

→ Coping with water threats as part of urban planning

Country Bulgaria

Project title Coping with water threats as part of urban planning

Twinning City region of Haaglanden (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Bourgas (Bulgaria)

Project period 1 December 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 69,182

Project objective

Design a programme of technical, spatial and organizational measures to solve problems associated with lake Vaya in Bourgas and to enhance the communication strategy for the Black Sea Basin Directorate.

Project summary

The project aimed to improve the sustainable functioning of the canal connecting the lake with the sea, to reduce the threats of the floods and to take measures for improving the passage of the channel and to apply the tools of spatial planning to water management. The project enabled new co-operation forms and improved communication strategy for the Black Sea Basin Directorate.

Core information

Bourgas, with 206,000 inhabitants has an industrial character with strong tourist traditions associated with the Black Sea and culture. The well developed transportation infrastructure, being the largest port in the country and a free trade zone are factors supporting the economic development. The Black Sea Basin Directorate (headquarters in Varna, branch office in Bourgas) is one of the four water management directorates in the country which is responsible for water management and implementation of the European directives.

Problem analysis

The main problem concerned the territories around the lake and the passage of the canal to connecting the lake to the sea. The territories were often flooded and the lake was threatened by pollution. The canal has been cleaned on occasions in the past but without a sustainable result. Both the lake and the canal offer potential for stimulating the economic development of the area by means of recreation and leisure facilities.

A practice to improve service delivery of local governments

Floods occur often and are particularly damaging because much of the sewage system lies below sea level and water discharge is ineffective. As water management is the responsibility of numerous stakeholders including the municipality, better co-ordination between these parties was required. Also communication was ineffective. The project focussed on solving the technical problems and on offering new forms of co-operation between the stakeholders.

Project implementation

First of all existing municipal plans and measures for the lake Vaya and regional water strategy requirements were analyzed. Organizational and technical measures based on the Netherlands' experience were prepared. Round tables, conferences and training activities on coalition forming and reaching agreement were organized. An advisory group to the waterboard was created, a monitoring scheme designed and knowledge transfer workshops were organized. Additional activities were undertaken together with land owners for area restructuring. The action plan was elaborated to include a communication strategy and an agreement for collaboration between stakeholders was prepared. A warning system and electronic board for water quality was installed. Citizens were involved in the public debate.

Process management

Common interests were defined to specify available resources, to create a dialogue between partners and to evaluate. Participation of the local elected representatives and citizens was significant. The most important changes were associated with upgrading the inter-institutional culture, co-ordination of joint activities, defining of the correct roles and responsibilities and correction measures according to stakeholders' interests. A number of stakeholders were involved, like the Regional Department of Environmental Protection, Civil Protection, Black Sea Basin Directorate, Chamber of Architects, Port of Bourgas, Bulgarian Association for the Protection of Birds and other NGOs.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Combine urban planning measures with organizational and technical tasks, the selection process of key-partners, ecological measures and stimulating recreational activities;
- Restructuring the territory and designing the communication strategy including an electronic information board offer good potential for extension to other constituencies.