



United Nations
Development
Programme

Rural Network and LEADER

Programme Area

Good Governance

Project Number

50862

Project Duration

March 2006 – June 2008

Implementing Partner

Ministry of Agriculture and
Forests - MAF

MAF Rural Development
Directorate (RDD)

Total Project Budget

USD 460,000

Project Funding by Donor

MAF – USD 200,000
UNDP - USD 100,000
UNDP Democratic Governance
Thematic Trust Fund
– USD 100,000
Bulgarian municipalities
– USD 60,000

Planned project budget 2007

USD 294,206

Project partners

Foundation for Local
Government Reform - FLGR

Bulgarian municipalities

Chitalishte Development
Foundation

11 Local LEADER Groups
(LLG) from the Sustainable
Rural Development Project

and

GEF Rhodopes Project of MAF
/ UNDP

UNDP Programme Officer

Ms. Ogniana Glavoussanova

MAF National Project Director

Ms. Miroslava Georgieva

Last updated: June 2007

Project Description

The project contributes to decentralization, good local governance, social capital building, local communities' activation and poverty reduction in rural Bulgaria by supporting preparations for absorption of assistance from the European Agricultural and Rural Development Fund in the period 2007-2013. The project will raise awareness and will strengthen capacities in rural communities and stakeholders to planning and use financial resources through networking, as well as through design and implementation of integrated local development strategies. At the same time, the project will enhance inter-municipal cooperation, especially among smaller municipalities, and will facilitate the creation of horizontal links among rural actors, including public-private partnerships.

The project expands and furthers the efforts and results achieved by the joint project of UNDP and the MAF "Sustainable Development of Rural Areas" (2003-2006) aimed at the establishment of 11 Local LEADER Groups following the model of the *EU LEADER + Initiative for Development of Rural Regions*. In addition, the project builds on the work carried out by the Foundation for Local Government Reform with regard to the formation of the *National Rural Development Network*.

Locations

Project field activities will be implemented in five areas in Bulgaria:

(1) the territories of the 11 LLGs already established - Eastern Rhodopes (Ardino, Kirkovo, Madjarovo, Ivailovgrad), Western Rhodopes (Yakoruda, Gurmen, Satovcha, Belitsa), Strandja-Sakar (Topolovgrad), Central-West Bulgaria (Trun), and North-West Bulgaria (Vurshets).

(2) neighbouring territories to the above 11 locations, depending on the interest and intentions of local stakeholders.

Exact project geographical scope will be determined during the second half of 2006, depending on the interest of municipalities to get involved in LEADER-type activities.

Planned Project Components:

Component 1: Establishment of the EU-supported National Rural Development Network

Component 2: Consultancy support for the RDD, MAF in drafting the implementing procedures under axis 4 LEADER

Component 3: At least 5 LEADER-eligible Local Action Groups consolidated and 10 new groups prepared to apply on measure "Animation of the territory" under Axis 4 of the NPRD

Component 4: Training and hands-on work of Bulgarian LEADER practitioners

The four project components will proceed simultaneously in the period May 2006 – June 2008.

Expected Project Benefits:

Planned project outputs (LEADER Groups, National Rural Development Network, core group of Bulgarian LEADER practitioners, measures and implementation mechanisms for LEADER) are EU-accession driven, and their long-term sustainability will be a natural effect of Bulgaria's forthcoming EU-member status.

Systematic project efforts to activate the local level will lead to the advancement of social capital in Bulgaria's rural regions, strengthening the communities' capacities for self-organization and participation in the country's development process.

Director, RDD

Project Coordinator

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Project Developments:

The Project Document was signed end March 2006. Project operations started in May 2006. The project office was opened on 10 Aug 2006.

Work of the non-formal open Rural Network Action Group started in July 2007 chaired by the Rural Development Directorate.

Support to the MAF in drafting the measures and implementing procedures under Axis 4 LEADER of the NPRD 2007-2013.

FLGR, together with the RDD-MAF and the PMU, conducted from June to July 2006, six information campaigns in project locations on the new EU and national rural development policy and the LEADER method in 2007-2013.

5 Information campaigns conducted on "Opportunities for the private entrepreneurs and agricultural producers within the National Rural Development Program (NRDP)–

Fifty persons from across the country were selected to be trained on LEADER. The first training module (moderation skills and community activation) was conducted by FLGR from July to September 2006. The best among them went through an advanced training. They will support Local communities in the LAG formation process, in drafting and implementing the local development strategies and in absorbing the European Agricultural and Rural Development Funds.

Traveling seminars with exchange of experience, know-how and good practices were conducted in several European countries that already apply the LEADER approach.

National conference "First Steps of the Rural Network" was organized that additionally informed about the new rural development policy.