



# ANNUAL REPORT 2008

**FOUNDATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM**

INDEPENDENT PROFESSIONAL RESOURCE CENTER,  
SUPPORTING LOCAL DEMOCRACY

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Foundation for Local Government Reform is an independent professional resource centre, whose mission is to support local democracy and promote effective, partnership-based local development, based on democratic values, social inclusion and prosperity.

## **BRIEF HISTORY OF THE ORGANIZATION**

FLGR was established in May 1995 as a non-governmental organization by a group of Mayors after the first democratic local elections in Bulgaria. For fourteen years of existence the Foundation has gained wide recognition at national level. Currently it has a proven record of successfully implemented projects and programmes contributing to the democratisation of local government in Bulgaria and enhancement of public awareness on local government issues.

## **FLGR GOVERNING BODY**

The Foundation Board of Directors consists of five members:

Lachezar Rossenov, Chairman Of Flgr's Board Of Directors  
Deni Kamenov, Vice-Chairman of the Board  
Ginka Kapitanova  
Roumen Draganov  
Emilia Panayotova

## **FLGR EXECUTIVE TEAM**

The Foundation boasts a team of 10 experienced professionals:

Zdravko Sechkov, Acting Director  
Vasilka Sirachevska, IT Programme Coordinator  
Maria Fileva, LED Specialist  
Irena Boneva, Subgrant Programme Manager  
Dessislava Tencheva, European Programmes and Projects Expert  
Nikoleta Efremova, Programme Coordinator  
Rositsa Raycheva, Information Officer  
Blaga Zasheva, Chief Accountant  
Elvira Koleva, Cashier-Accountant  
Demir Deyanov, Office Manager

During the years the organization has established a countrywide network of 30 local professionals, who join our projects relevant to their area of expertise on a part-time basis.

## **Contacts:**

Mladost 1, Yerusolim Str. bl. 51  
Office building, office 2  
1784 Sofia, BULGARIA  
Tel.: + 359 2 976 89 89  
Fax: + 359 2 976 89 30  
E-mail: [flgr@flgr.bg](mailto:flgr@flgr.bg)  
[www.flgr.bg](http://www.flgr.bg)

***Dear partners and readers,***



Herewith the Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR) reports on the activities implemented within the period of January - December 2008. Established in 1995 by a group of mayors, the Foundation strengthens successfully its position and works as an independent professional resource centre, supporting local democracy.

FLGR clearly defines its objectives and priorities. Its specific activities are in accordance with the local government needs and the contemporary trends in the field of local government development. Our main strategic fields of work are:

- Stimulating dialogue and achieving consensus for effective policy and joint initiatives between various stakeholders and governmental levels;
- Professional development and consultations for local governments, their civic and business partners;
- Provision of needed and topical information to different customers through the use of appropriate technology;
- Partnerships for local economic development;
- Improvement of the administrative services provision;
- Support for the implementation of projects of NGOs and municipalities – Community Forum Program;
- FLGR invests in its professional and organizational development.

In 2008 FLGR managed to develop and carry out projects that were in the interests of Bulgarian municipalities and stakeholders and guarantee the financial independence and vitality of the organization.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zdravko Sechkov'.

Zdravko Sechkov,  
Acting Director of FLGR  
May 2009

# GEOGRAPHIC AREA AND/OR DEMOGRAPHICS SERVED



## National experience

The Foundation has the ambition to serve all municipalities in the country. Each year, our programmes aim at supporting local development initiatives in different geographic areas in order to gradually cover all administrative communities in Bulgaria.

Our headquarters are based in Sofia but we have also opened a regional office in Smolian to serve this south-west mountainous area.

About 80% of our customers reside and work in the country, outside the capital. In general they are representatives mainly of local administrations, non-governmental organizations and educational institutions – schools, community centers (chitalishte), etc. Nevertheless during the last couple of years we have managed to expand our target audience by implementing expertise initiatives in partnership with district administrations, companies and business associations as well as business centres and incubators.



## International experience

Our professional experience and support to introduction of structural reforms in local governance, has truly won us a remarkable reputation among the other transitional countries. Thus we have been invited to assist local development in Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, Kaliningrad Region.

# OPERATIONAL AREAS

## European integration issues



For years FLGR has been actively involved in the country's European integration process. Due to our long-term planning efforts, we managed to geographically expand the scope of our capacity building and campaign activities, related with the discussed EU issues. Together with our partners, local communities and authorities from more all Bulgarian 264 municipalities, we implemented the following effective projects:

### 2002 – 2004

#### **Bulgarian Municipalities–Competent Participants in the Absorption of EU Funds**

More than 180 municipal experts from 60 municipalities in Bulgaria, as well as their social and economic partners on the local level were trained in a long-term training and qualification programme.

### 2004

#### **Empowering Local Communities project** under PHARE, Development of Civil Society Programme 2001.

The main objective of the project was to build and improve the capacity of local authorities, NGOs and businesses to work in partnership and identify common solutions of common problems applying the participatory approach. Based on a thorough need assessment analysis, the project activities included five municipalities, located in the north-west region of Bulgaria.

### 2005 – 2007

#### **“Operational Programmes 2007 – 2013: Opportunities for Bulgarian Local Governments”**

FLGR carried out the first national information campaign under this title. The information meetings were attended by more than 480 people in all 6 planning regions; These participants were representatives of over 80% of the municipalities in Bulgaria.

#### **Development of the Operational Programmes 2007 – 2013**

FLGR was an active participant in the development of the 2007 – 2013 Operational Programmes. Our representatives took part in the National Working Groups on the Regional Development National Operational Programme of the Ministry of Regional Development and Public Works; the Administrative Capacity Operational Programme of the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform; and the Rural Development National Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forests.



## Communication Strategy on Bulgaria's Accession to the European Union

As part of the project implementation, FLGR developed a study "Readiness at Local and Regional Levels for Bulgaria's Membership in the European Union. Pre-Accession Financial Instruments and Structural Funds of the EU".

## Implementation of Life-Long Learning Management through Different Educational level Establishment

FLGR continued to work under the **ILME Project** (Implementation of Life-Long Learning Management through Different Educational level Establishment), funded by EU's Socrates Programme, Grundtvig 1. A five-day training module on life-long learning management in educational and training institutions was developed. The course targeted life-long learning managers. The project was implemented in partnership with five other countries: Estonia, UK, Italy, the Netherlands and Germany.

## Adult Learning as an Added Value to the Activities of Community-Based NGOs

FLGR partnered with 6 other organizations from Germany, Bulgaria, UK, Poland, Romania and Switzerland to carry out the project **ALAVA** (Adult Learning as an Added Value to the Activities of Community-Based NGOs), under the Grundtvig 1 Programme. The main goal of the project was to support the strengthening of non-governmental organizations in small municipalities and their transformation into training centers.



## Development of countrywide communication channels



[www.flgr.bg](http://www.flgr.bg)



[www.invest.bg](http://www.invest.bg)

Right after its establishment, the NGO identified the setting up and development of countrywide communication channels as a main priority tool to reach out all 264 municipalities. Thus we developed a thorough Communication strategy and Action Plan to effectively programme and target our efforts. During the years we have 'invested' in adequate techniques, equipment and software applications to occupy a leading position as a local communities' information provider.

In 2008 FLGR preserved its prominent role in providing information, exchange of best practices and networking via accessible and focused communication channels, described as follows:

[www.flgr.bg](http://www.flgr.bg)

The FLGR records up to 40 000 visitors per a month in the working months or 34 000 monthly visits on average.

[www.invest.bg](http://www.invest.bg)

This is the marketing website of Bulgarian Municipalities, which enjoys 21 000 monthly visits.

## ngo.flgr.bg

The resource site for NGOs, in Bulgarian, enjoying 3 500 monthly visits.

## ngofund.flgr.bg

NGO Fund under EEA FM in Bulgaria, 3 000 monthly visits.

## ccouncils.flgr.bg

Website to present Community Councils, in Bulgarian, 2 000 monthly visits.

## wp.flgr.bg

FLGR blog, in Bulgarian, enjoying 2 000 monthly visits.



ngofund.flgr.bg



ngo.flgr.bg



ngofund.flgr.bg



wp.flgr.bg



e-Weekly



bi-Weekly



e-Brief

## E-Weekly bulletin

In 2008, 49 issues of the e-Weekly in Bulgarian informed its readers on 739 possibilities for funding and on 207 training possibilities. At the beginning of 2008 the number of subscribers was 6 600, and at the beginning of 2008 its number reached 8 400. That means that in average 150 new readers monthly subscribed to the e-Weekly.

## FLGR Local Economic Development bi-weekly

24 issues in Bulgarian, disseminated among the LED municipal experts, vice mayors and mayors of 25 municipalities.

## Monthly e-Brief

12 issues. Since 2005 FLGR delivers information in brief format on FLGR news via monthly electronic bulletin in English language to 500 subscribers.

## Online Library

About 130 new thematic documents uploaded yearly.

## Innovative Practices online database

This electronic library holds more than 1000 innovative practices of Bulgarian municipalities and their socio-economic partners. These free-of-charge information resources increase with about 100 per year.

## Innovative Municipality 2007 National Award Ceremony, February 2008



During the year 2007 the FLGR Innovative Practices data base was enriched with 97 practices, submitted by 27 municipalities and their civic and business partners, by 5 regional and 1 professional association of municipalities in Bulgaria. Municipality of Tundzha became the winner of the FLGR 2007 Innovative Municipality Contest with the input of 22 innovative practices.

## E-Government

FLGR provides counselling support and consulting services for development and implementation of projects in the field of e-services on local and regional level, particularly in 2008 in the following areas:

- Audit of the municipal informational systems.
- Audit of the municipal web-sites from the point vies of better service provision and good governance principles application.



# TRAININGS AND CAMPAIGNS

## Centre for Training and Qualification

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

A contract for cooperation between **FLGR** and **Sofia University** was concluded aiming at developing certified **long-term professional courses** designed for municipal experts. FLGR Training Centre conducts this type of training in partnership with a wide range of faculty members, and municipal officials on the following topics:

- Municipal property management,
- Spatial Planning
- Municipal Social Services,
- Public Relations,
- Strategic Planning,
- Budget and Finances,
- Administrative Management,
- Human Resource Development,
- Lobbying,
- Tourism,
- Project Management,
- E-Government,
- Informational Technologies in the Municipalities,
- Conflict Management.

## New trainings and campaigns

Based on regular needs assessment analysis, FLGR team has expanded the scope of training courses and started to offer new topics for training and regional meetings:

- **Project Development and Management within EU Programs**, performed in partnership with Sofia University;
- **Development of city system for waste water management**, performed in partnership with Utilities Services;
- **Six regional information meetings on the launch of the first call for proposals under the NGO Fund, EEA Grants Bulgaria** - FLGR and BEPF organized a far-reaching campaign for more than 300 NGOs from all over the country;





- **Three info-days on the First Call for proposals under the Cross Border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria-Romania**, in partnership with Prime Consulting;

- **Anti-corruption initiatives** - FLGR carried out workshops in 2 municipalities to identify areas of municipal activities susceptible to corruption, based on the methodology of the “Restore the Health of Your Organization” Manual of UNDP. The methodology was applied in Bulgaria for first time;

- **Fundamentals of local economic development**-performed in partnership with the Centre for European Programmes of the American University in Bulgaria;

garia;

- **Information campaign on the implementation of the Referendum Act in Bulgaria**, including two public discussions and relevant coverage via the FLGR communication channels.

- **Information campaign on the role of the Community Advisory Councils**, including two public discussions and relevant coverage via the FLGR communication channels.

- **Two information meetings** on the application of Valencia declaration of EU on good governance principles.

## Conferences

- **“Municipalities and Business - Partners for Economic Development”, February 2008**

FLGR organized the Annual Conference and its main topics were: Competitiveness of the Bulgarian municipalities in attracting investments; Bulgarian business and European Union; Latest tendencies in human resource development; Investment interest profile from EU, USA and Asia; Development of high-tech productions and innovations in Bulgaria; Sustainable development of protected areas. The forum brought together over 180 participants: mayors, chairmen of municipality council, deputy mayors, directorate directors and experts from 48 municipalities, 4 regional governors, representatives of seven ministries, two agencies, universities, NGOs and business, representatives of Italian Chamber of Commerce, “Economic moulding and development strategies” – Ireland, USAID, German technical collaboration, as well representatives of the foreign missions of Ireland, Norway and France in Bulgaria.

- **“Municipal Road Infrastructure and Protection of the Environment”, March, 2008**

FLGR and Stroitelstvo/Gradat Newspaper organized the National Conference as a part of the Bulgarian Construction Week. The objective of the Conference was to present to the Bulgarian municipalities the possibilities for infrastructural projects and environment protecting projects, financed by the European Funds, and good practices in these spheres from 2 European countries - Austria and Italy.

# OPERATIONAL AREAS IN 2008

## 1. Implemented project

### ■ Administration of NGO Fund – Bulgaria (still in progress)

At the beginning of 2008 FLGR and its partner Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation won the privilege to administer the NGO Fund – Bulgaria with support from the European Economic Area (EEA) partners Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. The Fund grants to Bulgarian NGOs the amount of 2, 064, 000 euro for a three-year period in the following focus areas:

- Protection of the environment and promotion of sustainable development;
- Provision and development of social services, such as health and childcare;
- Development of civil society and protection of human rights.

The NGO Fund was officially launched in July 2008. On 21 July, 2009 the first call for proposals was announced. FLGR and BEPF organized six regional information days to spread the word on the first call for proposals. The meetings were attended by representatives of more than 300 NGOs from all over the country. External evaluators were selected to conduct project evaluation of all 321 submitted projects. In February 2009 the first set of approved 28 projects was announced.

To secure transparency and keep public informed, FLGR created a thematic NGO Fund Bulgaria website [ngofund.flgr.bg](http://ngofund.flgr.bg) and has been constantly updating it ever since. The project implementation is still in progress.

### ■ NGOs - Reliable Partners For Project Development, funded by the Operational Programme Administrative capacity, co-funded by the European Social Fund.

The main goal of the project was to strengthen the capacity of the NGO sector in South Central planning region in developing and implementing local and regional policies in partnership with the public administration.

The main objectives of the project were:

- 1) To develop specific knowledge and skills of the civic organizations, working in the fields of local development, good governance, civil rights and social activities, for partnering with the public administration;
- 2) To improve the organizational capacity of key NGOs contributing to the development of the NGO/public administration relations in South Central planning region;
- 3) To develop FLGR capacity for delivery of CAF (common assessment framework) services to public institutions.



The expected results of the projects were:

- Current situation analysis of the NGO sector in South Central Planning region;
- Improved organizational capacity of 45 local NGOs;
- Certified 15 NGOs and 50 NGO representatives as community development mediators.

At the end of February 2008 FLGR introduced a new rubric in its e-weekly, entitled “**Experts in Action**”. The FLGR’s e-weekly was in the beginning of 2008 every Wednesday received by more than 7100 subscribers and they estimated it highly as a reliable source of timely information. The rubric “Experts in Action” delivered information on interesting initiatives, publications and results of the projects financed under Administrative Capacity Operational Programme (OPAC). The goal was to achieve continuous flow of information between the organizations for sharing and synergy search between the different projects, thus increasing the total impact of the grant scheme on the civil society in Bulgaria.

FLGR established **Innovative Practices Team** with the purpose to develop feasible **models for partnership between NGOs and public administration** in formulation and implementation of local policies in 10 areas of community interest.

tation of local policies in 10 areas of community interest.

As next step of the project implementation was the publication of analysis named **Legal framework for participation of civic organizations in the government: models. Conclusions and recommendations.**

### ■ **Bulgarian Local Government Integrity Project**

Since the beginning of 2007 FLGR has been part of the Consortium of Bulgarian NGOs jointly implementing the “Improving Bulgarian Local Government Integrity” project.

The project was financed by MATRA Programme of the Dutch Government and was carried out in 9 Bulgarian municipalities by a Consortium of 4 NGOs: NGO Links, Bulgaria, Center for Liberal Strategies, Bulgaria, Foundation for Local Government Reform, Bulgaria, and transForma, Romania.

A series of training in integrity were carried out for municipal administrations and municipal councillors.

On-spot Local integrity groups were formed, consisting of representatives of municipal administrations, municipal councils, NGOs, business and media. They prioritized the problems at local level, concerning integrity and proposed strategy, an action plan according to the specifics of each municipality and carried that plan out.

The project was framed by two sociological surveys on the quality of the municipal administrations performance from the integrity viewpoint.

## ■ **The Good Governance Principles: Bridging Citizens and Governments** (in progress).

In September 2008, FLGR started the implementation of this one-year project. The project involves two pilot municipalities – District of Slatina, Sofia Municipality, and Municipality of Pazardzhik - and is financially supported by GMF / The Balkan Trust for Democracy / Bulgaria Fund.

The project envisages reaching the following objectives:

1. To raise the awareness, introduce and make recognizable the good governance principles among local administrations, municipal leaderships, civil society and businesses nation-wide and especially in the 2 pilot municipalities.
2. To develop and apply in practice effective mechanisms for organizing, mobilizing, activating and empowering local communities (including various socio-economic groups within them) to be participants and corrective in the application of the good governance principles in the pilot municipalities.
3. To revise and improve the performance of the local administrations and leaderships in terms of internal administrative procedures and rules based on recommendations from the citizens and local businesses and within the context of observing the good governance principles.



Main activities in 2008 under the project were:

- General information flow on the implementation of the good governance principles at the local level in Bulgaria;
- Selection of the pilot municipalities;
- Public debates and focus groups with local NGOs and businesses to choose an area for intervention;
- Surveys among local businesses related to their satisfaction from the partnership and interactions with the municipal administration and on the development of the municipal information systems with regard to the better service provision of businesses;
- Preparation of overall reports and recommendations on the development of the IT municipal infrastructure and administration procedures, rules and policy implementation mechanisms with regard to the better implementation of the good governance principles.

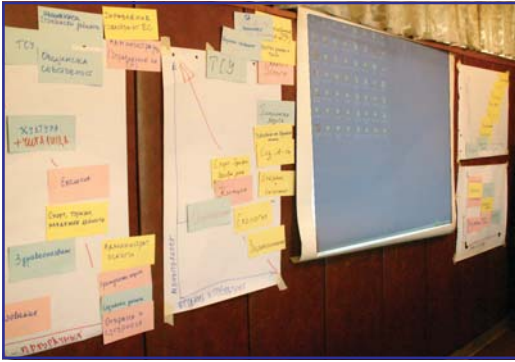
The project will be carried out till September 2009.

## ■ **Dissemination and implementation of the curing and preventing corruption approach at Local Governments' level Project.**

The project was carried out in the period February – August 2008 under the framework of Regional Programme 2007-2008, managed by the Partners Foundation for Local Development, Romania, and financed by LGI – Local Government Initiative of the Open Society Institute.

The project's goal was dissemination and implementation of practical, strategic approach of curing and prevention corruption in 2 pilot local governments in the municipalities of Mezdra and Panagyurishte. Local initiative groups were built; they analyzed the risk areas in the functioning of the municipal





administration, elaborated an action plan and implemented proposed measures.

Mezdra Group worked on the establishment of an intermediary unit for resolution of disputes between citizens and municipal administration (local ombudsman).

Panagyurishte Group worked on achieving greater transparency in EU funded municipal projects through elaboration of an online database in the municipality web-site with the relevant information.

## 2. New partnerships in 2008

- **Civic Coalition for Free and Democratic Elections:** FLGR representatives participated in several working meetings with representatives of national NGOs (Transparency International Bulgaria, Open Society Institute - Sofia, Bulgarian Politics School, European Institute, Green Balkans, Institute for Market Economics, Centre for Economic Development and Centre for Liberal Strategies), which resulted in forming the Civic Coalition for Free and Democratic Elections and development of a public contract proposed to be signed by all political parties.
- Close relationship was developed with the Bulgarian Environmental Partnership Foundation (BEPF) that resulted in development a joint project proposal and winning the joint management of **NGO Fund, EEA Grants – Bulgaria** and creation and joint management of a NGO Fund, EEA Grants – Bulgaria site [ngofund.flgr.bg](http://ngofund.flgr.bg)
- **NGO coalition to develop a resource site nfo.flgr.bg,** FLGR developed close relationship with the NGOs from the Central South Planning region that resulted in the development an NGO resource site, supported by more than 230 NGOs members and a forum that is administered by the partner organizations.
- **Consortium with 3 NGOs:** NGO Links, Bulgaria, Center for Liberal Strategies, Bulgaria, and transForma, Romania, to carry out Bulgarian Local Government Integrity Project.

## 3. Other FLGR Activities in 2008:

### Technical assistance contracted services:

- Evaluation and analysis of the anti-corruption measures undertaken by the local administrations for the Council of Ministers
- Elaboration of a manual on *Local governments and good governance principles application* for the National Ombudsman office

### Study tours

FLGR organized and carried out a study tour for representatives of the local authorities of Albania in the field of e-governance, financed by Representation of EC, Tirana, Albania.

FLGR facilitated visit of an official delegation from North Greece to the Rodopi region, February – March, 2008. The visit took place as a result of the extended cooperation between the municipalities of Banite, Laki and Chepelare and the Foundation for Local Government Reform on Bulgarian side, and organizations from Kavala prefecture on Greek side in the process of establishing Local action group (LAG) based on the LEADER approach.

## 4. Organizational Development

In 2008 Mott Foundation financially supported FLGR in the field of:

- Raising the professional qualification of FLGR team;
- Supporting the participation in conferences and seminars and in meetings for developing future projects at EU level, discussions with potential partners and clients and marketing FLGR products on a larger scale;
- Developing partnership mechanisms and coalitions.

## MEMBERSHIPS

FLGR is a member of American Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria and participates its events, round tables and debates on newly proposed acts and is a member of the Public Affairs Committee of the organization.

FLGR is a founding member of Donor Fund Bulgaria, participates in and supports its initiatives in the field of social responsibility.

FLGR jointly with the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Bulgaria organized meetings and trainings for municipal experts on the topic of EU funding for municipal projects in the field of protection of environment.





## **FOUNDATION FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT REFORM**

### Contacts:

Mladost 1, Yerusolim Str. bl. 51  
Office building, office 2  
1784 Sofia, BULGARIA  
Tel.: + 359 2 976 89 89  
Fax: + 359 2 976 89 30  
E-mail: [flgr@flgr.bg](mailto:flgr@flgr.bg)  
[www.flgr.bg](http://www.flgr.bg)

