

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE



FASTFACTS

U NDP works in one of the priority areas for support in the country, puts an emphasis on enhancing **good governance for equitable local and regional development**. Improving the democratic institutions and processes, and managing the changing roles of the state and civil society was the focus of advocacy initiatives and projects' interventions in the first phase of the development of the Country Office Democratic Governance portfolio.

On the eve of Bulgaria's accession to the European Union, bigger emphasis was put on supporting institutions and processes that are more responsive to ordinary citizens' needs. With this in mind UNDP built partnerships and shared ways to promote participation and accountability at all levels. The extensive UNDP partnership network extended to government, including many ministries, municipalities, and donors and civil society.

In view of Bulgaria's membership to the European Union the CO fine tuned its programmatic support to reflect adequately the development needs in a new EU member state. The Country Programme for Bulgaria (2006-2009) identified **Good governance for equitable local and regional development as one of the three priority areas for UNDP' s work in the country**.

The programme uses the NHDR as an advocacy tool and as a mechanism to bring issues to the policy agenda and help to initiate action on them. The Bulgaria Beyond the Facts programme (formerly Early Warning System) acted as an analytical instrument for the identification of emerging political, economic and social problems and strategic solutions. Advocacy is focused on good governance as a means to reduce development inequalities at the local and regional levels. Support is provided to the central Government for the participatory formulation of sectoral policies, plans and related SCF operational programmes, which adequately integrate local and regional concerns. Particular focus is placed on policies and programmes that support disadvantaged and rural areas.

Balanced regional development is supported through strengthening the capacity of local and regional stakeholders to prepare planning documents and projects for accessing and making optimal use of the EU funds. Special emphasis is placed on strengthening vertical links between the local stakeholders and the central administration and on horizontal partnerships between municipalities.

The country programme supports a greater role for civil society and the private sector in the planning of local development processes to ensure that they are channeled to address local and regional needs and

UNDP's democratic governance support to Bulgaria focuses on:

- 1) **Local Governance and Civil Participation**
- 2) **Capacity Development**
- 3) **Justice and Human Rights**

UNDP works through the following ways influence change in Bulgaria

- **Pilot Projects**
- **Policy Advice**
- **Advocacy**

National policy documents and legislative acts supported:

New Administrative Procedure Code
National E-Government Strategy and Action Plan

Assessment of the capacities of local development actors to absorb the EU Funds
Amendments to legislation on Freedom of Information

priorities. To ensure the effective use of the EU rural development funds, the participation of 18 rural communities in the formulation of integrated rural development policies and plans was assisted. These initiatives were complemented by the expansion of the I-centres to reach more communities and by support to local E-Government as a means to strengthen good local governance and combat the "digital divide".

The country programme directly addresses the eighth MDG (to "develop a global partnership for development") by assisting Bulgaria in the transformation from a recipient of development assistance to donor of Official Development Assistance.

The programme builds on earlier experience in linking national-level policy advice, advocacy and policy dialogue on the one hand, with demonstration projects for policy impact on the other. It further strengthens linkages, complementarities and synergies between its various interventions.

Key projects and decentralization initiatives within the current Country programme foster greater citizens participation in local decision making:

Bulgarian Libraries – Access points to information and Communications to All project has a strategic goal to provide easy and equitable access to information, knowledge, communications and electronic services in public libraries via free use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies, so as to enable Bulgarian citizens integrate into the global information society.

The project kicked off with a grant of USD 606 000 provided by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The funding is from a special initiative of the foundation's Global Development Program, Global Libraries, which seeks to open a world of information and knowledge to many more people by helping public libraries provide free access to computers, the Internet, and training. A needs assessment of Bulgaria's public libraries network was conducted in 2008, in order to draw a list of nearly 1,200 libraries to be supported by the Foundation and national co-financing. Upon completing the planning process in 2009, Bulgaria will be eligible for a program grant from the Foundation that will support financially the technological renovation of libraries (computers and Internet connectivity), as well as the training of library staff and the general public. The planning phase implies field activities with national coverage, calling for active involvement of regional and local networks supported by the key project partners.

The project ***Increasing Government Transparency and Accountability through Electronic Access to Information*** demonstrated the benefits of ICT in the implementation of the Access to Public Information Act. It supported Bulgarian national institutions to fulfill their obligations under the APIA by effective use of the Internet as a cheap and efficient way to provide information. The project assessed 411 public institution websites with regards to the obligations from APIA to publish the formulated by law categories of information. The results, coupled with comparative analysis, were included in the Annual Reports Access to Information in Bulgaria for 2006 and 2007. Based on the assessment, proposals for better regulation of the right of access to information were submitted to parliamentary committees and to relevant ministries with regard to future ATI legislative amendments. On December 5, 2008, the amendments were promulgated. A key component of the project encouraged Bulgarian citizens to effectively exercise their right to information by using the opportunities for electronic access to public information. The project raised massive awareness in national and local media and garnered more than 500 print publications, more than 150 radio and TV spots on FOI issues, published 20 monthly FOI newsletters disseminated to 1200 electronic subscribers. The project was executed by the Bulgarian NGO "Access to Information Programme", internationally recognized as a leading NGOs in the area of freedom of information.

The ***Sustainable Development of Rural Areas*** project tested the EU Leader method in 11 Bulgarian municipalities and strengthened the capacities of rural communities to manage EU rural development funds. A Demonstration Initiative Fund established under the project financed 85 local pilot initiatives and granted 146 micro credits for start-up businesses.

The ***National Rural Network and Leader*** project furthered the results of the Sustainable Development of Rural Areas project by expanding the national

preparations to apply the EU Leader method in the 2007-2013 programming cycle. The project (2006-2008) also contributed to the establishment of Bulgaria's National Rural Network.

Chitalishte Development Network of more than 500 Chitalishte (traditional Bulgarian community organizations), was supported helping them to find innovative ways to better community development. Participation of the Chitalishte in the EU-supported National Rural Development Network and Local Leader Groups was pursued, together with their recognition as beneficiaries of the Leader method for rural development. The Chitalishte as the information intermediaries of rural regions, delivering specialized services and participating in the processes of strategic local planning and development was the focus of a special UNDP-funded Program "***The Chitalishte – information intermediaries in rural areas***". It aimed at the enhancement of the information role of 80 village Chitalishte and further developing their capacity as information intermediaries between the small village communities and institutions providing information and services to the citizens.

Strengthening the Capacity of the Managing Authority of the Operational Programme Administrative Capacity supports the alignment of the Operational Programme with EC recommendations, strengthening the capacity of its Managing Authority (in the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform) and the relevant directorates involved in programme implementation. Through this project, UNDP plays indirectly a role in strengthening of the central, district and local public administrations in line with EU standards.

Information Technology for Development is the essence of a series of projects that support introduction of e-government principles for greater transparency and accountability of the administration and increased access to ICT by overcoming the digital divide for remote and poor areas of the country. Implemented jointly with Government partners, local authorities and non-governmental organizations, the ICT Projects portfolio covers: Telecenters, (more than 100 public IT-centres across the country), E-Government (in support of the IT Coordination Center at the Council of Ministers), I-Government (national computer education programme for the civil servants), European Software Institute-Bulgaria,(Regional Center for Eastern Europe), National Research Network, e-Government through free software and an open code software at municipal level.

Advocacy tools:

- ***Bulgaria Beyond the Facts*** project comprising of national sociological surveys and publications on hot development issues in a new EU members states
- ***National Human Development Report-2006 – Are we Prepared for the EU Funds?*** The perspective of Local development actors.

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