

Quick Facts:

- Country Office established in 1992;
- Over 70 projects implemented so far;
- The overall financial volume of UNDP's Programme (1999-2006) amounts to over USD 176 million;
- Currently over 90% of funding is government cost-sharing;
- Around 30 ongoing projects are jointly implemented with more than 200 partners;
- Presence in all 28 districts and over 170 Bulgarian municipalities.

Major characteristics:

- » UNDP responds to the key national development challenges influencing policy, legislative and institutional changes;
- » UNDP assists the country to best meet its obligations as a new EU member state;
- » UNDP has a unique and extensive network of partnerships throughout the country.

Main areas of work:

Social Inclusion and Local Economic Development for Poverty Reduction

National policy documents supported: National Strategy and Action Plan on Poverty Reduction and Social Inclusion; National Programme for Improving the Living Conditions of Ethnic Minorities in Urban Areas.

Some of the key projects have become essential components of the government's employment promotion policy.

- The *JOBS (Job Opportunities through Business Support)* project helps Bulgarian micro and small businesses to grow and strengthen. A network of 42 business centers, 10 business incubators and 15 window offices operates throughout the country. Since 2001 they helped create nearly 24,000 new jobs, provided 83,000 consulting services and trained more than 35,000 people. Nearly 1,400 start-ups and existing small enterprises accessed micro financing totaling around BGN 14.6 mln. (USD 9.7 mln.)
- *Renovation of Multifamily Residential Buildings* is a demonstration project in 18 municipalities testing for the first time in Bulgaria a full-cycle renovation of condominiums. This will provide practical experience for the future implementation of the National Programme for the Renovation of Residential Buildings including through access to EU Structural Funds. The project builds on the experience and capacities capitalized by UNDP under the Beautiful Bulgaria project.
- The *Social Services Against New Employment* project, after a pilot phase (2003–2006) implemented in 12 Bulgarian municipalities, has institutionalized an alternative model for decentralized provision of social services while generating employment. Since January 2007, the model has been integrated into the National Programme "Assistants to People with Disabilities" (Social Assistant Sub-Programme) and is currently implemented country-wide.
- *Teams on Wheels* introduces mobile agricultural and business advisory services in 6 out of Bulgaria's 28 districts and operates jointly with 13 JOBS business centres and the UNDP-supported project for the Strandja-Sakar Region.

Democratic Governance for Equitable Local Development

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.

The key projects and decentralization initiatives foster greater citizen participation in local decision-making.

- *Strengthening Partnership in the Planning and Absorption of the EU Structural and Cohesion Funds (SCF)* project builds local project-design capacities in conformity with SCF requirements and develops models for successful Public Private Partnerships projects in 93 Bulgarian municipalities. In March 2007, more than 80 projects elaborated by municipal working groups were ready to apply for funds under the Regional Development Operational Programme.
- The *Sustainable Development in Rural Areas* project tests the EU Leader method in 11 Bulgarian municipalities and strengthens the capacities of rural communities to design sustainable local development plans and project proposals. A Demonstration Initiative Fund established under the project financed with small grants 85 local pilot initiatives and assisted the implementation of 146 business plans in accordance with the strategies drawn up by local leader groups.
- The *National Rural Network and Leader* project furthers the results of the Sustainable Development in Rural Areas project. The new project assists the country's preparations to use the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and paves the ground for the establishment of Bulgaria's National Rural Development Network.

- *Chitalishte Development Foundation* serves as the secretariat and resource center for a nationwide network of more than 500 Chitalishte (traditional Bulgarian community organizations), helping them to find innovative ways to better community development. Participation of the Chitalishte in the future National Rural Development Network and Local Leader Groups, together with their recognition as beneficiaries of the Leader-based measures of the National Rural Development Programme may turn the Chitalishte into the information intermediaries of rural regions.
- *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 in 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 (IT Coordination Center at the Council of Ministers), European Software Institute-Bulgaria (Regional Center for Eastern Europe), I-Government (national computer education programme for civil servants), the National Research Network, E-Government through open source software at municipal level.

Energy and Environment Conservation for Sustainable Development

National policy documents and legislative acts supported: Biodiversity Act, Protected Territories Act; Energy Efficiency Act; National capacity self-assessment of Bulgaria's ability to meet its commitments under the UN Rio Conventions; Bulgarian Biodiversity portal developed.

The key projects integrate Bulgaria's international commitments into sustainable development planning.

- *The Rhodope Project* is implemented in the Rhodope region targeting 27 priority municipalities and is focused on the protection of globally significant local biodiversity. It promotes the integration of environment preservation issues into private sector activities and mobilizes local communities to make collective efforts for envi-

ronmental preservation as a sustainable development resource.

- *Sustainable Land Management* develops policies and administrative and institutional capacities to better manage/rehabilitate degraded lands.
- *Integrating Rio Conventions into the National and Regional Development Policies* builds institutional capacities for the design of integrated strategies and plans mainstreaming EU priorities and UN Conventions for better environment preservation.
- *Building the Local Capacity for Promoting Energy Efficiency in Private and Public Buildings* – assists the market transition to energy efficient planning of new buildings and rehabilitation of the housing stock.
- *Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme in Bulgaria* gives opportunities to the NGO sector to take part in environmental preservation activities by providing grants to for NGO initiatives in specific priority areas.

The Way Forward

In line with the new Country Programme (2006–2009) UNDP is consolidating earlier work in order to address the needs of support in a new EU member state. Foremost are:

- building capacities, especially at municipal and district levels in local government, private sector and civil society to better access and use the range of EU funds coming to Bulgaria.
- focusing more on the needs of vulnerable and marginal groups, and on areas with incomes below the national average and in rural areas.
- assisting Bulgaria to become an emerging donor and provider of Official Development Assistance.

The UNDP programme in Bulgaria is the largest in the region of Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (29 countries, 24 country offices); in 2005 the Programme reached its highest delivery amounting to USD 29 million, followed by USD 25 million in 2006.

*More information about the work of
UNDP in Bulgaria is available at
www.undp.bg*