discussing the way of its establishment in Chepelare Municipality. With the help of a local coordinator appointed through competition and a group of volunteers from all sectors, a Community Forum was conducted with the participation of over 100 citizens organized in 10 working groups representing local government; citizens; business; education and youth; culture; sports. The Forum identified and prioritised the needs with respect to enhancing local development, and defined the main areas to be supported by the Community Fund. The citizens taking part in the forum determined tourism and sport, solving infrastructure problems and development of education and culture as most important areas. A wide public consensus was reached for the creation of the Community Fund. The Forum elected an Initiative Committee for the founding of the Community Fund and defined the goal of a pilot donation campaign, which was meant to demonstrate the mechanism of the Fund's activity and to convince citizens in the benefits it can bring.

The pilot donation campaign started on 24

May 2002 during Chepelare's official holiday and was devoted to the modernisation of the street lighting with energy saving lamps. The funds raised only in one day amounted to 2000 BGN. Larger donors had the possibility to transfer their donations to a bank account opened for this purpose. Chepelare Municipality, which has supported the project development from its very start in every possible way, became the major donor in the campaign. Following the court registration of the Community Fund at the end of June 2002 the funds collected are to be transferred by the Initiative Committee to the Fund's bank account and the Fund is going to hold a bid for the implementation of the street lighting project.

The main activities of the Chepelare Community Fund as defined by the Initiative Committee for the Fund's creation will be as follows:

- systematic survey of local needs;
- mobilising the community for solving the problems identified by the citizens themselves;
- organising fundraising campaigns;
- holding competitions for funding of projects in the priority areas determined by the citizens;
- management of donated funds in accordance with the principles of working for the public benefit and the donor's will.

The steps for implementing the practice are:

1. Accepting the idea of creating a Community Fund and ensuring support of the Chepelare local government. Chepelare Municipality confirmed its participation both as a donor and as a partner in the program.
2. Promoting the idea for a Community Fund in the municipality - conducting an active information campaign in the local and regional media.
3. Involving key figures from all sectors (business, NGOs, local government, and the citizens) in the process of developing the Fund;
4. Survey of local needs, resources and possibilities for development - conducting meetings and discussions with representatives of all social groups on the territory of Chepelare Municipality.
5. Conducting a broad public discussion - Community Forum, for building a consensus about the priorities of the Community Fund.
6. Conducting a pilot donation campaign targeted to a public benefit purpose determined by the local people.
7. Constituting the Community Fund on 27 June 2002.
8. Developing a strategy and action plan of the Chepelare Community Fund.
9. Institutional strengthening and making contacts with other Community Funds in Bulgaria and internationally.

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#### Results

- Broad public agreement achieved on the creation of a Community Fund in Chepelare;
- Participation of key public figures from the three main sectors: local government, business and civil society in the process of creating the Fund;
- Citizen consensus achieved regarding the priority directions of local development to be supported by the Fund;

- A successful donation campaign of the Chepelare Community Fund;
- Broad promotion of the Fund's constitution and possibility for each citizen to be a founder;
- The practice described is being developed simultaneously in three Bulgarian cities - Chepelare, Gabrovo and Blagoevgrad. The Program aims to set a model in the municipalities selected, which can be replicated in other Bulgarian cities.





### Buildings in Sofia - an energy efficiency action plan

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Municipal Property & Municipal Privatization

#### Background

#### Summary

According to a previous study, Sofia's energy consumption for heating purposes is 240 kWh/sqm, which considerably exceeds the average European standard of 140 kWh/sqm. The main reasons for this high rate of consumption are excessive heat losses from the buildings due to inadequate thermal insulation and poor construction; an

inefficient heat distribution system; and lack of control devices on the radiators. The distribution system is inefficient partly due to the lack of automatic regulation and the lack of measuring equipment in many of the sub-stations. As a result of the high level of energy consumption, CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are estimated to exceed 800,000 tons annually.

Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria with 1.2 million inhabitants, consumes energy for heating purposes at almost twice the rate of the European standard. This results in excessive energy costs and high CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. In order to reduce both energy consumption and air pollution, the municipality decided to establish an energy conservation program. With an EcoLinks Challenge Grant, it teamed up with an American consulting company and a Bulgarian NGO to develop an Energy Efficiency Action Plan.

#### Practice

Sofia Municipality's overall goal is to reduce energy consumption by 30% by introducing cost-effective energy conservation measures in both public and residential buildings. In addition to saving money, the Municipality expects to reduce emissions of CO<sub>2</sub> and other pollutants. The EcoLinks Challenge Grant enabled the Municipality to get started by funding the development of an energy efficiency action plan.

The objectives of this plan were to assess the energy consumption for both the public and residential buildings; identify appropriate energy conservation measures; and prepare a long-term energy conservation plan that defines the necessary financing, possible financial resources, and implementation steps for the selected measures.

Sofia Municipality teamed up with a US consulting company and a Bulgarian NGO to implement the EcoLinks project. The American partner was especially helpful in assessing different energy conservation measures and in developing marketing and business plans.

The main activities of the project were as follows:

#### ■ Collect data on current energy consumption

The available data on current energy consumption was collected for both the public and residential buildings. This included general characteristics and present condition of the buildings as well as the consumption of heat and electric energy. Based on this analysis, the buildings were classified into different groups according to their function, structure and energy consumption.

#### ■ Develop an audit methodology and conduct audit

It was decided to conduct two kinds of energy audits. First, a preliminary audit was conducted of the approximately 300 buildings owned by the Municipality by administering a questionnaire. The results were input to a database to support project implementation in later stages. Second, a detailed audit was conducted on two sample buildings, a school and a residential building. Computer models were used to determine current heat losses and estimate the potential for energy savings.

#### ■ Identify energy conservation measures

As a result of the analysis of the audit, a list of energy conservation measures was prepared.

The list included such basic measures as installation of meters to measure heat consumption, installation of thermostatic valves, and insulation of doors and windows. For each measure, the necessary investment was determined along with the simple payback period. Also, possible administrative and regulatory barriers to implementation of the energy conservation program were identified.

#### ■ Prepare action and marketing plans

The action plan detailed all the technical improvements necessary to implement the energy conservation program, along with the costs, risks and possible financing sources. It also provided for the creation of new institutions to operate the program. The marketing plan primarily targeted the owners of private residential buildings. Their buy-in is essential in implementing the program in the residential buildings. Draft plans were first prepared and discussed in numerous meetings with municipal authorities, consulting companies, associations, equipment suppliers and residents. A separate workshop was organized to present results of the energy audits and to discuss priorities of the action plan. As a result of these public discussions, the action and marketing plans were finalized.

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#### Results

##### Action Plan

The Action Plan scheduled the implementation of the energy conservation measures over a three to twelve-year period, depending upon the different ownership of the buildings; the owners' limited ability to finance the measures and the institutional barriers that needed to be addressed. One consideration was to undertake easy, fairly inexpensive measures in the first three years before the current Mayor's term expired. Then a track record would be established when the new Mayor's term began.

A noteworthy initiative in the Action Plan was the creation of an Energy Efficiency Fund to finance the implementation of energy efficiency measures in the municipality-owned buildings. The Fund would be initially capitalized at \$2.5 million. It would invest in energy efficiency measures that have the highest rate of return and shortest payback period. The money saved from reduced energy consumption would be returned to the Fund and invested in other measures on a revolving basis. It is estimated that the Fund would generate \$51 million for energy efficiency investments over a twelve-year period with the initial \$2.5 million fully recovered.





## Municipality of Pazardjik

### The marketing process in the building of Business Area - Pazardjik

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

The Municipality of Pazardjik has worked in cooperation with the Municipality of West Bend, Wisconsin, USA, on the project of building Business Area - Pazardjik within the framework of the Program for Technical Twinning between Bulgarian and US Municipalities

implemented by FLGR and ICMA. The applying of marketing approaches has been appreciated as a key to the successful implementation of the project, so the municipality proceeded to the execution of a complete marketing plan.



### Municipal Property & Municipal Privatization

#### Category

#### Summary

The aim of the present practice is to show the stages of the complete marketing plan, used in support of the creation of a business area in order to meet effectively the needs of small and medium size businesses. The preparation of a detailed marketing plan is presented, as well as the corresponding marketing tools used by the Municipality of Pazardjik in building the business area.

#### Practice

The stages of the marketing process are as follows: collecting information and building an initial database; defining the target groups; collecting the necessary information about them; identifying their needs by getting in direct contact; outlining the methods for satisfying these needs; conducting a promotional campaign. Providing for a cyclic approach in this logical framework gives the possibility to react in accordance with consumers' needs and criteria for building the area. It also ensures control over the technology of preparing and implementing the concept of business area by feedback from the parties concerned and the Program partners.

Before proceeding to the execution of the first stage of the preparation of a marketing plan, a specialized team should be chosen. In this case, it was decided to use the capacity of the team responsible for the economic development of Pazardjik Municipality, selected for the work under the Business Area Project. The team comprises specialists from the Municipality of Pazardjik, the Regional Economic Development Agency, and representatives of West Bend Municipality (the word „team“ is used below for brevity).

#### ■ Collecting Initial Information

The initial database was developed with the help of specialists from West Bend Municipality, who pro-

vided rich information about already established similar business areas in their city and provided their know-how for the way of their construction.

#### ■ Defining the Target Groups, Collecting Information About Them and Identifying Their Needs

Small and medium size enterprises (SME) in the town were defined as a target group. A meeting was conducted with the SME representatives, with the whole team taking part in it, including representatives of West Bend Municipality. The purpose of the meeting was to get information about the size of the area needed in order to divide the zone effectively; about the way participants would like the area to be built - whether all investments should be at the expense of the entrepreneur, or the infrastructure should be built first and then the area would be sold, etc. The information gathered was used in the preparation of the draft project of the business area.

#### ■ Conducting a Promotional Campaign

#### ■ Preparing and Printing A Marketing Brochure

Together with its partners from West Bend, the Municipality of Pazardjik prepared the structure of the brochure, its vision and the concrete messages that should be included. It was very important to find the most effective ways to reach the target groups. In the process of the brochure preparation, the input of an artist and an architect was used for working on the brochure's vision. The brochure was successfully distributed and highly appreciated by specialists and private entrepreneurs at local and

national level, and this gave the necessary feedback about the start of the next stage, drawing the team nearer to the final opening of the area. This marketing tool turned to be very successful for publicising of the business area project.

#### Active Dialogue with Business Circles

The active dialogue with business is an inseparable part of the work at all stages of preparing and realizing the marketing plan. During the process of defining the target groups specialized meetings were held between representatives of small and medium businesses and the municipality. Later, when the concept for building the area was complete, meetings were held with banking and business representatives with the purpose of presenting the concept of the area and discussing the opportunities for external financing.

A subsequent meeting with representatives of business in Pazardjik is being organized. During this meeting businessmen will receive information about the terms of buying a lot in the new business area. The criteria will be given to them for evaluation of the applying companies, as well as the general form of application.

#### ■ Media Coverage

A series of media events were organized and articles were published in local newspapers.

#### ■ Internet Promotion

Information about the business area was published in the Municipality of Pazardjik web site.

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#### Results

The introduction of marketing principles in the building of Business Area - Pazardjik has brought to concrete results with direct effect: maximum acceleration of the work on the area, as well as larger scale effect on the overall work of the team at the Municipality of Pazardjik. The approach adopted is already being multiplied within other strategic activities like „Preparation of a New Solid Waste Management Strategy“, and

the innovative „Issuing of Municipal Contractual Loan“. The innovation does not require expensive novelties, and stems from the intellectual endeavors of the staff and effective team work (at the local level and with Program partners), which has resulted in saving municipal funds and time for the creation of facilities for solving an acute social problem such as the support of small and medium size enterprises.



## Developing a techno-economic model for a geothermal station in Sapareva Banya Municipality

### Innovative Practice

### Category Municipal Services and Procurement

### Background

### Summary

At the end of March 2002 the project entitled „Development of a techno-economic model for a geothermal station in Sapareva Banya“ funded by USAID's EcoLinks Program was completed. The project was realised through the effective cooperation between Sapareva

Banya Municipality, the US partner Princeton Energy Resources Ltd. and the Bulgarian partner Elisa Consult Co. Activities were implemented in the course of 12 months with total program funding amounting to 48 000 USD.

Sapareva Banya municipal administration, with the financial support of EcoLinks Program and the United States Agency for International Development, and in partnership with US partners has developed a complex strategy for the development of geothermal resources in the region.

### Practice

The aim of the project was to develop a model for economically effective and environmentally safe use of the geothermal water in the region of Sapareva Banya for heating purposes (as an alternative energy source) as well as for developing the tourist and balneological infrastructure in the region.

The specific tasks of the project comprised the collection and analysis of data for the climatic characteristics of the region, the length of the heating period in the town, the need for heating energy sources, and the comparative share of each of the traditional fuels used for heating administrative and private buildings. A detailed technical and economic analysis was performed on the existing heating system, using water from the largest thermal spring (the Geyser) on the territory of the municipality, registering its potential in the short and long term.

US project consultants designed measures for immediate increase of the efficiency of the present heating system's operation, which the municipality then implemented

with minimum expenditures. The project also supported the expansion of the existing heating system to include the building of the kindergarten and the department store in Sapareva Banya.

A detailed assessment of expenditures for better utilization of the geothermal source potential was made, on the basis of which a techno-economic model for the regional heating system was developed. The assessment of the economic effect of the model developed in partnership between Bulgarian and US experts showed that its implementation would lead to annual savings for the community amounting to 91 400 USD.

The assessment of the environmental effect shows that the heating system will bring substantial benefit for the local environment through the reduced emissions of air polluting substances. The most significant one is the cut of over 9000 tons of carbon dioxide emissions annually.

Taking into account the natural resources available - the geothermal water and Sapareva Banya's location at the foot of the Rila Mountain, the model provided includes

guidelines for the development of tourism and some specific productions. It envisions the development of three interrelated resorts with Sapareva Banya as their centre - balneological, ski and golf resorts.

The specific productions proposed include drying of seed and wood, asparagus growing, production of seaweeds such as spiruline, food processing and aquaculture reserves, including an alligator breeding station.

In the course of project implementation problems of legal nature were encountered, which significantly hinder the successful implementation of the model developed. These are related to the currently operating legislation according to which in case of conceding the geothermal sources, concessioners receive only 30% of revenue, which is insufficient for maintenance and economically unprofitable for them. The price of cubic meter of geothermal water determined at this stage is inadequate in terms of the real consumption, and impossible to be paid by users, which on its part leads to ineffective use of the resource.

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### Results

Sapareva Banya Municipality, with the help of US based Princeton Energy Resources International and Elisa Consult, Bulgaria, has implemented a detailed techno-economic analysis of the existing heating system using geothermal water from the largest resource on the municipal territory (the Geyser), and performed an assessment of the potential short and long term possibilities for expansion. On this basis a techno-economic model for a regional heating system has been developed. The assess-

ment of the economic and environmental effect of the model shows that the heating system will bring substantial benefits to the environment, as well as for the development of some specific productions.

The research on the possibilities for attracting foreign investors for the implementation of the model developed indicate that the not so favourable investment climate in Bulgaria poses a serious legislative obstacle to the future effective utilization of the project results.





## Municipality of Montana

### Municipal plan for solid waste management

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

In 1999 and 2000, the International Agency of the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG International) prepared a program called „Strengthening Support for Local Government Reform in Bulgaria“, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands, the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development, the Foundation for Local Government Reform, and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. The main goal was to improve the capacity of local and regional authorities to use their rights in the sphere of municipal development policies and the process of regional development. The municipalities of Montana and

Vratsa were selected as pilot projects within the program.

The pilot project in Montana Municipality was related to solid waste management - a subject of immense importance to all Bulgarian municipalities, not only from environmental point of view (less pollution of environment, recycling of waste, etc.), but from financial as well (costs, investments, taxes, and others). In December 2000, new regulations became operational in relation to the Law on Decreasing Negative Impacts of Waste on the Environment of 1997. New regulations are to be accepted by the Bulgarian Parliament in 2002.



#### Category Municipal Services and Procurement

#### Summary

Montana Municipality ran a pilot project for solid waste management, which could be used by all Bulgarian municipalities as a practical guide to the preparation and implementation of municipal plans for solid waste management (MPSWM) according to the requirements of the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water, existing legislation and the expectations for the next 5-10 years.

#### Practice

The preparation and implementation of the project started in February and ended in October 2001. Final assessment is due one year after its end. The project had five inter-related goals:

- Prepare a general solid waste management plan, which could be used by all Bulgarian municipalities as a practical guide to the preparation and implementation of municipal plans for solid waste management (MPSWM) according to the requirements of the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water, existing legislation and the expectations for the next 5-10 years.

- Test the general solid waste management plan in Montana Municipality and share the experience with all Bulgarian municipalities.

- Develop the chapter „Financial Control and Investments“ in detail, so that it will serve as the basis for calculating the actual and full costs of solid waste management, and the relation to the waste charges.

- Stimulate the participation of all in-

terested parties at the local, regional and national levels, NGOs, citizens and civil groups, institutions, consultants and companies, in this important process, making the first difficult steps towards a more sustainable and cleaner environment in Bulgaria.

- Make an attempt to create new jobs through the implementation of specialized systems for separate collection and treatment of waste.

The achievement of these goals was the topic of a series of meetings and discussions with participants at the municipal (Montana Municipality), regional (Montana Regional Administration) and government (Ministry of Regional Development) levels, NGOs, citizens and civil groups, institutions, consultants and companies. That approach was chosen in order to involve a wide range of major project stakeholders, which would guarantee public support and commitment for the achievement of final results.

The municipal plan for solid waste management includes a general description of the area; legislative framework; present condition of the system for waste collection; meth-

ods and tools for intermediate waste treatment and deposition; system for separate collection of waste; activity management; reporting; research, prognosis and planning; involvement of NGOs, citizens and civil groups, institutions; financial analysis of activities; process and procedures for MPSWM preparation and approval; SWOT-analysis; future events, priorities, action plans; funding/investments and charges. A MPSWM in Montana Municipality was elaborated, conforming to the specific local conditions.

The project had the following innovative aspects:

- For the first time, municipal problems were analysed directly and the report addressed local government.

- Following the steps described in the guidebook, each municipality would be able to prepare its own waste management program.

- With the implementation of the Action Plan, a social and environmental effect was sought, e.g. the introduction of a system for separate waste collection would result in the creation of new jobs.

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#### Results

The stages and procedures for MPSWM preparation and implementation were developed, as well as the contents of the general and specific plans. Together with the experiences gained in the course of the project, these were published in a special Guidebook. It provides practical advice to all Bulgarian municipalities which would like to develop their own MPSWM. The electronic version of the Guidebook is available to municipalities in the LOGIN Library at the FLGR website.

The application of the results and experience of the Montana project in all Bulgarian municipalities in the next few years will help harmonize the national policy for solid waste management with EU policies. This would gradually contribute to the global policy for a better environment, and Bulgaria will become a full participant in that process.





## Municipality of Vratsa



### Preparation and implementation of a municipal plan for maintenance and repair of municipal roads in Vratsa Municipality

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Infrastructure

#### Background

#### Summary

In 1999 and 2000, the International Agency of the Association of Dutch Municipalities (VNG International) prepared a program called „Support for Strengthening Local Government Reform in Bulgaria“, with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development, the Foundation for Local Government Reform, and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. The main goal was to improve the capacity of local and regional authorities to exercise their rights in the sphere of municipal development policies and the process of regional development. The municipali-

ties of Montana and Vratsa were selected as pilot projects within the program.

The pilot project of Vratsa Municipality for the preparation and implementation of a municipal plan for the maintenance and repair of municipal roads was in close relation to one of the three sub-projects of this program: „Strategy for preparation and implementation of municipal development plans as a main part of the national and regional development of Bulgaria“. Practically this strategy demonstrated the importance and the general approach of municipal development plans from the point of view of both theory and practice.

Vratsa Municipality ran a pilot project for the preparation and implementation of a municipal plan for the maintenance and repair of municipal (former 4th class) roads, which could become the basis for plan preparation in all Bulgarian municipalities. The experience gained in the course of the project was promoted through the Guidebook published by FLGR, and a CD containing a system for the definition of priorities in the sphere of municipal road network.

#### Practice

The project started in February and ended in December 2001; final assessment is due one year after its end. The project had six interrelated goals:

- Prepare a Municipal Development Plan (MDP) for the maintenance and repair of municipal road network, which would become a successful example and practical guide for the preparation and implementation of the MDPs of all 263 Bulgarian municipalities.

- Present the key financial and investment aspects, allowing the calculation of the real costs of maintenance and repair of the municipal road network.

- Provide material for discussions at the local, regional and national level, entitled „Solving the problem with insufficiency of funds for appropriate repair and maintenance of municipal road networks in the near future“.

- Stimulate the participation of local, regional and national government, citizen organizations, institutions and all stakeholders in an important pilot project, and create a working system and solid financial basis for the future maintenance and control of municipal roads

in Bulgaria.

- Demonstrate a more rational use of the available materials, staff and equipment of private road-construction companies, in order to obtain a bigger capacity for the maintenance and repair of roads at the municipal level.

- Create new jobs in the field of municipal roads maintenance and repair.

The achievement of these six goals was the work of a team of international and local experts, with the support of the Vice Mayor and the working group in Vratsa Municipality. The ideas and opportunities in that sphere were explored at a number of constructive meetings and discussions with the involved institutions at the local, regional (Vratsa) and national (Bulgarian Ministry of Regional Development, Roads Executive Agency) levels. Other participants were the National Association of Bulgarian Municipalities, the Foundation for Local Government Reform, interested citizens, companies and institutions.

The Municipal Development Plan for the maintenance and repair of municipal roads in Vratsa Municipality includes a general description of Vratsa Municipality and Vratsa District; legal framework and financial status of municipi-

pal roads; computer model of priority setting; a long-term vision about the repair and maintenance of municipal roads for the next 15 years; a six-year Action Plan; financial and investment aspects; conclusions and recommendations.

The process and procedure of MDP preparation and implementation, its contents, and the experience gained in the course of work, were collected in a special Guidebook for the use of the 263 Bulgarian municipalities, published and disseminated by the FLGR. The Guidebook is accompanied by a CD entitled „System for priority setting in the sphere of maintenance and repair of municipal road networks“ (texts of both the Guidebook and the CD can be found in the LOGIN Library at the FLGR website). This Guidebook will serve as an example for the preparation and implementation of MDPs in the sphere of maintenance, control and repair of municipal roads in the whole of Bulgaria. The exemplary MDP has been conformed to the requirements of legislation in Bulgaria, as well as the expected developments and necessary changes in repair and financial aspects during a period of six years (2002-2008).

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#### Results

The presentation of results and the sharing of experience of Vratsa Municipality with all Bulgarian municipalities in the next few years will gradually improve the level of repairs and maintenance of municipal roads and urban streets according to European Union standards. The MDP provides municipal councilors with the necessary information when they approve the annual budget and activities. Each point of the Action Plan has been discussed and approved by the Municipal Council, tak-

ing into consideration the specific conditions (financial resources available, rate of unemployment, etc.) and the selected priorities, permits etc. regarding the corresponding activity or project. An annual report is expected to give the Municipal Council the opportunity to evaluate the results of the previous year and approve the priorities for the next one, depending on the available resources





## Water supply of the village of Buzovets

### Innovative Practice

### Category

Infrastructure

### Background

Building the water supply system in the village of Buzovets had begun in 1993, financed by government subsidies. Unfortunately, due to the municipality's financial difficulties and the inflation process in the country, the building project came to stagnation.

The municipal management decided that a possible solution of the problem would be for the Municipality of Valchedram to apply with a project to the Danube River Initiative Program, implemented by the Foundation for Local Government Reform and the US Agency for International Development.

### Summary

The construction of the water supply network of the Village of Buzovets is an infrastructure project, part of the municipal strategy for development and realization of its Program 2000-2006, which is the main management document reflecting the future development of the Municipality of Valchedram. This socially significant project corresponds with the priorities and the vision of the municipality: „A renovated municipality, center of modern agriculture and processing industry, with improved infrastructure and environment, attracting investments for sustainable development, ensuring high level of employment, social progress and high living standard.“

### Practice

In 2000, the Municipality of Valchedram applied with five infrastructure projects to the Danube River Initiative Program of the Foundation for Local Government Reform and the US Agency for International Development. The project „Water Supply of Buzovets“ was approved.

„Aqua Top“, a Sofia private firm, prepared the project documentation. The project was realized in two stages:

Stage 1 - included building a pumping station; a steel, chlorinated water pressure tower; and water supply network made of high-density polyethylene, 3300 meters of length.

Stage 2 included completing the construction of the water supply network.

In July 2000 a tender was announced for the execution of the construction work, which was won by „Kamdimitar Kolev“ private firm. The implementation of the first project stage began. Until its end in September 2000 costs amounted to 250 000 BGN, 100 000 of it coming from the Danube River Initiative Program. 3231 meters of water supply network were built. The final construction work of the water tower and the pumping station was done. Consequently, 80 private homes and municipal consumers such as the Social Services Home for blind people, a bread bakery, the Health Service, a Cooperative, etc. enjoyed water running in their buildings.

The construction site was officially opened on 30 October 2000. The public fountain which was also built in the village became the symbol of the project. His Grace Bishop Dometian served a solemn service.

The Municipality of Valchedram planned the implementation of the

project's second stage for the year 2001.



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### Results

The implementation of the project's first stage solved partially an acute problem of the municipality development and improved the living conditions. Positive results were achieved on the basis of the synergy between the efforts of the municipality, non-governmental organizations, and international assistance:

- the project's first stage was realized at the cost of 250 000 BGN;
- 3231 m of water supply network was constructed;
- public and private consumers were provided with water;
- a public fountain was built.





## Urban development of „Vuzhodi“ District

### Innovative Practice

### Category

Infrastructure

### Background

### Summary

Market needs and citizens' initiatives led to the quick building of small street kiosks and temporary service workshops, which pretty soon turned insufficient for satisfying the needs of the citizens of the „Vuzhodi“ residential district. According to citizens' wishes, the Urban Planning Department worked on changes in the general plan of the district. Citizens' complaints provided the opportunity for finding out their priority

needs. At the top of the list came the district development and building of a children's playground.

Growing unemployment and diminishing of industrial activity has caused a reduction in revenue from local taxes in the municipal budget. There is no government participation in the construction of similar sites either. All these facts have made the municipality look for alternative ways to finance its projects.

Financial difficulties prevented the Municipality of Tutrakan to finish the block construction in the „Vuzhodi“ district according to the town development plan. It was completed as part of the Danube River Initiative Program of the Foundation for Local Government Reform with the financial support of the US Agency for International Development.

### Practice

Due to the serious problem with the completion of the „Vuzhodi“ District, the Municipality of Tutrakan decided to apply for financing of a small infrastructure project to the Danube River Initiative Program of the Foundation for Local Government Reform.

Architect Plamen Drumev gave the idea for the project; engineer Stefan Stefanov and his staff developed the technical project and green up design. The project included development of the spaces between the buildings „Vuzhodi-2“, „Vuzhodi-3“, and „Vuzhodi-4“ located in square 50 of the Tutrakan master plan, and around the „Vuzhodi-7“ building in the same neighbourhood. The total area of the construction site was 15 268 sq. m.

On 15 May 2000, the Municipality of Tutrakan and FLGR signed a financial agreement. Five companies competed

for the project execution - two each from Russe and Silistra, and one of the town of Razgrad. „Vodno stroitelstvo“ - Silistra won the tender and executed the project.

The project cost reached 119 760 BGN, 94 700 of which were provided by FLGR, and 25 060 by the Municipality of Tutrakan. Citizens of the neighbourhood made a subscription list to ex-

press their support of the project implementation with volunteer work and money donations. Fifteen unemployed people found temporary work during the project realization. The term for finishing the construction work was four months (15.07. - 15.11.2000).

The Mayor of Tutrakan Krassimir Petrov officially opened the building complex on November 24, 2000. Owing to the project, the following utilities were built: sports playground - 960 sq.m.; children's playground - 420 sq.m.; sidewalks - 760 sq.m.; parking lots - 540 sq.m.; recreation area - 135 sq.m.; flower and green areas - 2000 sq.m.



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### Results

After the construction work in „Vuzhodi“ quarter:

- Esthetical and clean living environment was created;

- Suitable playgrounds and recreation areas were formed;

- People gained normal access to their homes.





## Encouraging interaction between local government and citizens for the improvement of the environment

## Regional Association of Municipalities „Trakia“

### Innovative Practice

### Background

### Category

**Municipal Services for Citizens & Citizen Participation**

### Summary



As a result of the analyses performed in 28 municipalities, members of the Regional Association of Municipalities „Trakia“, the following common problems were established:

- Lack of effective application of local legislation in the environmental area;
- Low interest on the part of citizens in the state of the environment;
- Lack of active mechanisms to guarantee citizens the right to obtain information on environmental matters.

As a mediator in promoting best practices and creating models for solving common problems of the municipalities, RAM „Trakia“ has directed its effort to increasing the environmental understanding of citizens and encouraging their interaction with local government in solving problems of local impact. A pilot project was developed for the municipalities of Stara Zagora, Nova Zagora, Dimitrovgrad and Gurkovo, funded by the Phare Access'99 Programme of the European Union.

ECO MODELS (Ecological Municipalities - Our Donation to the European Life Status) aims to improve the level of environmental education and information of citizens concerning the state of the environment in the municipalities involved. The project activities have been implemented on the territory of four municipalities, while the results and best practices will be promoted among all members of RAM „Trakia“.

### Practice

RAM „Trakia“ efforts are directed towards:

- Long term publicizing of the possibilities for public participation in environmental decision-making;
- Enhancing public level of information on environmental matters;
- Increasing the quality of local government decision-making on environmental matters;
- Initiating legislative changes allowing to implement European Union practices for protecting the environment.

#### Municipality of Stara Zagora

A public survey has been conducted, initiated by Eco Europe Club, focused on citizen attitudes towards the current environmental situation in the municipality. A web site of the club has been developed allowing citizens to obtain fast and up-to-date information about the club's activity, as well as their participation in a discussion forum on environmental issues in the municipality.

The efforts of the local team have been directed to intensive work with young people. A valuable partner are the members of the Youth Municipal Council and the participants in the optional environmental courses to the specialized high schools. They have taken part in the „Stara Zagora - you are my own city“ action, focused on cleaning up the park around the Bedechka River, initiated by Earth Forever Foundation in partnership with Green Balkans Association.

#### Municipality of Nova Zagora

A memorandum for coordinating the activity of the community has been signed, aiming at immediate solution of environmental issues. The main task included in the memorandum is to create an Eco Council to the Municipality, which will have organizing and coordinating functions. The Eco Council will take part in identifying environmental problems, and development and implementation of projects focused on environmental education with the active participation of local NGOs. The aim is to develop a common policy for the prevention or solution of environmental problems and supporting local authorities in this direction.

Eco Europe Club in Nova Zagora is a participant in the process of building a hazardous waste treatment plant - information is presently being collected about the environmental effect to be achieved by constructing the plant. The Club is a mediator in the dialogue between the community and local government on the benefits and harmful effects of the plant's construction.

Support has been provided to the Culture Centre (Chitalishte) „Dinyo P. Sivkov“ in the development of a project on creating an Open Air Eco Culture Centre. Activities have been planned for the Club's participation in the project for repair and completion of the water treatment system in the „Shestif“ District.

#### Municipality of Dimitrovgrad

A spring clean up was initiated in Dimitrovgrad, with municipal officials, representatives of schools, kindergartens, pensioner's clubs, business compa-

nies and citizens taking part in the promotion campaign. The local Eco Europe Club has produced leaflets and visual materials on the following topics:

- What can I do to make my place a cleaner one;
- Charges on waste - what is the money used for;
- Local environmental regulations.

Together with the city's clean up, a campaign was conducted for separated waste collection in the week 15 - 21 April 2002. 2125 kg of paper and 179 kg of plastic were collected and submitted for recycling.

#### Municipality of Gurkovo

A total of 6 lectures on medicinal plants and herbs in Bulgaria have been delivered in local kindergartens with the help of the municipal environmental expert. To stimulate children to keep clean their classrooms and school yards, special stickers have been produced, which are awarded to the best performing students. At the end of the school year the student who has collected the greatest number of stickers will receive a „Young Environmentalist“ certificate. 70 trees have been planted, the seedlings donated by the local forestry. Measures have been taken for their protection, the children from kindergartens and schools having formed groups for taking care and watering them.

On the basis of citizens' proposals a draft program for environmental protection has been developed for the period 2002 - 2003. The program includes measures for separated waste collection, protection of Radova, Lazova and Tundja river basins, increasing the sanctions for cutting walnut trees, control over stubble-field burning etc.

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### Results

Four Eco Europe Clubs have been opened and equipped in the pilot municipalities, in a short time becoming favourite meeting places for discussions on key local environmental matters. Each of the clubs is maintained by a specially trained officer. Interaction between local authorities and citizens for solving important environmental issues has been sustainably promoted. The pilot municipalities are discussing their positions for changes in the legislation with the participation of expert ecologists from all member municipalities of the Association. A film is being prepared on citizen participation in the decision-making process for harmonizing Bulgarian legislation with the European

Union one. The achievements can be expressed in numbers as follows:

- 10 roundtables and workshops on citizen participation in improving the local environment have been conducted with a total of 220 participants;
- a survey of over 300 people has been performed, focused on the state of the environment in the pilot municipalities;
- over 20 additional partners have been attracted in activities related to improving the environment in the pilot municipalities.

The local clubs are initiators of complementary activities conducted in cooperation with the municipal administration and NGOs, which has led to unexpected positive results.



## Center for Sustainable Development of Teteven Municipality

### The activity of the Sustainable Development Center of Teteven Municipality

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

The idea of establishing the Sustainable Development Center of Teteven Municipality was born during the sessions of the Public Forum - a project of the Swiss Government and the municipalities from Central Stara Planina Region. It was aimed to answer the need

of institutionalisation of the citizen potential of the municipality. The Association was founded on April 2, 2001, by 21 legal entities and 7 individuals, including the Municipality, NGOs, schools, culture centers (chitalishta), state institutions, businessmen, and citizens.

#### Category

Municipal Services for Citizens & Citizen Participation

#### Summary

As a result of the process of citizen participation and active search for partners' support, initiated by the Community Forum in Teteven Municipality, a Sustainable Development Center of Teteven Municipality was founded, which grew to become an active partner of local government and a driving force for the implementation of the municipal strategy.



#### Practice

The Sustainable Development Center of Teteven Municipality (SDCTM) has set itself the ambitious task to work for the revival and stable growth rates in all spheres of public life in Teteven Municipality, through the mobilisation of local resources and partners, for the better future of all citizens of the municipality.

The activities planned by SDCTM include: identify acute local problems, compose programs for their resolution, fund and help the measures selected; develop and implement project ideas of common importance; work in cooperation with local authorities, business circles and NGOs; serve as a unification factor and driving force for the implementation of the Development Strategy of Teteven Municipality; provide specialized support to everyone who, aiming at his or her personal development, contributes to common interests.

In its first year, the association oriented its activities towards institution building and priority areas - raising public awareness, tourism, environment, and education. Learning from the experience of other NGOs and analysing the reasons for their members' and leaders' loss of energy and enthusiasm, SDCTM reached the conclusion that in order to achieve goals and keep the trust of citizens, institutions and administration, a permanently operating structure is needed. They agreed on a number of criteria for the appointment of an Executive Director, and invited representatives of Balkan Assist, Capacity 21, the FLGR, the Municipal Council and municipal administration to join the selection committee.

After registration, SDCTM performed a number of significant activities: it participated in the preparation and discussions on the Development Strategy of Teteven Municipality; submitted a project proposal - Alternatives for Socialization and Employment of Young Bulgarian Muslims from Teteven Municipality - to the „Civic Initiatives in the Bulgarian Village“ Program of the Open Society Foundation; prepared a project for a website of Teteven Municipality presenting public structures, companies, tourism opportunities, bookings etc. - a project financed by the Swiss Government. The Center has developed and is implementing a program for effective management of municipal property together with the municipal administration, which presents a new way of action and a new attitude to municipal assets. The program aims to stop the one-off activities and to set a clear long-term goal for the optimum use of municipal assets, so that they could contribute to financial sustainability. SDCTM also took part in a project for the town center's aesthetic improvement; it served as an information center on funding programs for culture centers, schools and NGOs.

Partnership between the association and the municipal administration underlies the Statutes of SDCTM. One of the members of the Management Board is supposed to be the Mayor of the municipality or another representative chosen by him. Common care for the future of the municipality and trust between the two structures became obvious at the time of the municipal Development Strategy preparation - SDCTM was appointed as the implementing institution for many of the initiatives in the Action Plan. An example of NGO - local government cooperation was also the fact that

Teteven Municipality asked the SDCTM to prepare a project for a Municipal Citizen Services Center and apply to the FLGR Citizen Services Improvement Program. The project was approved and is currently in progress. This was yet another opportunity for joint work of Teteven Municipality and the SDCTM, for improvement of quality, optimisation of the process of offering administrative services to local people, and the establishment of a friendly behavior to citizens. New joint activities of the partners have been included in the Action Plan for 2002.

The SDCTM keeps partnership contacts with the Chance-1 Youth Association, the Association of Craftsmen and Entrepreneurs, the Associations of Teteventsi, Vita-Tourist, and Nature, with schools, village mayors and other state institutions within the municipality.

Practical support was provided by the SDCTM to other bodies: to the culture center of the village of Gorni Izvor for the preparation of a project proposal for the „Citizen Initiatives in the Bulgarian Village“ Program of the Open Society Foundation; to the Georgi Benkovski School, the Association of Craftsmen and Entrepreneurs, and the Chance-1 Association, for the development of a demonstration project within the Action Plan of the Municipal Strategy for Sustainable Development, prepared with the support of the Capacity 21 Program; to the school at Glogovo Village for the project entitled „The Living Environment - Main Factor for the Development of Sustainable Individuals“; to the mayors of Cherni Vit and Divchovoto Villages for participation in the FLGR funding program.

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#### Results

The organizations and individuals - members of the Association, have gained useful experience, and their qualities and skills have built the capacity of the SDCTM. As a result of the formation of a good working team, the Association succeeded in achieving a number of significant results in quite a short time:

- The executive body of the SDCTM became a desired partner and consultant in many spheres of public life.
- The SDCTM continued to stimulate public processes, provoked by the work of the Community Forum.
- Schools, culture centers, and NGOs continue to look for information and support for the implementation of ideas.

The Association publishes a monthly newsletter with the support of its partners and has prepared a project for the opening of a local public radio, which would build a bridge between citizens and institutions. SDCTM is currently looking for funding in order to implement this idea.

SDCTM established a Talented Young People Fund to support the development of gifted boys and girls from the municipality. The Association works in partnership with the Cooperation Department of the Swiss Embassy, the FLGR, the Capacity 21 Program of UNDP, Balkan Assist, the Stara Planina Regional Association of Municipalities, the Stara Planina Regional Tourist Association, the Agency for Economic Development in Stara Zagora, the Center for Business and Information of Velingrad, and many others.





## Bulgarka Foundation Omourtag Municipality



### Herbs can treat unemployment as well

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Municipal Services for  
Citizens & Citizen  
Participation

#### Background

#### Summary

The level of unemployment in the Municipality of Omourtag is high, the greater part of the unemployed living in the villages. At the same time the lack of industrial enterprises in the region has preserved clean the soil, water and air in Omourtag. All factors are in place for the start of environment-friendly agriculture.

Taking into account these factors, the Omourtag Club of the National Citizen Foundation (NCF) „Bulgarka“ set itself the task of developing a program for

the reduction of poverty on the basis of a new approach to the problem, i.e. self-employment. In the framework of this approach the benefits for the individual and the state are mutual: self-employed people do not pose a burden on the state, since they generate the necessary income themselves instead of relying on the Labour Bureau. On the other hand, they demonstrate an active stand with regard to change, i.e. they take up their destiny in their own hands.

„Let's help our own selves“ is the motto of the project for reducing the unemployment in the Municipality of Omourtag, which uses an innovative approach - self-employment. The first stage of the project includes training of unemployed and disadvantaged people in herb growing, while the second one implements the knowledge obtained in practice through growing lavender on municipal land.

#### Practice

The project aims to reduce poverty in Omourtag Municipality by using an innovative approach - self-employment. It was implemented in two stages. In the first stage a training course was conducted with unemployed and socially disadvantaged people on environment-friendly agriculture (lavender growing). On completing the theoretical part, the knowledge obtained was put into practice. This stage was funded by the Phare Lien Programme and implemented in the course of 12 months. The project partners comprise the Municipality of Omourtag, Labour Bureau - Omourtag, Commerce and Industry Chamber - Targovishte.

Following a research on the climatic conditions, soil content, the attitudes of the unemployed, the overall market situation in the municipality and the market for untraditional crops with prospective profit, the project managers team chose to focus on herb growing,

and lavender production in particular. 20 unemployed people from Ugledno village were acquainted with the medicinal aromatic plants growing on the territory of the municipality, lavender among them. On the knowledge obtained, the participants were more or less ready to start their own business of producing medicinal and aromatic plants.

Following the theoretical part, participants in the course applied their knowledge on 1 acre of municipal land, which they sowed to obtain lavender seedlings.

A bulletin was produced entitled „Cultivated growing of lavender: How to become herb producers?“, which promotes herb growing. The bulletin includes a short physical and geographical description of Omourtag Municipality, whose semi-mountainous climate is very suitable for such production. Valuable information is provided in the form of questions and answers for everyone willing to start his/her business. Informa-

tion is available about the legislative framework, the ways of renting municipal and state land; the ways in which lavender is grown and care provided; its uses; and sources of methodological help and contact addresses.

A contract was signed with 5 people from the target group regarding cooperation for lavender cultivation. Simultaneously, people's interest towards the alternative agriculture has grown. The second stage will stem from the first one. It will be implemented with the funds obtained on the sale of the lavender seedlings and the project partners' efforts focused on developing an information bank for anyone interested in herb growing. Cultivating medicinal plants allows utilization of land with low output or erosion, the opening of additional jobs and ensuring income for the population. The project was awarded a certificate by the Delegation of the European Communities in Bulgaria at the national competition „Made in Bulgaria with EU support“.

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#### Results

The target group has accepted, despite some reservations, the idea about developing alternative sources of income through growing lavender. Reservations stem from the fact that lavender has been cultivated for the first time in the municipality, and traditional crops are still preferred. A large number of the participants fear that they would not be able to cope on their own with a large area of cultivated land and are not sure how certain the realization of the produce obtained could be. On being con-

vinced that lavender growing is profitable, they intend to take part in the process as well. In this respect, by signing contracts with people intending to grow lavender, the project will help other unemployed people to help themselves through self-employment and not be dependent on welfare.







### Developing a marketing profile of the Municipality of Silistra and a brochure presenting its economic potential

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Economic and Social Partnerships

#### Background

#### Summary

In recent years, a main priority of local government's activities has been the attracting of more investments. The main steps are organizing and carrying out a marketing campaign, and producing promotional materials about the potential of the country and the municipi-

pality, their advantages and economic opportunities. Silistra Municipality started the development of an overall concept for a marketing processes, utilizing the experience of several US companies and research materials for the business environment in the region.

A marketing profile and bilingual brochure for the Silistra Municipality have been successfully developed by a partners team of experts from the Economics Directorate of the municipality and specialists from Kettering, Ohio, USA, in the framework of the Technical Twinning Program implemented by FLGR and ICMA.

#### Practice

The first stage began in March 2001. It included defining of the marketing profile of Silistra, the objectives of the marketing materials, the specifics of readers in Bulgaria and abroad. The ways of collecting feedback were also discussed.

The second stage envisioned elaboration and conducting of research for defining the business climate in the city. Opinions and recommendations of representatives of 40 small and medium size enterprises were analysed and used as a basis of the marketing profile of Silistra.

The marketing profile was defined, based on the following features:

- specifics of the region evaluated by local businesses - free sites and industrial zones, strength of industries and agriculture, transport infrastructure, communications, work force and public utilities, and business climate within the municipality;
- mission of the municipality presented in the main message it is trying to put forward through its marketing efforts;
- target group - geographic location, market analysis, delivery contacts, specific resources of the region.

The next stage was to elaborate the marketing plan and to focus on suitable tools to be used: marketing brochures, Internet site, public relations, advertisement, direct mail, etc. The marketing brochure of Silistra was designed for easy update and consists of a main text and enclosures. Its concept relies on the visual impact of design and photographs, the text messages and good promotion of the free sites on sale.

The first part of the text focuses on the advantages of the strategic proximity of Silistra to the borders of Romania, free municipal sites near the port area, skilled workers and the supportive role of local administration. Enclosures present the quality of life within the municipality and technical details of the sites offered. Production of the brochure was funded by the World Learning Transit Program.

The main messages in the brochure, the selection of photographs and the design were discussed during the Silistra team visit to Kettering in May 2001. Most valuable was the advice and professional consulting of the US design companies Nova and Chizano.

The project planned to discuss widely the text of the brochure. The task was accomplished by involving 7 volunteers from the Peace Corps, local journalists, businessmen and municipal

councilors for the editing process.

All materials provided a sound promotion for Silistra and the advantages of the region, especially the key location of the city. One main topic in the brochure is agriculture. Successful business plans of local and external investors are another advantage. The text features the experience shared by Y. Stoimenov, the man who recovered and renewed output at „Kamashit - Keramik“, one of the typical businesses for Silistra. Innovative approaches of the municipal managing team provide another accent in the materials.

Qualified work force is a great advantage of the city of Silistra. Additional enclosures with details and specifics of free municipal sites equipped with good communications are available.

The team of Silistra Economics Directorate organised and conducted an investment forum „Silistra - the city of your business“ (11 September 2001), supported by Kettering partners. The main goal of the forum was to present the economic potential of Silistra and the marketing brochure. The forum participants received a copy of the brochure and filled out the feedback information form. The Technical Twinning Program team prepared a mailing list of organizations and companies to send it to.

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#### Results

The forum provided a good opportunity of uniting team players from Silistra Municipality and Kettering, the Silistra Agency for Economic Development and Investments; Peace Corps volunteers; town councilors; businessmen; and an Open Society Fund consultant. External partners improved technically the package of materials and helped achieve its persuading style.

The constant exchange of ideas improved marketing skills and experience of the experts from the Economics Di-

rectorate. Another achievement is the elaboration and successful implementation of the business concept in preparing the promotional materials, which is quite a new method for local administration. Increased understanding and effective business contacts within the city are also a significant success for local administration. However, successful investments in the region would be the most important result.







## Municipality of Haskovo

### Corporate Office Center and Orientation Program

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

Haskovo Municipality stands with old traditions, culture and attractive opportunities for business development, based on good climate, geographic location, and natural resources. Series of meetings with local and foreign companies, operating in the Haskovo region have led to establishing the main problem areas for attracting investments: lack of information about terms and require-

ments - the key issues for an investment solution - is prior on the list. All investors had to spend time and money with agents and lawyers in order to find useful information and details about local standards and local life. Red tape procedures, poor quality of work and indifferent behaviour of public administrations have also provoked these difficulties.



### Economic and Social Partnerships

#### Category

#### Summary

A unique practice has been developed, consisting of five steps, each encompassing a specific area of the general presentation of the region. The basic components are the marketing profile and the orientation programme for attracting potential investors. Free of charge use of the business center, which is a municipal property, is foreseen for companies wishing to get familiar with the situation in the region.

#### Practice

Initially a project team was formed, consisting of 6 chief administrators from Haskovo Municipality (Administrative and Financial Unit, Municipal Property, Architecture and Urban Planning, Agricultural Policy, Economic Activities and Consumer Protection, Legal Services); 6 municipal councilors, all involved in different Municipal Council committees; and representatives of local state institutions such as Regional Environmental Inspectorate, Labour Bureau etc. This team started collecting different types of information and shared responsibilities for its processing. A general forum was conducted at local level, including foreign investors in the region. Participants shared experience and various problems, helping each other with suggestions for improving activity and communication with the municipal administration and citizens. The content of the informational package (Orientation program) was widely discussed in order to contain most useful information for the prospective investors. All companies participating in the meeting provided financial support for the creation of a municipal „portfolio“ which would also give an idea of the business initiatives taking place in Haskovo and the region. Haskovo municipality published advertisements of its sponsors, thus raising one third of the amount needed for the brochure publication.

Information was gathered in cooperation with representatives of other institutions from the Team. Structure, design and translations of the brochure were carried out by Griff Publishing House, Plovdiv. Griff has used also the experience of its American partners from Abington, Pennsylvania in developing the forms and ways of arranging all materials regarding the marketing

profile of Haskovo Municipality. US partners also suggested certain enclosures with updateable information.

The second stage was the development of the Orientation Program for attracting more investors to the region. The program is still being elaborated due to the large amount and different types of information. It comprises all juridical regulations and laws, valid for local companies and for international ones as well. An innovative element is the comprehensive coverage of the Local Taxes and Charges Act, emphasising on the fact that local authorities are responsible for defining various taxes and charges for the region, aiming at best possible life standard for all residents. Also the program provides information on all rentable sites in the region and details for purchasing procedures, concessions, etc. as well as terms and preferences available for each potential investor. Haskovo municipal officials, members of the Team, are ready to provide a wide range of information for each specific site or any issue of interest for the investors.

The next stage was creating a business profile of Haskovo Municipality. During their visit in the USA, the delegates from Haskovo Municipality witnessed a marked interest by US companies in opportunities for investments and joint initiatives in Bulgaria. The delegates put forward the idea of creating the business profile of the region, organizing it in different branches and various sorting, depending on the number of employees in Bulgarian companies, thus using all preferences available for small and medium sized companies. This is an innovative approach as the existing catalogues do not give the necessary information and full details for classification of business throughout the region. The Profile was completed at the end of November 2001. It includes numerous files presenting each company; copies can be made and the information is

frequently updated. In this case the Municipality demonstrates flexibility and service to readers, rather than publishing a luxury book every six months. If an investor seeks additional information, an e-mail is being sent to him with most recent data and he is able to consider contacts with possible partners.

The fourth stage was developing the city tourism marketing, producing an attractive map and presentation. The map will be A0 format, framed and mounted in the main building of Haskovo Municipality. This would be a unique and very new type of information facility. Pictures of buildings and premises will be prepared by an artist and would be valuable works of art. Each image will be scanned and resized to fit a map format, and placed at the appropriated place. The languages used are English and Bulgarian. Both the presentation and the map are designed and prepared for every guest of the Municipality (foreign and Bulgarian delegations, friendly visitors, business trip groups, etc.). The map would be resized and prepared for distribution in a smaller format as well.

The last stage is the idea of the Corporate Office Center. It would be situated in the building of the present Small Business Centre (municipal property) which now accommodates „Municipal Press“ and NGOs. The mayor has provided more offices for rent by potential investors in the region. The Marketing Profile, Orientation Program, the Business Catalogue and the Tourism Marketing materials will be presented to the investors by municipal officers. Each investor will be offered an individual program (for a week, for 10 days, etc.). The innovative approach of this stage is visible: this service has never been offered before. It proves the good care, hard effort and significance of this act of good will, which the Municipality is undertaking in order to support and improve the economic development in the region.

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#### Results

- Municipal officials and councilors, involved in the project have realized the need for interaction between local authorities and citizens. They are convinced that this is the only way to prosperity in the region;
- All project participants know about the problems of the international investor, no matter foreign or local, and they understand the importance of such joint efforts;
- Local businesses show understanding of the efforts of municipal administration;
- The schematic diagram of the North Industrial Zone already developed is a completed plan for a future location for doing business;

■ The marketing brochure is an impressive presentation of the municipality, used in international forums and facilitating the initiation of future contacts with business partners. It demonstrated its effect during the USA visit of the Bulgarian delegation;

■ There is a possibility for multiplication of this practice in other municipalities. This is being already implemented in Harmanli Municipality. The visit of the US delegation and discussions conducted inspired local authorities to repeat the steps of their colleagues of Haskovo Municipality. The team in Harmanli has been formed and it is already working on collecting the data necessary for the marketing profile; Haskovo Municipality is in continuous contact and consults the team.





## Business Incubator - Gotse Delchev Center for Entrepreneurship Support



### Marketing strategy for traditional crafts development in the Gotse Delchev region

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

#### Category

Economic and Social  
Partnerships

#### Summary

The Gotse Delchev region has been known for traditional crafts such as pottery making, weaving, coppery, and bell making for ages. These crafts have been handed down to generations and are still alive nowadays. Muslim women are skilled in embroidering, weaving and crocheting according to a recent study made by the team of the Business incubator - Gotse Delchev. The study covered the area of the following villages: Breznitsa, Lazhnitsa and Kornitsa. There is a manual

weaving loom in almost every house. The colorful look and the variety of patterns inspired local people to use this crafting for developing small business and raising additional income. Moreover, in the context of high indicators of unemployment and scarce means, lack of gender equality for Muslim women, as well as the poor entrepreneurship culture, the development of crafts is a good opportunity for overcoming these problems and a means of promoting the Municipality.

The project „Business incubator without walls for Muslim women from the 4 municipalities of the Gotse Delchev region“ funded by the Phare Programme of the European Union through the Foundation for Civil Society Development combines the joint effort of the Business Incubator, local government and Muslim population in the region for making crafts a source of additional income. The project links traditional skills with contemporary knowledge on entrepreneurship for achieving sustainable development.

#### Practice

After many meetings with women in the Gotse Delchev region, the team of the Business Incubator and the project partners - the municipalities of Gotse Delchev, Garmen, Hadjidimovo and Satovcha chose the villages and met many craftsmen for selecting participants in the groups.

##### Marketing strategy

The team has elaborated a marketing strategy for the development of traditional crafts in the region, based on its own experience and research work, as well as the advice of Bulgarian and foreign consultants from Aid to Artisans. The strategy includes: ■ crafts analysis in the region; ■ marketing strategy for the local markets; ■ marketing strategy for markets identification; ■ ideas for new products. The analysis indicated clearly that the most profitable and promising market for these products would be the City of Sofia, taking into account the international groups temporarily resident there. The strategy shows three steps for action:

**Step 1.** The Business Incubator Gotse Delchev should elaborate and develop professional marketing services for craftsmen, supporting their promotion in Sofia and abroad.

**Step 2.** Developing products and pricings for small businesses and innovations in design in order to satisfy international customers; setting up a library within the incubator for access to product information and the marketing process in general.

**Step 3.** Crafts promotion: direct participation in market events for promoting final products, preparing a catalogue and creation of a website.

The marketing strategy for local markets includes also researching market opportunities, i.e. discovering new potential markets, ensuring participation in trade exhibitions in Bulgaria and providing permanent sales stands; cooperation and exchange of ideas and experience with other crafts within Bulgaria and abroad.

At the end of the project, the strategy was revised and expanded, summarizing overall experience and recommendations. The final version includes: Synopsis, History of crafts, Research papers and evaluation, Marketing strategy for crafts development; Promotion of products made in the region of Gotse Delchev; Ideas for new products.

##### Training of target groups

60 women from the region were trained in starting up their own business and instructed for participation in trade exhibitions. The groups included not only skilled weavers, but also young girls from Breznitsa, Dolno Dryanovo, Ablanitsa and Ribnovo. Well-educated women from other villages, such as teachers, social workers, etc. were also invited to attend. They are successfully working for the benefit of society and could be an example for the rest of the participants.

##### Crafts promotion

■ Exhibitions:  
Christmas exhibition of crafts in the US Infor-

mation Centre, Sofia, 6-8 December 2000, officially opened by Mrs. Miles, US Ambassador's wife. According to the marketing strategy, all invitations for the exhibition (500 letters and e-mails) were sent out to foreign business initiatives in Bulgaria - international companies, embassies etc. As a starting point the beginning of December was chosen - the time when people usually buy Christmas gifts. A rich variety of products, some of them completely unknown in Sofia, was offered for sale. A demonstration of authentic Christmas traditions and ritual Christmas dishes was also prepared. The exhibition itself appeared to be extremely useful for surveying customer's demands on this product.

Celebration and exhibition „At the edge of Europe“ in May 2001 in Sofia; Exhibition „Tradition, opportunities, future“ in Gotse Delchev, 16th November 2001, officially opened by the Mayor of the city;

■ Colorful catalogue of crafts, 1000 copies;  
■ Internet website <http://www.crafts-bg.com>, created through the efforts of the target group - all craftsmen, Business Incubator, partner municipalities, community centers, Gotse Delchev public museum, media, non-governmental organizations.

■ Results and experience were presented at a panel discussion before key institutions in the region - mayors, deputy-mayors, municipal counsels, NGOs, museums, business centers, representatives of FLGR, BAAT, JOBS project and representatives from Greece.

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#### Results

The project has proved its main assumption - crafts are a good source for additional income and the active role of target groups is already recognized. The marketing strategies developed have led to the rebirth and development of crafts in the Gotse Delchev region. Local authorities, museums, cultural centers, media, NGOs, local business initiatives and craftworks have united efforts in building up a beneficial environment and an attractive image throughout the region.

The project is providing great help in raising the self-confidence of Muslim women in the region. Most valuable is their role in different exhibitions, enabling them to sell

their own products, exchange ideas, meet different people and sense the importance of being evaluated because of the beauty they create.

As a component of village tourism, crafts may receive significant push for development. Promoting various crafts along with the specific architecture of the region, clean environment, well preserved traditions, and typical dishes increase the possibilities for selling their products. There are already established contacts with the Pirin Tourism Forum, BAAT, tourist agencies and consultants within the JOBS project - Employment through support of business. Cooperation with Greece through mutual exhibitions and tourism projects is also much relied on.





## Regional Tourist Association „Stara Planina“



### Marketing and promoting a group of municipalities in the region of Central Stara Planina Mountain

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

#### Category

Regional Development

#### Summary

The „Tourism“ project, which has been implemented since the beginning of August 1994 in Central Stara Planina Mountain with the assistance of the Swiss government, has as its main purpose the consolidation and coordination of the efforts on local and regional level towards sustainable development of tourism. The region of Central Stara Planina Mountain is exceptionally rich in tourism resources, but they had not been appropriately presented on the tourist market and as a whole the destination was not well-known to a big part of the tourist services users.

On the initiative of Swiss experts and with the active participation of local authorities associations of those engaged in tourism were created in the municipalities of Tryavna, Gabrovo, Apriltsi, Troyan and Teteven, and tourist information offices were set up in each of the five municipalities. A Regional Tourist Association was created in the summer of 1996, established by the five local tourist associations, the Municipality of Gabrovo and the Gabrovo Chamber of Commerce and Industry. In 1998 the regional office of the Association was set up in the City of Gabrovo.

The Regional Tourist Association „Stara Planina“ and the local associations in Tryavna, Gabrovo, Apriltsi, Troyan and Teteven undertook advertising and promotion of the destination, search for solutions of common problems, and lobbying before institutions on local, regional and central level.

#### Practice

In 1996 the first color tourist brochure „Stara Planina - the path of the Sun“ (print run of 32 000 copies in four languages) was issued, which presented the five Stara Planina Mountain municipalities as one tourist destination. A price list supplement offering information on the tourist sites, accommodation and public catering facilities in the whole region was annually issued in Bulgarian and in English. In 2000 „Stara Planina“ Regional Tourist Association issued a second color tourist brochure „Vacation in four seasons“ (6 000 copies) and two color posters, which offered regional tourist products.

In 1998 „Stara Planina“ Tourist Association together with the tourist associations realized a project for pedestrian and bicycle tourism „With a bicycle and backpack on the path of the Sun“. Pedestrian and bicycle routes were marked and signalled and a regional tourist map was issued with the support of the municipalities. The Swiss donors financed the purchase of 25 bicycles - mountain bikes that were offered for hiring in the municipal tourist information offices.

Since 1999 „Stara Planina“ and „Gabrovo“ Tourist Associations have organized regional contact exchanges - seminars aimed at drawing tour operators' attention to the region and presenting the tourist potential on the spot.

„Stara Planina“ Regional Tourist Association has presented the region at every national tourist fair since 1996 at a stall granted by the Ministry of Economics. With the assistance of the Ministry and the tour operators collaborating with the organization, the advertising materials have reached all international tourism fairs, at which Bulgaria was presented. A good result towards the increase in tourist demand for the region was produced also by the website of the Association: during 2001 it has brought over many tourists from Europe and the USA.

The local tourist organizations and the regional one are engaged not only in marketing and advertising the region. A priority task is to work for the solution of the problems of the branch, to enhance competitiveness of the tourist supply and to defend the interests of their members on local, regional and national level.

Several practical training courses were organized in previous years for the improvement of the local entrepreneurs' competence. In the summer of 2001 the Association collaborated with „Balkan Assist“ Association for the implementation of a project for practical training of students from the region of Stara Planina Mountain in Italy, financed by the EU Program „Leonardo De Vinci“. The Regional Tourist Association and the local associations were active participants in the Swiss Government's project „Community Fo-

rum“, as a result of which the project „Guaranteeing the quality of tourist services in the region of Central Stara Planina Mountain“ ensued.

In the future the Regional Tourist Association and the local associations will work in three main directions:

- Institutional strengthening of the organizations;
- Increase of revenues in the tourist branch; creation, development and promotion of a regional tourist product;
- Increase of the competitiveness of tourist services supply of the region.

„Stara Planina“ Regional Tourist Association is a member of the Bulgarian Hotel & Restaurant Association, the Bulgarian Tourist Agencies Association, the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism and the „Balkan Assist“ Association. It is also represented in the National Tourist Board at the Ministry of Economics and participates actively in all national and regional discussions on the problems of tourism development.

Applications for membership in the Association have been submitted by the new tourist association in Selevio and the Tourist Council in Etropole. Tourist and advertising agencies and NGOs from Selevio, Etropole, Sofia, Lovech and other cities have showed interest in membership.

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#### Results

1. The implementation of a large-scale project for the development of tourism in the region of Central Stara Planina Mountain has created conditions favourable for the development of tourism as a whole.
2. Many proprietors of hotels, village houses and villas acquired new knowledge and skills for the supply of tourist services.
3. Through the marketing and advertising activity of the Association within the country and abroad the region has

become a more widely known and visited tourist destination.

4. The good collaboration with other NGOs has led to the solution of some of the most painful problems in tourism and to a joint protection of the branch interests on national level.

5. The activity of the local and regional tourist organizations proved to the local population and local authorities that the NGO sector has the potential to assist sustainable economic development and civil society in Bulgaria.







### Regional Council for European Integration

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Regional Development

#### Background

Regional Administration - Gabrovo bears in mind that citizens cannot just support every effort for European integration if they do not have detailed information about the European Union. There are situations when even officers from state institutions are not aware of all the information about the process of European integration of Bulgaria. None of the institutions are able to restructure fast, locate and solve all particular ob-

stacles in the course of this process. The independent effort and activities of both the regional administration and the municipalities is not fully effective and shows no clear results. An appropriate solution is to create a Regional Council for European Integration which would provoke and activate every potential of regional and local authorities, and administration officers should pass specific trainings in this area.

#### Summary

The Gabrovo Region in cooperation with the Municipalities of Gabrovo, Sevlievo, Tryavna and Dryanovo have initiated the setting up of a Regional Council for European integration, which will create favourable conditions in the region for the dissemination of information about the European Union and will build capacity for effective communication and participation in EU projects and programs.

#### Practice

The Regional Council for European Integration was founded on January 23, 2002, in Gabrovo; chairman is the Regional Governor of Gabrovo Region. Founders of the Council are mayors and chairmen of the municipal councils of Gabrovo, Sevlievo, Tryavna and Dryanovo. According to them integration is possible only after going through similar processes on a local basis. Their wish is to achieve the highest level of administrative efficiency by the moment of obtaining full membership and to initiate active contacts with The Committee of the Regions. The Council will put the project and its activities much closer to citizens, introducing the partnership approach and dialogue in every action, and joint efforts in achieving its mission: „Gabrovo Region - European region in the heart of Bulgaria“.

The ceremony of founding the Council was attended by Mr Kristof Shtok, second secretary of political matters in the

Delegation of the European Commission in Bulgaria, who demonstrated support on behalf of the European Commission. The Council strives for developing a good regional model as an example for other regions.

The goals are:

1. to receive all necessary information and raise understanding of the European idea for all citizens and institutions in the Gabrovo Region.
2. to organize educational initiatives about structures of the European Union, their functions and programs.
3. to train a large number of public individuals in the expanding process of accession and future membership of Bulgaria.
4. to stimulate every initiative within the municipalities leading to an improved image of Gabrovo Region as an European area.
5. to create operational contacts with state departments responsible for the European integration of Bulgaria.

6. to attract NGOs to Gabrovo Region for practical work with the Council.

One priority of the Council is initiating active participation and work in various agencies and programs of the European Union, which are open to applying countries and provide useful information and support.

An expert unit has been created within the structure of the Council primarily aiming at developing and organizing projects and supporting the activity of the Council. Another priority is strengthening the administrative potential for more efficient utilization of pre-accession funds, and after full membership - the structural funds of the European Union.

The Council will make substantial efforts for continuous step-by-step informing of all social groups in Bulgaria (including NGOs, business organizations, academia) about the process of negotiations, duties and rights, stemming from the full membership in EU.

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#### Results

The successful operation of the Regional Council for European Integration and the prospective accession of Bulgaria to the European Union would stimulate structures on a local basis as well as the main actors of public life in Gabrovo to accept and respond ad-

equately to the challenges of this membership. If appropriate regional and local structures working together are created successfully at this stage, Bulgaria would be able to participate efficiently in all EU structures regarding different regions and spheres of activity.







### Analysing human resources for rural tourism development in the Pirin region

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Regional Development

#### Background

#### Summary

The Pirin Tourism Forum has been working for almost a year now on the 28 Rural Weekends Program for the development of rural tourism in the Pirin region. The goal of the program is to stimulate local initiative in the villages and bring motivation for new economic activities using the 'example of the neighbour'. Therefore the PTF decided to select 28 model villages that would become the first to offer weekend packages at the Bulgarian tourism market.

In the summer of 2001 the PTF team visited all the 256 villages in Blagoevgrad District, made over 2000 photographs and collected information about the population, housing funds, infrastructure and public services, the natural, cultural and historical heritage of each village. The project called „Rural Tourism in Pirin“ was funded by the Bulgarian Charities Aid Foundation under the Democracy Network Program of the ISC and USAID.

With the help of volunteers - students at the Southwest University of Blagoevgrad - the Pirin Tourism Forum carried out a research of the human resources for rural tourism development in the pilot municipalities of Simitli, Bansko, Razlog and Gotse Delchev. On the basis of local people's readiness to work for that cause, the first five model villages under the 28 Rural Weekends Program were selected. Short training courses on rural tourism were held in all of them.

#### Practice

In September 2001, the PTF started a project called „Training Local Authorities from the Pirin Region in Finding Alternative Models for Local Economic Development“, funded by the Open Society Foundation in Sofia. One aspect of the project was the practical training, through participation, of local government representatives of four pilot municipalities (Simitli, Bansko, Razlog and Gotse Delchev) to help their citizens find alternative means of livelihood in the rural areas.

The other aspect was the analysis of human potential for rural tourism development in these municipalities. An initial selection of 25 (out of 40) villages was made in the beginning, on the basis of the following criteria:

- Relatively low level of urbanization (deselecting urban villages located along the main roads);
- Accessibility (existence of a road that can be used by a car);

- Infrastructure and public services (electricity, water supply and sewerage, telephone connections, others);

- Combination of favourable geographical location, cultural, historical and natural heritage;

- Initial impressions (from the Rural Tourism in Pirin Project) on the general attitude of local people to the idea of rural tourism.

Meanwhile the PTF presented its cause to fourth-years from the Southwest University in Blagoevgrad. Ten of them were willing to take part in the project as volunteers. They received initial training and instructions at the PTF office. With the help of village mayors, a precise organization of the students' visits to the 25 villages (10 in Simitli Municipality, 5 in Bansko, 5 in Razlog and 5 in Gotse Delchev) was made: arrival of volunteers in the village and visits to a number of houses/gardens; general meeting for project presentation and dissemination of feedback forms; transport of volunteers to the next village.

The organization, quite surprisingly, worked extremely well; volunteers came back tired but smiling. In two weeks time, they submitted their detailed reports to the PTF. Here are some quotations: „I was deeply impressed by the high fences, locked gates and barking dogs behind them, while in the next village it was easy to see that all doors were unlocked and everyone was leaving their belongings back in the yard.“ „The village of Gostoun is surrounded by so many hills that we could easily say each inhabitant has his/her own hill.“ „What rural tourism can we talk about in a village that is surrounded by the E-79 International Highway, from one side, and the Sofia-Koulatata Railway, from the other?“

The PTF thanked its volunteers by making every effort to give their work visibility in the local and regional media. A Christmas event was also organized where the volunteers received honorary diplomas and presents.

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#### Results

As a result of the volunteers' work, 631 feedback forms were returned to the PTF office. Through these, the inhabitants of the 25 villages declared their readiness to invest effort, time and money in tourism development in their village. In December 2001, an independent commission comprising representatives of the Ministry of Economy, the Regional Government of Blagoevgrad, the Economic Faculty of the Southwest University, and the PTF, analysed the received information and selected the

first five out of the 28 model villages in the Pirin region: Senokos and Soushitsa from Simitli Municipality, Kremen from Bansko Municipality, Dobarsko from Razlog Municipality, and Lazhnitsa from Gotse Delchev Municipality. In January 2002 the PTF team visited the five villages, met the people and held short trainings on rural tourism in general, the legal requirements, the market rules, etc. The arrival of the first tourists, however, requires further time and efforts.





## Municipality of Veliko Turnovo



### Academic Award of the Municipality of Veliko Turnovo

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Education  
& Culture

#### Background

#### Summary

Each Bulgarian carries parts of the majesty, beauty, history and inevitable feeling of pride, when mentioning the Old Bulgarian capital of Veliko Turnovo. Turnovo has kept everything that brings national dignity and therefore we identify it as a spiritual capital of Bulgaria. The local citizens accept and hold the past, but are very positive and entrepre-

neurial-like as for the creation of the future. The University of Veliko Turnovo is the second major academic institution in the country. Being extremely proud of the fact, on December 8th 2000 the Mayor announced for the first time the idea for establishing a special annual award for the best and most successful graduate.

The traditionally good relationship between the municipality and the „St. St. Cyril and Methodius“ University of Veliko Turnovo has created a beneficial environment for the implementation of joint projects. Stimulating and keeping in Veliko Turnovo students who have demonstrated brilliant academic performance and the desire for our young people to stay, work and create in Bulgaria are the basic motives for the founding of the Statutes of the Veliko Turnovo Academic Award.

#### Practice

Most of the local government officers at the municipal administration are graduates from the University of Veliko Turnovo. Some of the experts are part-time lecturers there. The tradition is to set up different internships for the students and to offer them a serious further career within the municipality.

After one year of negotiations and discussions with the Rector of the University, the Academic Council, lecturers and students, and with the municipal management, the result was setting up an Academic Award of Veliko Turnovo Municipality.

#### Goal

The award is given in order to stimulate and support young specialists at the dawn of their careers, as well as establishing the city as an attractive scientific and educational centre.

- The Award is granted annually on December 8th - the official celebration for Bulgarian students;

- The Award amounts to 5 000 EURO (its BGN equivalent);

- Funds are provided by the Municipality budget;

- The Municipal Council adopts a decision for the awarding with a special session shortly before the student holiday;

- The Award is given by the Mayor of the Municipality at an official ceremony at the University;

- The Chairman of the Municipal Council grants the written copy of the Council decision for the Award at an official ceremony

#### Nomination criteria:

The Award is granted to a university graduate - a full time student meeting the following requirements:

- age up to 30
- graduated in the last academic year in a Master program
- showing excellent grades during semesters and with highest grades from his/her diploma thesis and state exams
- has taken part in various research projects during education

- has no administrative offences during education.

#### Nomination procedure:

All applicants for the Award are presented on relevant Faculty Councils individually or by their tutors.

The nominations (not more than 5 applicants, according to the criteria) are discussed by the annually appointed Commission for the nomination including:

- three representatives from the Academic Council, selected by the Academic Council

- two representatives from the Municipality, selected by the Municipal Council.

For the period of three weeks until the official ceremony, the commission nominates three students for the Award; the Academic Council is to approve one of them and to present its official written decision before the Municipal Council, with detailed argumentation. This should be done up to two weeks before giving the Award.

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#### Results

In 2001 the Award was granted for the first time and we all believe in its positive future development and in the stimulus it would give to many young professionals, who would try to compete for it through hard work and extensive

knowledge. The opportunities and the chance granted by this Award would be an important factor for their high merits and responsibilities. Thus they will feel the need of helping and supporting the society they belong to.





## Municipality of Varna



### International Conference „Humanism and Pragmatism in 21st Century Education“

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Education  
& Culture

#### Background

#### Summary

Varna is the biggest cultural, educational and economic centre in northeast Bulgaria. More than 50 000 students in primary and secondary education study there; students in universities are around 40 000 in 5 Higher Education Institutions. There is an extremely diverse and dynamic network of standard and specialized schools, colleges, qualification centres for lecturers. It comes without saying that the new millennium has put forward a common issue: seeking the answer to a major challenge - education of XXI century - unity between old traditions, new trends and European dimensions. The common experience shows that successful educational reforms rely

primarily on real achievements and certain commitments of local communities, not on the pressure from inside or outside factors.

In this context the Municipality initiated the idea of organizing a prestigious forum, entitled „Humanism and pragmatism in 21st century education“. Bulgaria, as a country applying for membership in the European Union, has to harmonize its educational curricula with the European ones. This conference has become a meeting point for exchanging ideas and successful practices of education professionals from the European twin-towns of Varna.

The International Conference organized by Varna Municipality with the financial support of the European Union Twinning Program, conducted on 24 - 26 October 2001 in Varna, created the possibility of dialogue between all participants in the educational process: teachers, pedagogues and university lecturers from Bulgaria and abroad, local government, parliamentarians, NGOs and primarily students from Varna schools.

#### Practice

The Education and Youth Activities Directorate at Varna Municipality created an overall concept and program of the event. Featured topics were: positive management in education, alternative forms of training, education for children with specific needs, career consulting and education, multicultural approach in modern education - ethnic tolerance.

Information materials were prepared - a brochure and multimedia product for education in Varna; and a website for the event was also developed. After a dynamic media campaign, the Conference provoked public opinion into a wide local and national debate about secondary education. The exciting moment was combining the scientific approach (lectures, reports, plenary sessions and different seminars) with practical educational activities. For instance, in career consulting discussions, the Labour Bureau had a significant role

along with Careers Information Centre, and representatives of professional syndicates. An exhibition of all publishing houses for education-supporting books and materials - „Prosveta“, Anubis“, Letera“, was organized. Participants from the twin-town of Varna Doerdrecht, the Netherlands, took part in all plenary sessions and discussion groups. They were most interested in the „Education for children with special needs“ topic and integration of minority groups.

The guests from Doerdrecht were not only participating; they transformed the forum into a live presentation of the Dutch city. Many contacts were established for future partnerships between schools, NGOs and local authorities. These were guaranteed by personal commitment of the Vice Mayor of Doerdrecht, Mrs Herda Bosdris, and by the Bulgarian side. The conference program included a number of visits of schools, kindergartens, careers information centers; meetings of Dutch professionals with school communities united

in the effort of establishing partnership networks. The youth section consisted of pupils from various schools in Varna who have a significant contribution to the conference event. They were active participants in all discussions along with their lecturers. Participation of representatives from the twin-towns of Varna, the hot topic of education and the creation of powerful environment for intense dialogue and sharing experiences of twin municipalities were all factors that led to winning funding support for the project from the EU Twinning Program.



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#### Results

- A memorandum of participants in the international conference „Humanism and pragmatism in 21st century education“ has been adopted, as well as a memorandum of the youth section „Education for us“.
- A decision was adopted for the Conference to take place every two years in Varna.
- Amendments to texts in the Edu-

cation Act were proposed and subsequently officially presented before the Parliamentary Standing Committee for Education.

■ Relationships between the two twin-towns Varna and Doerdrecht have been reinforced and widened with a new content. Many further projects for education, culture and social activities are about to be launched.







### European Culture Heritage Days 2000

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Education  
& Culture

#### Background

The Council of Europe initiative „European Heritage Days“ (EHD) has taken place each year since 1991. Recognized as an institution in 1991 the event aims at provoking a most diverse audience with ideas for protecting cultural heritage, as well as to improve knowledge on European identity not only in cultural, but in social, economic and political aspect. Since then, the event has gained outstanding importance with regard to

participant countries and number of visitors to monuments. Elena Municipality is a centre of significant cultural traditions and there are many monuments in the area. The municipality has welcomed the event in any sense, because of the opportunity to promote its cultural heritage in the context of diverse European traditions and to bring up to visitors the feelings of understanding, respect and integration.

#### Summary

For the citizens of Elena Municipality the historic and cultural heritage is especially important since the spirit of the city's renaissance past has never stopped being part of their thoughts and feelings. No less important is the theme implemented within the European Heritage Days 2000 - „Cultural Trails“, as one of the biggest hopes of the region is the development of cultural tourism.

#### Practice

Some preliminary meetings were arranged between Mayor Dilyan Mlazev with several NGOs from the municipality: „Elena in XXI century“, „Vasil Levski“, „Elena Art - 2000“, „Vazrajhdane“ Museum, Children Complex, Tourist Society „Choumerna“, pensioner's club, and Culture Center (chitalishte) „Napredak“. There were discussions about different ideas for EHD, appropriate sharing of responsibilities, preparation, and organization. Five trails for visitors have been defined, two of them being launched for the first time.

The cultural trail „Art and Crafts“ with three new sites opened on 20 August 2001. The cultural and historical trail „Elena - Kapinovski Monastery“ was also organized for the first time. The event turned into a profound happening for more than 200 people. All visitors were welcomed in the monastery and blessed for health, peace, love and welfare. This

tradition of the citizens of Elena has been renewed for the first time since it was last practised 150 years ago. According to history records people had regularly visited the Plakovski and Kapinovski Monasteries. The worship in 2001 has re-established this again as a traditional event.

Three other cultural trails comprise: „Museum Complex“ visited in that period by more than 600 people (150 foreigners); cultural trail of the Green School in Mijkovtzi; the days of the Balkan Mountains with over 1000 participants.

The European Heritage Days in 2000 concluded with an official ceremony on 16 September in the Museum Complex. The flag of the European Heritage Days was raised under the sounds of the European hymn by the Mayor of the municipality. A short concert marked the closing part. A photographic exhibition presented memorable moments and different events during the European Heri-

tage Days Program. At the end the historical sacred image of St. Nikola was solemnly returned to the St. Nikola Church after a long absence.



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#### Results

A large number of citizens in Elena Municipality have been engaged with the exceptional value of religious and cultural heritage and inspired with the idea of its protection and understand-

ing. The community, drawing upon its traditions, has demonstrated a new approach, building a sensitive, mature and civilized attitude towards cultural heritage.





### Training citizens to communicate with the visually impaired and promoting the language of „The White Cane“

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

People with impaired sight use the sign language to communicate with the seeing participants in the traffic. There are signals through which drivers understand that they are supposed to stop and ensure for the blind to cross the street safely or passers by should help them in a difficult situation. Unfortunately, Bulgarian society is not so familiar with and

does not use the sign language. Seeing people cannot communicate with the visually impaired and therefore cannot help them if they needed it. This is a serious impediment for people with impaired sight to be integrated in society, and it forces them to live in close-knit communities of their own.

#### Category

Healthcare  
& Social Activities

#### Summary

For the first time in Bulgaria, the teams of the „Open Hearts“ project organized a training in communication with the visually impaired for specialized professional groups. The White Cane language was promoted among different social groups through the mass media.

#### Practice

With the cooperation of the local Police Departments and the Municipalities of Varna and Shoumen, policemen, municipality officials, crews of „City Transportation - Varna“ and „Social Services“, teachers, members of the Municipal Councils, and journalists were trained to understand and use the „White Cane“ language. Teachers conducted classes about communication with the visually impaired for the fifth grade in Varna and for the ninth grade in Shoumen.

The Varna organization worked actively with the Center for Specialization and Professional Training. From January to June 2001 teachers and policemen passed a training course, which introduced them to the specific behaviour of the visually impaired citizens, their difficulties, as well as to the professional and ethical norms of communication with them in different situations. The project team in Shoumen cooperated with the local Police Department. Together both organizations trained 220

policemen from the whole region: Shoumen, Kaolinovo, Novi Pazar, and Veliki Preslav.

Well trained police crews from the region of Varna and Shoumen were a guarantee for effective dissemination of the sign language among citizens and a prerequisite for increasing the safety of the visually impaired people. The project team and the police officers reached the conclusion that the „White Cane“ signals should be included in the Road Transportation Act.

With the cooperation of „Property and Economy“ Department, „Transportation“ Directorate at the Municipality of Varna, all drivers of the city transportation firms were trained. Fifth grade teachers from Shoumen were also trained within the project. The Vice Mayor for Culture and Education affirmed their qualification to train their students. Ninth grade teachers were trained in Varna.

With the cooperation of the Mayor's Office municipal officials in Varna and members of the Municipal Council in Shoumen were trained. All social workers

as well as journalists who showed interest in the project also passed the training course voluntary.

The project team issued a free educational brochure „White Cane Language“, which was received with great interest in the community. Copies of the brochure were given not only to workers and libraries of the partner organizations, but also to people and organizations closely connected to the problem outside the region.

An educational film „Open Hearts“ was produced, broadcast not only by all cable channels in the region, but also by some national TV stations as well. This fact widened significantly the area of activity and proved the enormous interest towards the problem. In order to satisfy the needs of other municipalities, a second stage of the project should be carried out at a national level. Press conferences in Varna and Shoumen concluded the project. Local TV cable channels invited the project coordinator to discuss the problems of the visually impaired and their possible solutions in their shows.

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#### Results

- With respect to the conditions provided for the visually impaired people to use the city transportation, Varna has become a truly European city. A great part of the population in the region can now freely help the unseeing people.

- The level of social integration and safety of the visually impaired has increased due to introducing the society to the sign language.

- Policemen from both Varna and Shoumen Police Departments have be-

come familiar with the „White Cane“ language;

- An opportunity for the growing up of a new generation, which would freely communicate with the visually impaired, was created owing to the training at schools.

- Some real steps in the area of disabled people integration were made, which is an approach in agreement with the requirements of the European Union.

- Trainings of a similar kind could and should be held in other municipalities. This is the goal of the second stage of the „Open Hearts“ project.





## Municipal Children's Complex - Mizia

### Early prevention of deviant behavior in children and adolescents

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

In the Municipality of Mizia the problems of raising children in the family and at school stand out against a background of 30% unemployment, poverty, illiteracy and low standards of living, especially among the Roma population. The population in the Municipality of Mizia is 9600 people. The total number of children going to school is 1028. 180 of them are at high risk. The escalation of children's delinquency, the juvenile anti-social behaviour as well as the negative phenomena among young people - drug addiction, smoking, drinking alcohol, violence and aggression call for effective solutions.

These problems provoked the idea of the Project for early prevention of deviant behaviour in children and adolescents, developed by a team from the Municipal Committee for Juvenile and Minor Delinquents in the town of Mizia and the Center for Preventive Activity in the town of Kozlodui, submitted by the Board of Trustees of the Municipal Children's Complex - Mizia and supported by the Education Department, The School Committee for Juvenile and Minor Delinquents and the school managing bodies, the police departments in Mizia and Oriahovo, the Court and Prosecution in Oriahovo, and the Municipal Social Service.



#### Category Healthcare & Social Activities

#### Summary

The Project creates conditions for establishing a working institution in aid of children at risk. It offers more information and raises social awareness of the problems of children's delinquency and juvenile anti-social behaviour, and develops forms of early prevention through a system of activities coordinating the efforts of specialists.

#### Practice

The implementation of the Project is connected with the early discovery, psychological diagnosis and prevention of hazardous behavior in children. What is meant by „early“ is that the origin and first manifestations are promptly stopped. The target groups of the Project are the children from the Municipality of Mizia; parents; pedagogical staff; school managing bodies; community and non-governmental organizations.

The Project is funded by the US Agency for International Development through FLGR's Danube River Initiative Program. It started in February 2001 and continued for 4 months.

Repair and content activities were carried out within the project. Five rooms in the Municipal Children's Complex in Mizia and a toilet were repaired. The rooms are used now for computer training, consultations on problems of the child's personality, education, a room for „Quiet Games“ and rest. The premises can be used not only for work with children and adolescents at risk but for all the other children of the Municipality of Mizia.

A room was equipped with 4 computers and one printer giving access to computer training to children at risk. It aims to introduce them to a different environment provoking the development of new skills and their imagination, and offering an alternative to their behaviour. This is an opportunity for the children to get new knowledge and skills to use computers and the Internet.

Different specialists - a psychologist, pedagogues, social workers, a lawyer, a doctor, etc. work on the Consultative Board on the problems of the child's personality. They consult children at risk and their parents.

The content activities started with a preparatory stage. The project partners - specialists from the Center for Preventive Activity - Kozlodui (a psychologist and a pedagogue) carried out 6 training sessions for the members of the Municipal Committee for Juvenile and Minor Delinquents and 36 children to acquire leadership skills and training skills for the prevention of drug addiction, alcohol abuse, smoking and AIDS.

Within the framework of the financial support of USAID in March 2001 in the village of

Ribaritsa a training of specialists in the problems of children with deviant behavior (a psychologist, pedagogues, social workers, social educators, representatives of the Law Court, the Prosecution and the Police) took place. The topics included Coordinating the efforts for correction of children's deviant behaviour and Drug addiction as a deviation. The lecturers were from the Institute on Addictions in Sofia. 44 specialists from the Municipality of Mizia and Kozlodui took part in the event.

The second stage of the content activities was carried out in April 2001 in the village of Ribaritsa where teams of children from „SOS Friends“ Club - Kozlodui trained the children from the Municipality of Mizia under the Peers to Peers Education Program. Four training sessions were conducted by teams in prevention of smoking, alcoholism, drug addiction and AIDS. 120 children participated in the training along with session leaders from the Municipality of Mizia and Kozlodui. During their free time the children went hiking, danced in a disco, celebrated the anniversary of the SOS Friends Club - Kozlodui, and had a contest for Miss and Mister Health.

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#### Results

The following results were achieved:

- 36 children from the Municipality of Mizia were trained and acquired skills in preventive activity. They successfully conducted training among other children of the same age and in the course of the one year after the project end they have carried out training of about 80 hours at 5 schools under Peer to Peer Education Program in the supervisor teacher's hour. They conducted trainings, sports competitions, contests, commemorated the International days against smoking and AIDS;
- 25 specialists from the Municipality of Mizia, involved in the problems of children at high risk, were trained to identify deviant behaviour and ways to correct it;
- The Center for Preventive Activity - Kozlodui

shared its experience with the Municipal Committee for Juvenile and Minor Delinquents - Mizia and thus established cooperation on a regional level;

■ An efficient institution for helping children was set up on the basis of the cooperation between NGOs, the Board of Trustees of the Municipal Children's Complex - Mizia, the Municipality of Mizia, the Police Department, the Law Court and the Prosecution in Oriahovo.

■ The attention and participation of parents as volunteers has enhanced project activities and has continued after its completion.

■ In January 2002 a Municipal Program was approved, focused on protecting the health and lives of the children in the Municipality of Mizia. The Municipal Council in Mizia voted funds for many sports, ecological and creative events for the children as well as for activities connected with healthy living.

## „Yordan Yovkov“ Culture Center - Alfatar Municipality



### Project „Today begins from tomorrow“ Bringing back and keeping in school Roma children and children in disadvantaged position

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Healthcare  
& Social Activities

#### Background

#### Summary

The idea for this project emerged due to the existence of the following problem: high percentage of dropped out or „left out“ students subject to compulsory education (25 - 30%). These are mainly children coming from ethnic minorities, whose families live on the edge of or below the social minimum of poverty (in most families both parents are unemployed and rely on social welfare). Those families get isolated, trapped in the cage of their material problems with no alternative ways of

solving them. This situation has led to a highly negative attitude towards all governmental institutions, including schools that „cannot solve parents' problems and will not solve children's ones“. Youngsters attending schools have low motivation, experiencing difficulties in attaining proficiency in the Bulgarian language and correspondingly in the school material. This has led to lower abilities for social adaptation, weaker academic competitiveness and less chance for realization.

The project „Tomorrow begins from today“ offers a sustainable program called „School for Everyone“ with attractive and flexible ways of acquiring information. The program includes free access to modern technologies, ethno-cultural activities, gaining skills in applied arts, publication of own printed products. The main purpose of the project was the social integration of students coming from the minority groups by recognizing their cultural identity, as well as involving parents in school activities and increasing the level of their civic education.

#### Practice

The project „Tomorrow begins from today“ has offered a possible solution to the problems of a close-knit community - children of Roma origin and children in disadvantaged position. The goals of the project were:

- Abolish the unfair treatment of Roma people according to the National Framework Program for equal integration of Roma people in the Bulgarian society through guaranteed open access to education.

- Unify the efforts of teachers, parents and students to create a favourable environment providing quality education, improvement of Bulgarian language skills, civic education in the spirit of ethno-cultural tolerance and respect to the individual.

- Transform schools into „neutral territory“, e.g. a scene for cultural intercourse, creativity, learning about specific traditions and crafts of the particular communities. Additionally, develop virtues such as initiative, responsibility, and ability to discuss and

solve problems.

The target group of the project were 86 children of Roma origin or disadvantaged families, attending „Otets Paisij“ Primary School in the village of Alekovo. The project started at the end of April 2001.

#### Main activities:

##### ■ Consulting and diagnostic activities

An expert in children psychology in cooperation with the project team carried out group and individual therapy sessions with children experiencing behaviour problems - incapability of communication, lack of adaptiveness, deformation in value orientation. Parents were consulted on problems related to child education, as well as stimulated towards more active partnership with teachers and participation in school life.

##### ■ Cultural and educational activities

The program included forming a children's vocal group „Smehorani“ (26 participants) performing songs and dances of the different ethnic groups. That activity contributed to building a favourable environment for development of the individual creative

potential, suggesting tolerance between different cultures and values, and providing opportunities for the children to freely express themselves.

- Equipping an information hall called „Knowledge is power“ for offering training in basic computer skills - how to use education software and how to produce information brochures. (Computer Club with 30 participants)

- The Journalist Club published the „All Seeing Eye“ brochure. It contained interviews, entertainment columns, and debates on school life problems. The educational brochure „Life in your hands“ was intended to inform parents on legal matters, rights and obligations, local self-government issues, as well as children's rights.

- The „Dexterous Hands“ Club (20 participants) helped children to achieve skills in applied arts, teaching them to make objects from various materials, and in the mean time, introducing them to particular customs and traditions. The „Colorful World“ games room was set up to help children with ideas on how to spend their spare time in a better way, to provoke their interests and to stimulate open-minded communication between them.

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#### Results

- School environment has become more interesting and attractive to children.

- On the basis of different interests, four teams have been formed: Computer Club, Journalist Club, „Smehorani“ vocal group, „Dexterous Hands“ Club. Those activities have been made available for all interested candidates. They created possibilities for children to develop their talents.

- Students have become equal partners to their tutors. In this way their initiative, sense of responsibility, involvement in school life and ethno-cultural tolerance have been stimulated.

- A great part of the parents appreciated the effectiveness of the project and demonstrated sympathy and interest in school problems.

- Useful cooperation with the Municipality of Alfatar for solving the target group problems.







## International Children's Football Tournament - Rakovski 2002

### Innovative Practice

### Category

Youth Initiatives

### Background

### Summary

In the beginning of April 2002 the seemingly quiet, even boring life in a small municipality like Rakovski was disturbed by a great event. For the first time ever in Bulgaria an International Children's Football Tournament - Rakovski 2002 took place under the auspices of the municipality, with the cooperation and support of the Catholic Church, the State Agency for Youth and Sport, MP

Nonka Matova and young people from the community. The motto was „United by football“. 8 teams took part in the tournament - 4 Bulgarian and 4 foreign ones. Bulgaria was represented by Rakovski Football Club; Lokomotiv Pd PFC; Botev PFC and Litex FC. The foreign teams were Tremoli FC - Italy; Rouch FC - Poland; Hibernias FC - Malta and Maximir FC - Malta.

The first international football tournament Rakovski 2002 set a new beginning in the relations between young people from Rakovski with their peers of different religious background and different nationalities in Europe.

### Practice

The Tournament was opened on April 2, 2002 with a ceremonial liturgy and a blessing in one of the biggest cathedrals in the town of Rakovski - „St. Archangel Michael“. The church was as crowded as if it had been a Christian holiday. The most exciting time was when the priests of different nationalities called upon their teams, each in their own language to offer a prayer for health, well being, and in the name of friendship. At that moment the children's faces were radiant with joy. Everyone present was aware that there are no religious or state boundaries for friendship.

After the ceremonial mass the eight teams were escorted to the town stadium by a brass band and girls in folk costumes, carrying the national flags of each of the participating countries. The streets were full of people, young and old alike, who had left their work on the

fields to witness the event. For seven days there was an endless holiday in the Municipality of Rakovski.

What was the aim of this tournament in fact? The main motive was not the sports event or the competitive moment. It was rather the desire to break up the stereotypes and enrich the lifestyle of young people from the Municipality of Rakovski. To challenge their thinking and their motivation for a new behavior - open not only to their own problems but also to the problems of their friends around the world. To say No to alcohol, cigarettes and drugs and Yes to healthy living and sport. To treat each other with understanding and overcome the differences in nationality and religion.

During the seven days of the tournament the town celebrated. The final day was the most exciting. Neither the bad weather, nor the rain could cancel the event. The final match featured the host team Rakovski FC playing against

Rouch FC from Poland. The team from Poland outrivaled Rakovski with better technique and won the victory through penalties. The boys from Rakovski took the second place cup with eyes full of tears, but they hug their rivals and wished for a victory in the following matches to be held in Germany and Italy.



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### Results

The first International Football Tournament - Rakovski 2002 set a new beginning in the relationships of young people from Rakovski with children from different nationalities and religions from other European countries. This would not have been possible without the determination of Mayor Franz Kokov and the cooperation of the young

people. The next steps will be to establish a twinning relationship between Rakovski and Tremoli, which will be a long and difficult process. The recognition for the brilliant organization of the tournament came from Italy with a letter of thanks to the Mayor and to everybody who helped conducting the event.





## A chance for young people

### Innovative Practice

### Category Youth Initiatives

#### Background

The results of a representative survey requested by „Knowledge“ Association showed that unemployment is a foremost problem for the citizens of the Municipality of Lovech - 40.4 % of the people rated it first and 19.8 % - as a problem of second importance. Every nine out of ten citizens of the municipality (both employed and unemployed) fear unemployment and admit not to have any strategy to cope with this kind of crisis situation. When asked about

possible reasons for changing their place of residence, 46.2 % of the people mention the limited opportunities for professional realization and growth.

This program is especially significant for „Knowledge“ Association's traditional target groups - the young people leaving Foster Homes, the physically harassed, the imprisoned, as well as members of the ethnic minorities.

#### Summary

The practice is focused on integrating disadvantaged young people, which are presently going out on the labour market. A set of measures have been undertaken to enhance the professional qualifications of the young people, and increase the efficiency and interaction of institutions with employers. As an alternative to full time jobs, the project has created a Youth Agency for seasonal and part time work. A specific mechanism of hourly employment has been established for disabled youth.

#### Practice

Project work began with training of high school graduates, which included a set of five activities in the following areas:

- information about labour market and most wanted professions;
- possibilities for continuing education;
- training seminar „Presentation at the employer's office“;
- individual consultations.

Professional training for specialists in demand - vice cooks, confectioners, as well as computer literacy courses were organized for disabled young people. Fifteen youths in disadvantaged position participated in each of the courses. They had graduated schools with no professional orientation - youths coming from foster homes, just released from prison or members of minority groups. The Labour Bureau selected the candidates for participation.

The Lovech prison is the second largest institution of this kind in Bulgaria. A house painters' course for fifteen young people was organized there. It included a repair of the prison dining hall. A construction work team was formed in order to continue the repair activities in the prison. The youths received a special „house

painters“ certificate, which is a certain prerequisite for finding work after the end of their sentence. In addition, a literacy course with fifteen participants was organized, including 200 classes of Bulgarian language and 100 math lessons.

The project provided modules for work qualification of young people with serious physical and mental disabilities. Qualification courses in cooking and practical crafts for fifteen youths from the Foster Home for Disabled Children in Lovech were organized, based on specially developed and adapted programs. The Youth Cooperative for Disabled Young People created and released its first products - Christmas cards, ikebana, and tapestries. A local firm provided the Cooperative with the opportunity to sell its products at one of the firm's stores. A fund for turnover capital of the Cooperative was founded with the finances accumulated.

Close interaction between Knowledge Association and the Labour Bureau - Lovech was established. Both have served as mediators between employers and young people who had finished their training. Group and individual meetings with the employers were organized in order to clear out legal regulations for hiring, and to discuss problems of disabled youths. Opportunity for internships at possible workplaces was provided. The core of the project was the Youth

Agency for seasonal and part time work. It was intended to provide alternative solution for people who are unable to find permanent work, and functions as a work mediator. Connection between the Agency and the Labour Bureau was established through a common computer network.

Part of the project was focused on the creation of an employers' database, offering seasonal and part time jobs, and young people looking for such. The Agency kept account of registered youths who had already passed their training and wished to upgrade their work qualification. The project collaborators - the Labour Bureau and Knowledge Association, used that information when selecting learners for particular qualification courses. This improved the quality of selection of youths who were financially supported by Knowledge Association, as well as those financed by the Professional Qualification and Unemployment Fund. For sustainability purposes, the Youth Agency for seasonal and part-time work was based at the „Work“ Club, division of the Labour Bureau - Lovech. After the project ended, the Labour Bureau has continued to finance the Club. Working on this project became possible due to the financial support of „Charles Stuart Mott“ Foundation through the Foundation for Local Government Reform.

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#### Results

■ A Youth Agency for seasonal and part-time work was created. In the course of a month only, the Bureau provided 38 workplaces for young people in disadvantaged position, mostly in the construction business. All prerequisites for the Bureau to continue its work after the project were set up - 87 youths upgraded their work qualifications, 13 of them started work immediately after the end of the project.

■ The project set grounds for a youth cooperative in the Foster Home for disabled children. A fund providing

the minimum finances required for the cooperative to continue its work was settled.

■ The project strengthened the traditional partnership among Knowledge Association, the Regional Employment Service, and the Labour Bureau and created preconditions for future co-actions.

■ Working on the project „A Chance for Young People“ Knowledge Association realised in practice the citizen organization's mission - generating ideas and initiating changes for social welfare, using the government institutions' potential.





## Youth Association for Development of Etropole Municipality Etropole Municipality

**Local government and NGO - together  
for sustainable development of their city**

### Innovative Practice

#### Background

Etropole is a small mountain municipality with beautiful nature and resources for development of tourism in the region. Before the beginning of focused activities this potential was not used, at least not rationally, and the city

and its nature were crumbling down. The idea of initiating alternative tourism with concern about the environment emerged spontaneously among young people and found support from representatives of the Municipality.



**Youth Initiatives**

### Category

#### Summary

The Youth Association for Development of Etropole Municipality together with the Municipality of Etropole and many other partners in the sphere of tourism and environment created premises and structures for development of alternative tourism which makes use of the rich local natural, historical, cultural, ethnographical and human resources.

#### Practice

From the beginning of 2002 The Youth Association for Development of Etropole Municipality has worked together with the Municipality of Etropole on the project „Young People and Alternative Tourism - factor for sustainable local development“. The project is financed by „Time Eco-projects“ Foundation under the „Democracy Network Program of the Institute for Sustainable Communities with resources of USAID.

A priority aim of the project is through sustainable practices to give start of the development of alternative tourism with concern about environment in the Etropole Ribaritz area by using the rich local natural, historical, cultural, ethnographical, human and other resources. The project prepares the pilot part of a tourist informational package; composes a Handcrafts Trail with a demonstration of 6 traditional crafts in Etropole; creates an attraction spot „Zaslona“ which is also the initial point for 4 pedestrian mountain trails

in Etropole Balkan; starts a partnership in the form of Tourism Council together with local businessmen, owners of recreation places, media, Tourist Bureau „Joral“, and local government.

Attracting visitors and turning Etropole into an appealing tourist center in the Middle Stara Planina mountain requires appropriate organization, large scale advertising, improvement and marking of walking mountain routes, preparing a comprehensive database of the municipal resources, publicising the natural resources available, and preparing a long term marketing strategy. As part of the project several walking routes in Etropole Balkan were marked and a qualified guide was made available. The routes are connected with local sights and protected natural areas, and for those who are more courageous a trail is offered to the mountain peaks. The Handcrafts Trail offers exciting experience with the demonstration of different crafts and the possibility to try the traditional local cuisine. Those who are willing to go back to the 18th or 19th century are of-

fered to spend the night in authentic old-fashioned rooms.

Etropole is famous for its clean nature and its traditional holidays and customs connected with the mountain. Two-day packages are offered to see them, which have attracted tour-operators' interest. The marking of the routes was made according to the requirements of Bulgarian State Standard. The tourist product was presented during the „Tourism“ International Exposition in Bulgarreklama and at the tourist fair for Stara Planina mountain „Teteven 2001“. The Tourism Council established within the project became a member of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism (BAAT). The partnership has started and efforts of mobilizing local resources for offering tourist services alternative to the usual tourist product were rewarded. The 16 journalists from the national media who took part in the second promotional media tour together with representatives of the Ministry of Economy and BAAT had excellent impressions and made an extensive coverage of the project.

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#### Results

As a result of the hard work there is a confirmation for a visit of French groups in Etropole Ribaritz in summer 2002. The following products have been launched: colour brochures and a web site

**[www.etrotur.etropole.cjb.net](http://www.etrotur.etropole.cjb.net)**

strategy for sustainable development of tourism in the region; a program for expanding tourist services with „Extreme

Tracks“, rock-climbing, and other initiatives aiming at attracting tourists for a longer time. These products are directed to the Bulgarian consumer too. Etropole region with its clean environment and the organization set up due to the work of young people under the project is attractive with its closeness to the capital and looks forward to future success.







## Municipality of Silistra



### Municipal Open Day

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Management Practices

#### Background

On the occasion of 12 October - the Day of the Bulgarian Municipality, for a second time in a sequence, the Municipality of Silistra opened its doors for all citizens who wish to know better the nature of the municipal administration work. Guests are invited to observe the

technical procedures in delivering municipal services, to ask questions and make recommendations for optimising the activities. In 2001 the focus was laid on the work of the Citizen Services Center, which has been in operation for already one year now.

#### Summary

Citizen participation creates prerequisites for making joint decisions about problems in the community and attaining common goals by utilizing the existing resources, sharing responsibility and the understanding that „this is our problem, not only the problem of municipal authorities“. This practice provides for incorporating and using the opinion and ideas of a wider circle of people. Citizens focus their attention on the general situation in the municipality, not only on their individual needs.

#### Practice

Citizens were welcomed by the Mayor of Silistra and his team. Each of the guests was acquainted with the structure and functions of the municipal administration, the work of the separate directorates, the local computer network, the services offered and the way of operation of the Citizen Services Center. Citizens were provided the opportunity to work as municipal officials. The complete document flow regarding a submitted request was observed - from registering it at the Documents Department to issuing the requested document or written response.

Students from the eleventh grade of „St. Kliment Ohridski“ mathematical school, „Peio Yavorov“ language school and first year students from the Silistra branch of the Rousse University „Angel Kanchev“ attended the Municipal Open Day. The hot topics discussed with the

young people were related to their professional realization, the possibilities offered by the city, their participation in

different municipal projects, environmental activities and the protection of the „Sreburna“ biosphere reserve.



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#### Results

Public understanding was attained in the following areas:

- Citizens start to better realize the complexity of the problems with which the municipal administration is faced;
- Citizens realize that taking a decision on a certain issue may prove a difficult task;
- Citizens obtain a general idea

about the time devoted to each file;

- Local authorities are not alone in taking decisions on the solution of certain issues;
- The contribution and ideas of a large number of people are utilized.
- Tolerance and understanding are created in the delivery of citizen services.





## Municipality of Kardjali



### Investments and Projects Department

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Management Practices

#### Background

#### Summary

The Investments and Projects Unit was founded in April 2000 as part of the Economic Activity Department at the Municipality of Kardjali. Its establishment was imposed by the need for gathering, summarizing, and submitting timely and accurate information about financing projects under different programs and investment funds. On the other hand, to that moment, there had

not existed a unit in the municipal administration, responsible for coordinating the efforts of the municipal departments, NGOs and business for improving the conditions of life and work in the region. After approving the changes in the structure of the municipal administration in October 2000, the unit was included in the Sustainable Development Directorate.

The Investments and Projects Department set up in the Sustainable Development Directorate at the Municipality of Kardjali with a young and energetic team has a considerable contribution to the wide range of project activities for sustainable local development, starting up partnerships, and preparing programs and projects for attracting investments.

#### Practice

The experts included in the team (27 years of average age) have different academic background - economics, law, biotechnologies. This allows for the team to work professionally in the preparation of analyses and marketing, and developing and implementing projects and programs in the sphere of social and economic development and environment. A priority in the Department's activity is gathering and summarizing information about grant programs, funds and NGOs, as well as building a database of the investment possibilities in the municipality. This information is submitted to the departments of the municipal administration, NGOs, and citizens. The team is trying to support and develop the existing partner relations with NGOs and business in the municipality and all over the country. The specialists from the section are taking active part in the projects which are currently realised.

1. Project „Solid Waste Management“ financed by the Know How Fund of the UK Department for International Development. The project is managed by the British company Entec and is carried out in two pilot municipalities - Kardjali and Lom.

2. Project „Decreasing the Harmful Influence of Transport Over the Environment in the Municipality of Kardjali“ under the „EcoLinks“ Program of the US Agency of International Development with partners - Institute of Transport and Communications, Sofia and Willbur Smith Ass., USA.

3. Project for announcing „East Rhodopi“ a nature park together with the Bulgarian Association for Bird Protection.

4. Project „Basin Council for Varbitsa River“ in cooperation with the Center for Social Practices and the municipalities in the region.

5. Project for establishing „Advisory Bureau for Citizens“ in partnership with the Consumers Federation, Union of Disabled People, Democratic Union of Women, financed by the Know How Fund of the UK Department of International Development.

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#### Results

Despite of its short term experience the team is proud of its first success - a diploma from the Economic Forum „Expo - 21 century“ in Plovdiv. The group presenting Kardjali region at the Forum included representatives of the regional and municipal administration, businesses, NGOs. Together with Euro-partners 2000 Foundation, Sofia and the Association of Regional and European Partnership, Kardjali, the project „Partnership in Resolving Conflicts“ was successfully accomplished. At the request for technical assistance to the Municipality of Kardjali, the Association of Rhodopi Municipalities (ARM) and

the Foundation for Local Government Reform organized in Kardjali the seminars „Preparation of Successful Projects“ and „Strategy Planning“. At these seminars, officials from the municipalities, members of ARM, obtained practical skills for preparing strategic plans and projects.

In its future activity the team will emphasise mostly on the preparation and implementation of projects and programs in different spheres of the social and economic development and preserving the environment, which will help improve the quality of life in the region.



# Municipality of Ivailovgrad



**„We are the people, this is the place and this is the time ...“**

## Innovative Practice

## Category

**Management Practices**

## Background

## Summary

In the beginning of 2001 the Municipal Council of Ivailovgrad declared February 14th the Day of the City. Thus after long years of searching the town has already established its holiday, which is in full keeping with the traditions of this southern vine-growing region. In the beginning of June 2001 the municipality hosted the fair „Ilieva Niva - day of the Thracian child“. This fair was supported not only by donations and sponsorship but also by a project with which the municipality applied to the „Culture“ National Fund.

Inspired by the patriotic spirit of the people of Ivailovgrad prominent statesmen gathered on

July 16, 2001 for the unveiling of the first monument of Vasil Levski in the eastern Rhodope mountains on the occasion of the 164th anniversary of the birth of the Apostle. This happened thanks to the active position of the municipal councilors in Ivailovgrad and the all Bulgarian committee of „Vasil Levski“. In September 2001 in Ivailovgrad a unique monument from Roman times was discovered - the tomb near the village of Svirachi. The „St. Paraskeva-Petka Bulgarska“ Chapel built with the help of the municipality by order of Vanga was promptly opened in fulfilment of her prophecy for the well being and good luck of the people from this region.

The citizens of the Municipality of Ivailovgrad encouraged by the energetic team of the municipality actively take part and support the initiatives connected with the revival of the history and the integration of young people into society as well as their education in love and respect for their homeland. During their spare time a lot of young people willingly take part in the preparation and realization of the forums initiated and supported by the municipality.

## Practice

The municipality has developed and put into practice a number of projects connected with the future of the young people in the region. „I am young, I am here, I will help you“ is the first project of the municipality approved by the „Maritza“ Regional Association of Municipalities aimed at young municipal officials and focused on improvement of the services offered by the administration. The Municipality of Ivailovgrad in partnership with „Probuda“ Culture Centre, the Municipal Social Service and the Labor Bureau prepared and successfully applied to Open Society Foundation with a project devoted to „Initiatives in the Bulgarian village“. The people from some of the larger villages e.g. Svirachi, Zhelezino and Slavevo have benefited from the results - easy-to-get, fast, high quality, time saving services.

Another successful project of the municipal administration in partnership with „Armira“ citizen organization is aimed at socially disadvantaged children: the project offers opportunities to parentless and disabled

children between 14 and 18 years of age to continue their education after finishing high school. The project was approved and funded by Charity Know How Fund.

In 2001 the executive body of the Municipality applied to the Peace Corps with a Project for technical aid - assigning volunteers in two areas: ecology and education. In the joint efforts of this successful initiative two new projects were born, amounting to 10 000 USD, aimed at enhancing the environmental culture, and equipping a computer room at „Hristo Botev“ high school, badly needed by the children of Ivailovgrad.

Under the PHARE Program of the EC the municipality won a project aimed at the creation of temporary employment for 35 unemployed people from the municipality in doing repairs and public utilities in the town center and the areas surrounding the blocks in Ivailovgrad. This project contributed to the improvement of the parks where special playgrounds for the children were built.

In March 2002 the Municipality of Ivailovgrad competed and won the race with 64 other municipalities before the EC Delegation with the project „A Day of Europe in

My Border Town of Ivailovgrad“. The project is aimed at introducing the people from the municipality to the processes of Bulgaria's integration to the European Union.

Projects were also prepared and presented before the State Agency for Youth and Sport, National Culture Fund, the Government of Japan, the „Interethnic Initiatives for Human Rights“ Foundation, the UN and other organizations and the results of the competitions are being expected. All this has been made possible mostly thanks to the enthusiasm of the young people who work in the municipality and those who have recently started work in the municipal administration under the law for protection against unemployment and the preferences offered by the Labour Bureau to unemployed youths of up to 29 years of age. Having become aware of the fact that they are the future of the municipality, confident in their abilities and feeling the support of the local authorities, they understand that this is the time and they are the people who can change things for the better because the town and the local people deserve it.

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## Results

The Municipality of Ivailovgrad pays special attention to the possibilities of revival of the history of this region so rich in traditions. It strives to discover and put into practice the potential of young people as bearers of innovation. Many projects are developed in order to repair historical monuments. They support the patriotic spirit of the citizens. Others ensure employment for young people.

Local authorities have initiated the development of successful ideas. They are

aware of the need to look for alternative sources of funding in order to achieve the main objectives of the municipal strategy: use of local resources and potential to stop the decline in the economy, create new jobs for the population, increase the birth rate and create European lifestyle standards. The key to the work in the municipality is the trust in young people. Mayor Stefan Tanev has initiated in recent years 8 projects to the amount of 230 880 BGN, which have been successfully carried out.







## Etropole Municipality



### Local Agenda 21 - Thought, action, and development of social, economic and environmental sustainability of the city

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

#### Category

Environment and Sustainable Development

#### Summary

The basic goal was set in relation to Etropole's participation in the European Sustainable Development Campaign. In the year 2000 local authorities signed the Aalborg Charter and adopted the principles of Local Agenda 21 (LA21) as their vision. A priority objective is the development of a sustainable society through active participation of the local community, which in the long-term should work

for achieving global sustainability. LA21 is a proper basis for policy making of the local community as it comprises the social sphere, economy, environment, culture, the elaboration of local plans and long-term development strategies through community debates, the introduction of innovative technologies for safe living conditions in the town, and a complex approach to human welfare and health.

Etropole Municipality has developed favourable conditions for sustainable development of the local community and enhancing the quality of life, involving all interested parties in the work of the Sustainable Development Council, and has conducted public discussions on the community vision and action plan. The project is financed 25 % by local business, 30 % by the municipality budget, 20 % by schools, 25 % from foundations and sponsors for separate initiatives and public campaigns.

#### Practice

Etropole local government utilizes the process of LA21 for harmonizing and implementing a strategy for local sustainable development through partnership and in conformity with the obligatory environmental requirements. The activities of the Council for Sustainable Development facilitated the outlining of the priorities the community had to work on and initiated the development of a long-term action plan.

The Council for Sustainable Development was established in December 2000 on the initiative of the Municipality of Etropole. It is a community body which functions on a partnership basis and all important institutions within the municipality are represented in it: local executive authorities; local legislative authorities; NGOs; journalists from local and regional media; directors and managers of companies and enterprises registered on the territory of the municipality, major polluters of the environment etc.; small and medium-size enterprises: tourist and agricultural companies; the police, the Hygiene and Epidemics Inspectorate, hospitals, medical centers, schools, kin-

dergartens, electricity and water supply companies, telecommunication networks, committee on emergencies and disasters, etc.; cultural institutions; citizens.

All members of the Council for Sustainable Development participate on voluntary and partnership basis in its activities. Each of them according to the relevant sphere of competence of the institution participate in one or more committees such as the Committee on Environment Protection, Committee on Cultural and Social Policy, Committee on Economics and Investment. Important decisions are made at the Council's meetings by means of voting.

The problems encountered during the implementation of this large scope municipal project could be summarized in several categories:

1. Problems related to the geographical position of the town- Etropole is a small town situated near the capital of Bulgaria, but communications are hindered because of the bad road infrastructure.

2. Problems related to the lack of Internet communication in the town - there is no local server because of the lack of financial resources

and this hinders Internet access.

3. Problems related to the lack of trust of the local community, which makes the adaptation to the new dynamics of globalization processes, European integration and sustainable development rather difficult.

4. Problems related to the social and economic environment of the countries in transition: it is difficult to convince people in the significance of environmental problems, urban sustainability, global changes and the risks for the future generations when they have to face the daily problems of unemployment, insufficient money for everyday life, stress etc.

5. Problems related to the lack of funds - municipal budgets still do not have funds for developing and implementing LA21 and that makes the pursuing of a sustainable policy very difficult.

Verifiable indicators for the success of the project were established, which comprise local community awareness; education for sustainable development; economy and quality of life. As the project is still being implemented, the overall impact is yet to be measured.

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#### Results

For a two-year period the Etropole local authorities in partnership with all sectors of the local community has accomplished the following: Realized its key role in the LA21 process; Involved partners from all social sectors for active work; Started developing management methods and techniques for successful implementation of LA21; Integrated the concept of sustainability in local policy; Increased public awareness through eco-parliaments, media campaigns, etc.; Initiated the development of a local action plan; Trained municipal staff in the area of sustainable development; Introduced the subject in schools and kindergartens; Introduced a pilot model of sustainable use of local natural

and historical resources through employment in tourism; Improved the town safety; Adopted the principles of the European Social Charter for Human Rights and Democracy; Improved the urban design (town parks, places for children, recreation areas, etc.); Initiated anti-poverty actions through alternative employment opportunities; Implemented initiatives on environment protection and sustainable development.

Etropole Municipality have shared their practice in developing, applying and accounting for the results of LA21 with other municipalities. The model has already been multiplied in three Bulgarian towns - Dryanovo (of similar size and population), Vidin (a regional center), and Botevgrad.





## Ecoprocess Company and City of Dobrich Municipality



### A successful public-private partnership in the environmental field

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

#### Category

Environment and  
Sustainable  
Development

#### Summary

The Budget, Finance, and Tax Policy Committee at Dobrich Municipal Council supported a proposal of the municipal administration for public discussion of the municipal budget and for the fourth year it has already performed successfully. During one of the public discussions held with business in 2001 all participants united round the idea that it would be of mutual interest if the municipality sustains ideas and business projects connected with preserving the environment and opening new work places. It was noted that one of the means for consolidating municipal finances is the public-private partnership.

In the last few years all over the world and especially in the member countries of the European

Union, the problem of disposal of useless tyres has become strained. These wastes are extremely harmful because of the fact that they are not disintegrating. In Bulgaria only, about 60 000 tons of automobile tyres are being discarded per year (and what is even worse - part of them is being burned down). A special attention was given to this problem by Dobrich Municipal Council and on May 28, 2002 an amendment and an addition was approved of Regulation No 2 for management of waste treatment activities and providing for the cleanness at the territory of the town of Dobrich. This motivated representatives of business to invest in a pilot project entitled „A Factory for Environmental Processing of Waste Tyres“.

The project aims at ensuring environment-friendly processing of used automobile tyres and extracting raw useful materials from them, providing new jobs and supporting local finances.

#### Practice

Ecoprocess Company is a patent holder of an invention named „Equipment for Pyrolysis of Whole Tyres“. The invention is unique as shown by a survey for the patent novelty. From the ecologically harmful waste - the useless tyres, valuable substances are being obtained in an environment friendly way without harmful emissions. Tyres are completely disintegrated in a thermo-chemical process - vacuum pyrolysis. This is a process of resolving complex hydrocarbon compounds without oxygen into simple ones by heating the pyrolysis material to a high temperature. As a result of the process the following products are obtained:

- About 30% of liquid hydrocarbon (industrial gas oil)
- About 30% of powder carbon
- About 30% of hydrocarbon gas (mostly methane)
- About 10% of steel wire.

An experimental model was built under the project. An authorized Bulgarian laboratory analysed the substances obtained in the process. The Regional Environment Inspec-

torate made measurements confirming that there are not harmful emissions in the processing of waste tyres by the selected method. At present Ecoprocess Company is building the first factory for environmental processing of waste tyres in Dobrich with its own funds. The needed area was purchased, special steel for building the equipment was ordered, preparation of an environmental impact assessment was assigned, and steps were made to get the necessary permission. The effectiveness of the model for public-private partnership was tested in practice with the active cooperation of the Municipality of Dobrich.

The factory comprises the following modules: a reactor, a condensation eliminating system, a cylinder drying system, a separating and digesting system, a storehouse equipment for steel wire, a storehouse equipment for hydrocarbon, storehouse cisterns. There are draft and basic projects prepared for all these modules. Working projects are also prepared for some of them and the building of the equipment has been already assigned.

The budget for the building of the first factory is about 500 000 BGN, and for the

time being 120 000 BGN have been invested by Ecoprocess Company. The financing assured is the minimal amount, so compromises should be made with the appearance of the factory. As the first factory should be a model for subsequent ones in Bulgaria and abroad, the team has undertaken steps for raising the additional financing at the amount of 300 000 BGN. With these funds the automation of equipment would be improved as well as the appearance of the factory and its infrastructure, staff would be trained and the ergonomics assured. In such way, Ecoprocess Company can present a unique, fully prepared, high-quality Bulgarian factory to foreign partners.

The invention is a target of exceptional interest on the part of German and French companies. On April 9, 2002 in Germany, a contract was signed for the construction of such factory in the town of Vaimiegerode. The partner in Germany is a company which has a factory for collecting and sorting tyres. The term for completing the factory in Dobrich is October 30, 2002, and for completing the one in Germany - October 30, 2003.

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#### Results

From environmental point of view a complete solving of the problem with useless wires in Bulgaria in general and in Dobrich in particular is envisaged. Furthermore, this pilot project can be applied in other member countries of the European Union which can use the Bulgarian patent and know-how in the field. Undoubtedly, this could improve Bulgarian image as a candidate country for European Union membership. From a social point of view direct or indirect creation of jobs is envisaged. On the one hand the first factory would hire 30 people, and indirectly in Bulgaria and espe-

cially in Dobrich people would be engaged in collection and delivery of useless tyres.

An additional positive feature is that the greatest part of the equipment (including the one for the factories abroad) could be manufactured in Dobrich and in the region, and in such way orders would be assured for the respective enterprises. The construction of the factories abroad would be performed by specialists and workers from Dobrich and its region, which envisions the creation of additional employment.

Taking into account that the factory is on the territory of Dobrich, this will help consolidate the local budget by reducing the number of people subject to social welfare.





## Municipality of Bourgas

### Building a system for extraction and utilization of biogas at Bratovo Landfill, Bourgas

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

Biogas emission from city domestic waste landfills is one of the characteristic environmental problems associated with the exploitation of this kind of facilities. A main biogas component is the methane (CH<sub>4</sub>) which is generated during the anaerobic fermentation of the organic matter contained in the waste. Methane is one of the main gases that cause the Greenhouse Effect, but it also constitutes a highly calorific energy source.

The project aims at introducing an efficient, environmentally compatible system for extraction and utilization of biogas from Bratovo Landfill. This will allow, on the one hand, to eliminate a considerable source of pollution that endangers the health of the local population, and to utilize a valuable source of energy, on the other. The project focused on the alternative of utilizing the biogas for electric- and heat energy production, which can serve to meet household needs and be used in an incinerator for burning dangerous medical waste.



#### Environment and Sustainable Development

#### Category

#### Summary

Unique for Bulgaria, „BIOGAS“ is a large-scale project, realised by the Municipality of Bourgas in cooperation with „Brown, Vence and Associates“ from the USA, directed towards introduction and building of economically advantageous, environmentally compatible system for extraction of biogas with following utilisation of the released energy.

#### Practice

Cooperation with qualified partners has contributed to the successful implementation of the „Biogas“ project. One of them was the US company „Brown, Vence and Associates“ which has a significant background in evaluation and surveys of the introduction of biogas installations. Other important partners were:

- „Control Marketing Planning“ - a consultant company with a background in the sphere of legal and finance procedures, management and business cooperation;

- Bulgarian - Dutch Foundation „Greener Bourgas“ - specialized in analyses and consultations in the sphere of environmental management.

The beneficial partnership on international, national and local level in the course of the project's realization is a new approach to the solution of a number of problems which have a social, economic and environmental aspect.

The main goals of the project include:

- Creation of a new source of renewable

energy, reducing the dependence on and indispensability of atomic energy and the import of solid fuels;

- Decrease of the emissions of greenhouse gases in accordance with the requirements of The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol;

- Solution of the critical environmental problems of the Municipality of Bourgas in accordance with market relations and policy;

- Demonstration of the project's results as a model for other municipalities.

The project was implemented in four main stages:

Stage 1: Conducting a pre-project survey

Stage 2: Financial analysis

Stage 3: Building

Stage 4: Exploitation and maintenance.

At Stage 1 the pre-project survey and the selection of an adequate system for extraction and utilization of biogas at Bratovo Landfill were carried out. The alternatives were analyzed and conceptions were drawn up

in accordance with the biogas available; the market value of the products, the possibility for technical innovation and the influence on the environment were introduced. Within the framework of Stage 2 a financial analysis of the process of building the recommended system was conducted. In accordance with the surveys and analyses conducted at stages 1 and 2 it was concluded that the utilization of biogas from Bratovo Landfill would be the most advantageous source for the production of electric energy. Stage 3 initiated the building and the introduction of the facilities. A priority task for the realization of Stage 3 was the provision of the investments necessary for building and installment, as well as conducting the necessary engineering tests of the facilities. The subsequent Stage 4 will allow starting the initial exploitation of the system for extraction and utilization of biogas at Bratovo Landfill, Bourgas.

The project was awarded a grant under the EcoLinks program of the United States Agency for International Development amounting to \$50 000. Within that grant's framework the first substantial stages were realized, namely the research and the project work.

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#### Results

The realization of projects of such a large scale includes specific approaches in both technical and economic aspect. The Municipality of Bourgas proved it was capable of being an adequate partner in negotiation and search of investments. Surveys of the market for renewable energy sources were conducted, as well as economic analyses of the alternatives, which are an important factor in finding potential investors. The demonstration project for biogas utilization for the landfills can serve as a model for other municipalities in Bulgaria as a

whole, organized in compliance with the requirements of the new legislation.

The results proved the possibility of developing a market and of the increase in the demand of energy products obtained as a result of biogas systems introduction. The surveys ascertained that the biogas obtained at the Bratovo Landfill is suitable for extraction and effective for utilization, and that there are technologies suitable for the practical transformation of the biogas into useful and utilizable forms of energy. As a result of this, it is possible that substantial revenues and financial savings be made, so that all operative costs be covered.







## Municipality of Tutrakan



### Tourist Information Center - Tutrakan

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Information Systems and Technologies

#### Background

All through its nineteen-century history, Tutrakan has always belonged to the Big Old River. In the old times a fishing village with a unique atmosphere was established on its territory. The „Fishing Neighbourhood“ has preserved its authentic revival spirit and originality. Every person visiting the exposition of the ethnographical museum „Danube fishing and boat building“ has the chance to feel the spirit of the Bulgarian

revival. All these historical treasures have not been publicized on the tourist market; therefore Tutrakan has not been discovered as an attractive tourist center, although it has the potential of being one. The members of the Municipal Tourist Association united their efforts to create a Tourist Information Center, which would implement the information and publicity policy in the area of tourism in the municipality.

#### Summary

The Tutrakan Tourist Information Center offers informational, consultancy, coordinating, as well as advertising and technical services related to alternative tourism in the Municipality of Tutrakan. Through its activities, the Center attempts to motivate the population to make better use of the given natural, architectural, and historical resources in order to develop alternative tourism in the region. The Center provides assistance to innovative citizens of the municipality, owners in the resort and entertainment business, so that tourism can take a serious place in the economic life of the region.

#### Practice

The project „Creation of a Tourist Information Center“ was implemented with the financial support of the Danube River Initiative Program of the Foundation for Local Government Reform and the US Agency for International Development. It started on July 1, 2000. The office of the Center was equipped with modern office facilities.

On August 24, 2000 a River Holiday was organized, which coincided with the arrival of the participants in the International Danube Regatta. The Municipality has the ambition to restore the old tradition of this holiday.

A database providing information about the accommodation available, various places of recreation and entertainment, and transportation links was created. The Center maintains information files covering natural, cultural, and historical sights, as well as national his-

torical monuments. A tourist walking route along the riverside of the Danube was marked, with an itinerary Tutrakan - Village of Pozarevo - Malak Kosiu Island. It takes five hours to walk on the route; there are suitable camping sites on the way. Along the route, rare flora and fauna species, typical only of the wetlands, could be seen. Pozarevo Island is a protected territory of world-wide importance as a nesting place of the globally endangered small cormorant. A small holiday village was set up and tourists are provided with equipment needed for tent camping, various outdoor games, etc.

The Tourist Information Center has prepared and issued printed advertising materials. The set comprises the Tutrakan guide-book (in English and Bulgarian); brochures of the cultural, historical, and architectural sights; postcards;

leaflets describing the eco trail along the Danube, the opportunities for fishing and camping, and typical rare species living in the region of Tutrakan. The ethnographical museum „Danube fishing and boat building“ shows original tools for fishing on the riverside of the Danube. With these promotional materials the Center participated in the „Holiday 2001“ Tourism Fair, held from 14th to 16th February 2001 at the National Palace of Culture in Sofia. The project also planned seminars discussing the use of the natural, architectural, historical, and cultural resources of the Tutrakan region and the possibilities for development of alternative tourism.

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#### Results

- Guests and residents of the municipality have the opportunity to receive up-to-date information about the places and cost of holidays in the Tutrakan region;
- Close contacts with representatives of the Bulgarian Association for Alternative Tourism, Tourist Bureaus and Agencies all over the country were established;
- The Municipal Tourist Association and the Tourist Information Center

were included in the „Holiday 2001“ tourist catalogue

- Due to participation in the „Holiday 2001“ Tourism Fair, the tourist product of the Municipality of Tutrakan will be included in specialized tourist publications in Bulgaria and abroad;

- Active partnership between the Tourist Information Center, local authorities, cultural institutions, and NGOs in the municipality was created.





## Municipality of Stara Zagora

### Mayor's Hot Topic Forum

### Innovative Practice



### Information Systems and Technologies

### Category

### Background

The first web site of Stara Zagora Municipality was developed in 1999 with the desire to publicize the historical and culture monuments of the city. The broader implementation of information technologies in everyday life has set new

tasks before the municipality, regarding the faster and more intensive communication with citizens. This strive for openness has generated the Mayor's Hot Topic Forum.

### Summary

The Mayor's Hot Topic Forum on Stara Zagora's website reflects the positive and negative emotions and questions asked by the citizens of the municipality, allowing them to actively participate in the discussions, evaluation and solution of the problems posed.

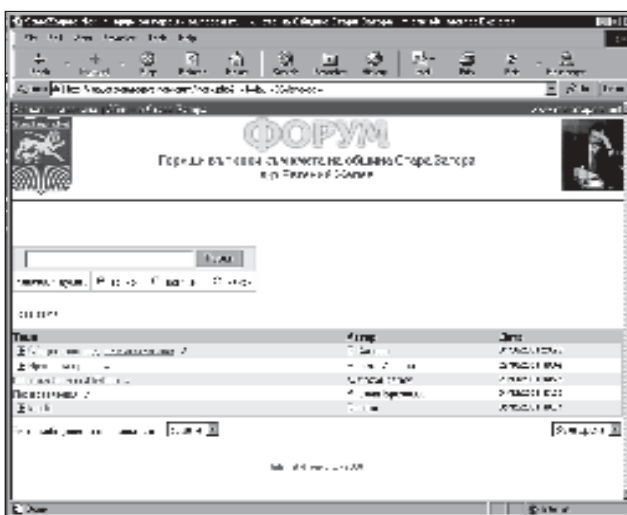
### Practice

In recent years the number of Internet users has increased continuously (encompassing about 15 % of Bulgaria's population). Since 15 December 2000 in cooperation with specialist from Internet Group Ltd. - Stara Zagora, the Mayor's Hot Topic Forum was developed as part of the City of Stara Zagora portal. It is based on a UNIX platform ensuring maximum protection of information. PHP was used as a programming language, allowing access to a database holding the information with all questions and the answers and comments made in their response. The Forum has its own Search by word or phrase.

The name Forum was not randomly given. The tool was especially called Forum since once put forward, the question stimulates a discussion, in which everybody concerned with the topic can participate.

The aim was to organize this interaction not as a mailbox, but in a format which gives publicity to the issues discussed, allowing everyone from any

point of the world at any time to give his/her opinion on the topic selected, as well as to have direct contact with the other participants.



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### Results

The idea was very well accepted by the citizens of Stara Zagora. Many of them directly ask and receive answers to their questions within the Forum. Their activity increases when there is a hot issue to be settled, for example the reconstruction of the opera, the city cleanness, water pollution, the repair of the language medium school and other specific city problems.

The system itself is so designed as to allow easy multiplication, and with a small change of design could be used

for other similar purposes. For example, responding to the call of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB) to organize a conference on the occasion of the Day of the Municipality, focused on improving life in our cities with presentations on different topics, a Discussion Forum „For a better life in our city“ was launched. Various subtopics feature there and everybody can take part to express their attitude and their views.



## Municipality of Blagoevgrad



### Developing a marketing profile of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad

#### Innovative Practice

#### Category

Information Systems and Technologies

#### Background

#### Summary

In 1998 the Municipality of Blagoevgrad joined the Program for Technical Twinning between Bulgarian and US Cities implemented by FLGR/ICMA by signing an agreement for cooperation and work on joint projects with the City of Auburn, Alabama, USA. The main project developed under this program during the first stage of its implementation (1998 - 2000) was „Drawing up a Strategic Plan for the Development of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad to 2015 in the areas of urbanization and infrastructure, economic development, environment and waste management“. In its vision of the municipal economic environment the Economics

Working Group specified as a task of major importance the creation of conditions favourable for attracting foreign investment. As a necessary condition and a first action step the creation of an information material about the municipality was specified, which would summarize the existing information of diverse and heterogeneous kind and would arrange it purposefully. In this way the municipality's advantages would be emphasised in an integrated way, with a view of the prospective interest on the part of potential business partners and investors, i.e. the idea of developing a „Marketing Profile of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad“ was put forward.

The marketing profile of the Municipality of Blagoevgrad comprises electronic information material presenting data about the municipality that may be needed by potential international investors, emphasizing on municipal advantages and strengths. The profile is part of the Blagoevgrad web site

[www.blgmun.com](http://www.blgmun.com)

#### Practice

The first and most substantial stage was the development of the draft project of a marketing profile. The idea of changing the philosophy of the municipality's presentation and adjusting the information to the point of view of the potential foreign investor was inspired by the marketing profile of Blagoevgrad's partners from the City of Auburn and the practices of a number of other US cities as models of such kind of electronic documents.

The second step was working out the structure of the marketing profile, which was realized with Mr. Ed Gardner, Expert in Economic Planning at the City of Auburn. A Working Group comprising municipal experts in all major areas of the marketing profile, with the participation of the information technology specialist, discussed the initial project and approved the final version of the structure.

The third stage was gathering the necessary information to fill in the structure of

the marketing profile already created. Each of the experts collected and processed the information in his/her area.

The fourth step was editing the information submitted by the various experts and shaping a uniform integral style of the document's content. The concise, brief and clear style of expression was of great functional significance. An important element at that stage was translating the document into the English language.

The fifth and last stage was uploading the file containing the marketing profile into the web site and designing it as an electronic document by the municipal information technology specialists.

The future development of the electronic marketing profile is directed towards creating an appropriate graphic design and linking to the rest of the information existing on the municipal web site, as well as regularly updating the information in it.

In contrast to the existing advertising brochures and other materials widely used in practice, the „Marketing profile of the

Municipality of Blagoevgrad“ bears the following innovative characteristics:

The content of the profile was selected from the point of view of the foreign investor's interest. The most detailed information was given in respect of the economic characteristics - work force, work force qualification, taxation, legislative requirements for environmental protection, etc. The information on the infrastructure - transport links, telecommunications, power- and water supply, included only the facts needed by the potential consumer - existing services, ways of getting connected and/or using the respective service, useful contacts. The general information and the information on the quality of life are concomitant and selected mainly from the point of view of the opportunities for spending quality leisure-time in the case of short stay or for ensuring quality family life in the case of permanent stay of foreign citizens. Links and contacts are ensured for more detailed information on culture, art and history.

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#### Results

The marketing profile increased the capacity of attracting foreign investment. Interest was shown in it by almost all municipalities in Bulgaria. The project has already been successfully replicated in the Municipality of Sliven, where on the basis of trilateral partnership between the City of Auburn and the two Bulgarian municipalities the whole process was repeated and a marketing profile of Sliven was developed.

The marketing profile of Blagoevgrad is the first material of its kind in Bulgaria developed as an electronic document. The electronic version has the following advantages compared to traditional brochures:

- Direct access at any time for every user, irrespective of his/her location;
- Practically unlimited number of people who can use the information;
- Possibility for a periodic and permanent update of the information (the economic information in the traditional brochures becomes out of date before materials run out of print);
- Possibility to include a volume of information much bigger than the traditional brochure, through references and links to other addresses.
- Practically insignificant costs of creation and update of the website, compared to the rather expensive printing of advertising brochures.







## Sliven Municipality Municipal Center for European Integration

### Municipal Center for European Integration - Sliven

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

Utilising the opportunities provided by European programs for solving local problems has been formulated as a priority task for the Municipality of Sliven. The initial idea was to look for and to give information about the programs opened for Bulgaria, to establish working groups in different areas of activity and to develop projects on current issues for the

municipalities. In the course of the discussions, the team reached the conclusion that the projects are just one part of a process of a much larger scale, and in order to ensure maximum benefit for the municipal administration and the citizens, an integrated approach should be found. Thus the idea of establishing a Municipal Center for European Integration (MCEI) in Sliven was born.



#### Category

International  
programs and  
partnerships

#### Summary

The Municipal Center for European Integration was set up as a section of the municipal administration entirely with Sliven Municipality's own funding, with the clear goal of contributing to the practical implementation of European Integration processes at local level. The Center is a result of the Municipality's approach of meeting new challenges and utilising new opportunities related to Bulgaria's accession to the European Union.

#### Practice

The Municipal Center for European Integration started work on May 9, 2000. The day of its birth coincided with the Day of Europe on which 50 years had elapsed since the signing of the historical Shouman Declaration. The idea has become something real not because of additional financing received, but owing to the establishment of a new organization of work - changing the functional characteristics of one employee, allocating a separate office, providing a PC and Internet access.

The mission of the Municipal Center for European Integration is to support the dialogue on issues of European integration, and to make citizens adhere to the idea of a United Europe.

#### Goals:

- To increase people's knowledge on issues of the European Union, integration and cooperation in Europe;
- To help the solving of local problems by finding their European dimensions;

- To create a model for partnership between the municipality, citizens, non-governmental organizations, businesses, youth organizations and the scientific community.

#### Activities:

- Providing information about the history, institutions, law and policies in the European Union; about issues of Bulgarian integration in the European Union; official documents of the European Union and documents of bilateral relations between Bulgaria and the European Union.
- A quarterly bulletin „Europe and Us“ intended for the citizens. The bulletin informs about general issues of European integration, as well as introducing local events and European initiatives.
- A monthly bulletin „EuroAccents“ intended for internal information of Sliven municipal officials. The bulletin aims at introducing the current issues in the field of European integration and contemporary European practices in solving local problems.

- European projects - preparation and management of projects; organizing the establishment of working groups on priority municipal problems; creating appropriate conditions for the work of the groups - giving information and consultations, seeking external experts assistance; providing technical assistance.

- Cooperation with citizen organizations, businesses, educational and cultural institutions for generating ideas, conducting preparatory work on the project and finding appropriate partners.

- Giving information about European Union programs open for Bulgaria; materials and handbooks on developing projects.

- Organising training courses in the area of European integration for diverse audience.

- Public events for promoting the idea of United Europe (lectures, seminars, conferences, discussions, etc.)

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#### Results

Access to information about the European Union and the integration process has been facilitated for municipal administration and citizens (4 copies of the informational bulletin „Europe and Us“ and the first copy of „EuroAccents“ were issued; information was published on the MCEI website, in the local network, and through the media).

Municipal administration has been better informed about European programs, the opportunities they provide and the preparation necessary for joining these programs (information about programs and best practices were presented; MCEI took part in projects under the „Ecos-ouverture“ Program, Technical Twinning between Bulgarian and US Municipalities, European Twinning Program etc.).

Consultations on project development have been

provided for non-governmental organizations, schools and cultural institutions (MCEI took part in the preparation of projects under „Culture 2000“, „Socrates“, „Leonardo de Vinci“, „Youth“ etc.).

Through its activity the Municipal Center for European Integration has supported the Municipality of Sliven in its work with young people (they work as voluntary collaborators of the Center; joint projects are being developed; the first students' Euroclub was founded in Sliven).

As partner of NGOs, MCEI has participated in organising and conducting different events (organising a conference „The Bulgarian Way Towards the European Union - Opportunities And Challenges“)

MCEI birthday coincided with conducting the Days of Europe in Sliven within a project devoted to Sliven and the European Cultural Traditions, financed by the Delegation of the European Commission in Bulgaria.



## City of Dobrich Municipality



### Months of EU countries in Dobrich and receiving the Flag of Honour of the Council of Europe

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

#### Category

International programs and partnerships

#### Summary

In the context of Bulgaria's active preparation for full membership in the European Union, in the autumn of 1999 the Municipality of Dobrich together with the non-governmental organization „European Club - Dobrich“ started the implementation of a large-scale project for presenting different aspects of the life

of Member States of the European Union. The project provided for presenting one member state of the European Union every month in the period November 1999 - June 2000. The first countries presented were the six founders, and the month of May was named a Month of the European Union.

The project is directed to all the sectors of society in Dobrich, seeking to raise awareness of the European identity and a feeling that we are a part of a single united continent with its values and principles, structures, organisations and personalities. The project aimed at finding the proper place for the Municipality of Dobrich in the process of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union and boosting citizens' self-confidence about their town highlighted on the map of Europe.

#### Practice

To achieve the goals of the project an Organizing Committee was established, comprising representatives of the Municipality and the European Club. The framework for the presentation of every country was defined. The project was submitted to the ambassadors of the member countries of the European Union and to the Delegation of the European Commission in Sofia. The implementation of the project was made possible through the sponsorship of private companies for particular events, which turned to be one of the first acts of public-private partnership in the city.

The list of the main events for every month included:

- business meetings for presenting companies from the corresponding country and visits of trade representatives from embassies, organized together with the Bulgarian Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Dobrich;

- concerts featuring music from the respective country and visiting exhibitions;

- lectures and seminars devoted to the country;

- competitions for essays and drawings on a subject connected with the corresponding country;

- theatre and show performances;

- information stands about the country;

- radio broadcasts and TV programs;

- publications in the local media;

- visits of ambassadors of the EU member states;

- visits of delegations of the respective country to Dobrich, etc. Within the framework of a similar program, the Month of the European Union in Dobrich - May 2000 was held, with the financial support of the Delegation of the European Commission in Bulgaria. H.

E. Jacques Wunenburger opened the Park of European Union Flags, a unique site for Bulgaria, and was guest of the events of the Day of Europe. The successful implementation of the activities under the project in a two year period is the result of a beneficial cooperation between the municipality and non-governmental organizations, businesses, sports and cultural organizations, schools, and other local institutions.



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#### Results

The project has clarified and expanded the idea of the EU member states for Dobrich citizens and has improved the interaction between different institutions. Students in the town have been engaged with issues outside their curriculum and have had the incentive for performing surveys and working creatively. Cultural institutions have varied their activities with new products directed to the citizens of Dobrich. Business companies have received first hand information about the possibilities for cooperation.

From a statistical point of view the project has produced the following results:

- a sociological survey about European Union issues, which is representative for Dobrich City;
- 1500 essays devoted to the member states of the European Union;

- over 17 000 drawings;
- over 20 concerts of the Bulgarian Chamber Orchestra and other musical formations;
- 35 exhibitions;
- 10 business breakfasts;
- during the Month of the United Kingdom only, the donations received by different institutions in Dobrich amounted to 40 000 BGN.

The greatest and most important result of the events has been the Council of Europe Flag of Honor Award granted to the City of Dobrich on September 25, 2001. For the first time in the history of the „Europe“ Award, a Bulgarian municipality has received this distinction for a contribution to promoting the European Union idea. The Flag of Honor was awarded by the honorable member of PACE, Mr. Robert Antreter, at the Official Session of the Municipal Council of Dobrich City.





## Municipality of Svishtov



### Municipality of Svishtov's experience in setting up the Danube South Euroregion

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

#### Category

International programs and partnerships

#### Summary

The cooperation in border regions or transboundary territories has a long tradition in the European Union. The basic purpose of transfrontier cooperation is the elimination of the border barriers, restrictions and other factors that contribute to the separation of the communities in the border regions.

The Association of Danube Municipalities „Danube“ has had a leading role in the development of transboundary

cooperation between Bulgaria and Romania. It was the main initiator of the agreement signed between Bulgaria and Romania on April 19, 2000 in Guirgevo, according to which Svishtov was designated as the center of one of the three Euroregions. Since his coming into office to date President of the Managing Board of ADM „Danube“ has been the Mayor of Svishtov.

Svishtov is the first Danube municipality to initiate the setting up of a Euroregion, which institutionalised in a new way the relations between Bulgaria and Romania and between the neighboring Danube municipalities in particular.

#### Practice

The Municipality of Svishtov started looking for ways of extending the connections between the two river banks and their institutionalisation even before signing the agreement in Guirgevo. The Municipal Council of Svishtov authorised the Mayor with Resolution No.91/14.03.2000 to conduct the negotiations with the Romanian side for establishment of Euroregion with the City of Svishtov as its official center.

In the beginning of April 2000 a team of experts from the municipal administration and municipal council was formed to conduct the negotiations with the Romanian party. The team requested the assistance of Lachezar Toshev, President of the Bulgarian Delegation in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), who provided a rich set of informational materials related to the foundation and management of transboundary structures.

In the summer of 2000 a number of meetings between the representatives of local authorities of the two parties took place for discussing the future transboundary cooperation. At the end of August the Bulgarian team began working on the organisation of a colloquium „Transboundary Euroregions between Bulgaria and Romania“, which was conducted in November 2000. With

Resolution 104 (2000) the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe supported the organisation of the colloquium in Svishtov.

Two meetings were conducted in September. The first one was with the Mayor of the City of Zimnich Mr. Parvou, to whom the idea and the structure of the future Euroregion were presented in details. At the end of the month a delegation led by the governor of Veliko Tarnovo Region Mr. Donchev visited the Regional Administration in Alexandria, where a meeting with the prefect of the Teleorman Region and the chairman of the Regional Council was organised. The Bulgarian delegation outlined the intention for the creation of a Euroregion which would include on Bulgarian part the municipalities of Svishtov, Belene and Nikopol, and on the Romanian part - the municipalities of Zimnich, Turnu Magurele and Alexandria. An invitation was extended for participation in the colloquium on November 3 in Svishtov, organised with the financial support of the Polish Know-How Fund and USAID's Local Government Initiative Program. At the colloquium the European experience in transboundary cooperation was presented, the legal instruments of the Council of Europe and the legislative practice in the area of transboundary cooperation.

Copies of the signed memorandum were sent to the Council of Ministers of the Republic of

Bulgaria, the Council of Europe, the Association of the European Border Regions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe at the Council of Europe.

Jointly with the Romanian side the Bulgarian representatives of the future Euroregion visited Poland at the invitation of the Polish Know-How Fund, for the purpose of getting acquainted with Polish Euroregions' activity. With the assistance of Mr. Lachezar Toshev the idea for transboundary cooperation was announced at the Council of Europe, wherefrom letters approving the establishment of Euroregion „Danube South“ were received.

In February 2001 several meetings were conducted with the Romanian partners for the purpose of specifying the organizational structure of the future Euroregion. On March 1, 2001 in the City of Alexandria, the center of the Teleorman Region, a Protocol was signed according to which the two parties finalized the name, the membership and the organizational structure of the Euroregion. According to the protocol its official name is „Danube South“ Euroregion. Its members on the Bulgarian side are the Municipality of Svishtov, Municipality of Nikopol and Municipality of Belene, and on the Romanian one - the City of Zimnich, Municipality of Alexandria, Municipality of Rosiori de Vede and the Municipality of Turnu Magurele.

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#### Results

The basic principles underlying the creation of the Euroregion were laid down in the transboundary cooperation agreement:

- Launching of mutually beneficial transboundary activities;
- Search for solutions of common transboundary problems and integrating the population from both sides of the frontier;
- A will for improving the cooperation between local and regional authorities at the border region in the spirit of neighborhood relations, openness and solidarity.
- Implementation of the contacts between the regions in the spirit of the European Frame-

work Convention on Transboundary Co-operation of the Council of Europe, dated 21 May 1980, and its Protocol, opened for signature in Strasbourg, on 9 November, 1995.

As recognition of the efforts made for proclamation of the European ideals in transboundary cooperation, the Council of Europe awarded the Municipality of Svishtov with a European Diploma. On 27 September, 2001 in the edifice of PACE in Strasbourg, France, Mayor Stanislav Blagov received personally from Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the first award of this kind for a former east block municipality - a Diploma with recognition of the efforts made towards creating and applying European values.





## Developing a mechanism for efficient participation of young people in the work of Varna Municipal Council

### Innovative Practice

Category Municipal Council

### Background

### Summary

The existence of a number of problems concerning young people in Varna Municipality, and neglecting youth organizations' resources and youth itself as a driving force for problem resolution, creates the feeling that young people are a burden rather than capital for the development of civil society. In previous decision-making and program implementation concerning young people, Varna local authorities have not taken into serious consideration the opinions and reaction of young people as stakeholders. The reason for that was the insufficient openness

of local authorities towards citizens, as well as the lack of an organized permanent forum of youth organizations. Until the start of the initiative, the seeking of joint decisions of Varna Municipality and Varna young people had been spontaneous and sporadic. Spending time and efforts on the interaction between youth organizations was considerably reduced with the establishment of Varna Regional Youth Council. Further joint efforts of these organizations led naturally to the need of sustainable forms of partnership with local authorities.

The initiative put into practice the principles of the European Charter for Youth Participation in the Life of Municipalities and Regions; it has created mechanisms for young people's participation in the work of Varna municipal administration towards youth policy preparation; and developed tools for contacts and feedback among young people and their representatives for needs assessment and joint activity.

### Practice

VRYC studied the experience and activity of the Gabrovo Cultural and Information Youth Center related to the implementation of the European Charter for Youth Participation in the Life of Municipalities and Regions - a project supported by the Foundation for Local Government Reform. Right after its foundation, VRYC made an official proposal to the Varna Municipal Council regarding the Municipality's adoption and implementation of the principles underlying the Charter. This proposal was accepted with Decision No. 1215-4/1216-4/1217-4/ Protocol No. 27 / 25.07.2001 of Varna Municipal Council, followed by a number of meetings held between VRYC and representatives of the municipal administration, Municipal Council, and NGOs working with young people. The result of these meetings was the innovative approach towards the elaboration of the precise scope of activity and concrete proposals for joint initiatives.

As a part of the program prepared by VRYC for the celebration of the European Youth Day, the Council organized a roundtable meeting entitled „Partnership Between Youth Organizations and Varna Municipality“, which led to the conclusion that Varna offers extremely favorable conditions for the development of effective partnerships between young people and local authorities.

The main goals of the project were:

1. Formulation of Varna Municipality youth policy, based on the suggestions and opinions of young people;
2. Institutionalization of the dialogue between local government, young people and their representatives, through the establishment of permanent structures for discussion, consultations and public monitoring of the decision-making process concerning young people;
3. Development of a sustainable model of interaction between local authorities and young people;
4. Assessment of young people's needs, problems and attitudes within the municipality;
5. Improvement of youth representatives' work, knowledge and skills, regarding their participation in the mechanisms for interaction;
6. Development of mechanisms and information channels for direct contacts and feedback among young people and their representatives;
7. Transfer of experience and skills from youth representatives to other young people from other municipalities.

Goals were achieved through the elaboration and acceptance of rules for youth delegates election, training of young people and municipal councilors, organization of public debates on youth problems, preparation of proposals to local government for the formulation of youth

policy, and transfer of experience to other municipalities.

Participants in the project were youth organizations and local authorities - the Mayor and municipal administration, and Varna Municipal Council. A natural partner was the Varna House of Youth, which hosts the meetings of youth organizations. The project involved experts on youth problems, and attracted the attention of the media. The Gabrovo Cultural and Information Youth Center, a project partner, played an essential role for the implementation of activities and the achievement of goals, bringing in its experience in strategic planning for the development of an efficient and sustainable model for adopting the European Charter and promoting its principles.

Keeping in mind the very fact of VRYC establishment and the ratification of the European Charter for Youth Participation in the Life of Municipalities and Regions by Varna Municipal Council, it should be emphasised that the most innovative part of the project was the preparation and signing of an agreement allowing the participation of youth representatives with a deliberative vote in the regular sessions of all permanent committees of Varna Municipal Council, as well as the constitution of a youth expert council involving the Chairperson of the Municipal Council, the Mayor, and the youth representatives.

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### Results

1. Practical implementation of the principles of the European Charter for Youth Participation in the Life of Municipalities and Regions on the territory of Varna Municipality;
2. Involving young people in the work of the Municipal Council and administration of Varna;
3. Accepting young people as an active party in decision-making on problems which concern them and fall within the competence of local authorities;
4. Developing the skills and knowledge of youth representatives on teamwork, thus making them an equal and active partner;
5. Developing sustainable tools for communication between young people and their representatives;

sentatives;

6. Promoting the idea of partnership to other municipalities from the region;

7. Raising public (including the media) interest to the idea of efficient interaction between civil society and local government.

The publication and dissemination of a brochure summarizing the successful practices and the experience gained in the course of the project, the involvement of young people in the formulation of long-term youth policy, and the knowledge and skills accumulated by youth representatives, are a guarantee for the sustainability of project results, their multiplication in other municipalities, and a good basis for further partnerships between young people and local government.





## Tolerance and democracy - involving young people in the life of Stara Zagora Municipality

### Innovative Practice

### Category

Municipal Council

### Background

### Summary

Due to the lack of experience, knowledge and skills, many young people are indifferent to the public life and problems of their town. By building a structure to introduce them to the rights and opportunities they have got, their powers and energy could be focused not only on the improvement of life conditions in their home places, but on teaching respect to the efforts of the municipal administration and other institutions. The forming of active citizen position, critical thinking and responsibility, are only part of the values, which could be taught through the involvement of young people in simulations of elections or municipal council

activities related to the environment, health care, culture, social and students' life.

After a series of training courses and an introduction to the experience of young people in some European countries, young people held the first elections for a Young Mayor of the town back in 1996, on the Day of Stara Zagora - October 3. In the years to follow, young people initiated - on the same day - a series of activities similar to those performed by the adults: groups of eco-patrols, young reporters covering the events in the media, meetings for discussing the most acute problems of youth in the town, and others.

With the organization of the first Youth Municipal Session on the Day of Stara Zagora in 2001, young people demonstrated their will to be active throughout the year, and establish a Youth Municipal Council - a voluntary body created through free and democratic elections, with its own Constitution, structure and long-term development program. This body was given information, coordinating and controlling functions, and was intended to represent young people before the municipal and regional administrations.

### Practice

The Youth Municipal Council (YMC) is a form of direct participation of young people in the organization of their public life and the resolution of problems concerning their growth as people with specific skills and abilities needed for their future realization. No more than three representatives of the youth community can apply each year to become YMC members, with a two-year mandate. The election is voluntary, personal and democratic. Every member of the students' community aged 14 to 19 can apply.

The goals of the MYC are:

- Support the involvement of young people in the public life of Stara Zagora.
- Act as a consultative group to the municipal and regional administration on problems concerning the young people of Stara Zagora.
- Support, develop and unite the activities of representative students' bodies in the secondary schools of Stara Zagora, and help the implementation of youth ini-

tiatives at the local, regional and national level.

- Serve as an information center for young people from the municipality regarding the resolution of their problems.
- Develop projects and activities concerning priority issues in the life of young people from Stara Zagora.
- Contribute to the forming of an attitude of intolerance to negative phenomena and the stimulation of responsibility for a better and more attractive life of young people.

The opportunity to address the Mayor of the Municipality with any question, to put forward resolutions and require their fast processing by the Municipal Council and the Standing Committee on Education and Culture, falls within the priorities of the YMC.

The YMC has five Standing Committees:

1. The Executive Committee controls all YMC activities and acts as coordinator between young people, local government and NGOs. Its members are the chairper-

son, deputy chairperson, all committee leaders, the Young Mayor, Vice Mayor and the methodological advisor of the YMC;

2. The Committee of Social and School Policy protects the rights of young people, detects violations of internal order at schools and outside, and alarms other bodies at the detection of violations of Law.

3. The Committee of Health Care and Environment is responsible for the organization of environmental activities and the improvement of health culture of young people; it makes local environmental problems public and runs environmental education programs.

4. The Committee of Culture and Sports supports the organization of cultural and sports events, as well as the improvement and utilization of existing facilities.

5. The PR and Communications Committee strives to explore, summarize and publicize the problems of young people in Stara Zagora, and inform the public about their activities.

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### Results

Main activities and outcomes of the YMC in the period October 2001 - April 2002 include:

- Holding a number of work meetings with youth organizations in Stara Zagora, teachers and representatives of other students' bodies; with the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science and the Regional Administration regarding matriculation; a discussion „Come 'to class' with us“ with representatives of Stara Zagora Municipality, the Regional Government, and Stara Zagora Regional Police Office.
- Inclusion of YMC representatives in 4 municipal committees.
- Preparation and participation in a number of projects: „Beautiful and Clean Stara Zagora“, financed by the Municipal Environmental Fund;

„Together in 2001-2002“ - an international project; a joint project with the Biosphere - Bitolya Environmental Youth Organization and the Youth Center of Denmark; Citizen of Europe Project, funded by the European Commission in Sofia.

- The YMC was the representative of the Schools and Health National Association in Stara Zagora at the time of Let's Think About Campaign for strict control over the sale of cigarettes around schools.

- Initiating and carrying out charity activities.
- Multiplication of the results of YMC's work through maintaining a whole page in the municipal daily paper, stable contacts with local cable TVs, meetings with representatives of youth communities in Kroumovgrad, Galabovo, Children's Parliament of Tryavna.



## Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds



Legislation

### Improving Bulgaria's readiness to develop the European Environmental Network NATURA 2000

#### Innovative Practice

#### Background

The European Birds Directive (74/409/EEC) requires that each EU member state designates sufficient in number and size territories for the protection of habitats of bird species significant for Europe, applying special measures for their preservation. Together with the territories designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC), they form the European Environmental Network NATURA 2000. This is a network of connected land territories and water basins of high environmental value within the European Union. The goal is to secure the protection of habitats, free movement of organisms and ge-

netic exchange by connecting the continent's protected areas within NATURA 2000, and to guarantee their survival.

The states negotiating their accession in the EU are obliged to give their contributions to the development of NATURA 2000 by the date of their prospective accession. The Bulgarian Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife Bulgaria) believes that it is important for the institutions and general public to be prepared for the implementation of EU Directives, so that the process is smooth and timely.

#### Summary

With this project, the BSPB intends to create conditions for the implementation of the EU Birds Directive related to the development of the European Environmental Network NATURA 2000, by actively promoting it, raising public awareness, and preparing qualified experts. The expected result is a mechanism for cooperation between state institutions, local government and NGOs in the process of developing the NATURA 2000 in Bulgaria.

#### Practice

The project of the BSPB was supported by the PHARE Access Program of the European Commission. It was awarded an honorary diploma for a Significant Project implemented in Bulgaria with the support of the EU in 2002. Partners of the project were the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (BirdLife UK) - main partner; Ministry of Environment and Water; Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; National Forestry Directorate; Municipalities of Svishtov, Staro Oryahovo, and Bourgas.

Project activities:

- Improving the institutional capacity of three regional offices of the BSPB in the towns of Varna, Bourgas and Svishtov in order to secure project implementation at the local level.

- Holding a three-day training workshop for 20 BSPB associates (staff and volunteers) in the sphere of European environmental legislation related

to NATURA 2000 - January 5-7, 2002, Eastern Rhodopes Environmental Center of Madjarovo.

- Organizing a series of two-day workshops in the three pilot regions (Varna, Bourgas and Svishtov) for clarifying the legal, administrative and practical steps of the integration of Ornithologically Significant Places (OSP) and the development of the NATURA 2000 Network. Workshops involved representatives of the regional offices of state institutions, local authorities and BSPB associates - March 12-19, 2002.

- Preparing demonstration proposals for the inclusion of 3 OSP in the NATURA 2000 Network through the participation of all stakeholders (state institutions, local authorities, general public, BSPB) - March 20-June 20, 2002; OSP: Vardim Island, Kamchia Complex, Mandra-Poda Complex.

- Organizing an information campaign called „NATURA 2000: for People and Birds“, addressing the general public in the regions around the OSP. The

campaign included the dissemination of information materials, presentations and slide shows in the settlements close to the OSP - April 1-June 23, 2002.

- Opening reception rooms at the offices of BSPB in Sofia, Varna and Bourgas, for tackling questions related to the NATURA 2000 Network.

- Elaborating criteria and mechanisms for the selection of NATURA 2000 sites in Bulgaria, similar to those in the EU member states.

- Holding a two-day meeting for assessment of the process of proposing OSP to be included in the NATURA 2000 Network, with the participation of representatives of state institutions, local authorities, BSPB, July 17-18, 2002.

- Publication of a guidebook on the stages, selection and management of Specially Protected Areas for birds preservation within the NATURA 2000 Network, based on the experience gained with three model sites - September 1, 2002.

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#### Results

- Expanded basic knowledge of government institutions and local authorities on the details, terminology and the technical process of designation of Specially Protected Areas (SPA) under European legislation. Establishment of contacts among the representatives of various institutions that will take part in the development of NATURA 2000 Network.

- Three demonstration proposals for SPA.

- Agreed assessment mechanism for designation of SPA in Bulgaria, based on

valid ornithological criteria of the EU.

- Publication of practical guidelines for SPA designation and proposal preparation.

- Positive attitude of the environmental community in settlements close to OSP towards NATURA 2000.

- Improved knowledge of BSPB volunteers and staff regarding the legislation and designation process for SPA in Bulgaria.

- Equipped and operating BSPB offices in Svishtov, Varna and Bourgas, ready to serve the citizens.





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