

→ Improving services for the young

Country Bulgaria

Project title Development of a strategy to enhance service delivery to the young

Twinning Municipality of Dordrecht (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Varna (Bulgaria)

Project period 1 December 2006 – 30 September 2007

Project budget € 32,754

Project objective

Provide better services to citizens of Varna, particularly the young.

Project summary

The quality of services for children and young people was improved by determining priorities in municipal policy based on assessment of needs and exchange of expert experience and traditions in the field of service delivery.

Core information

Varna, with a population of 320,000 is the third largest town in Bulgaria, an industrial and tourist centre in the north east. Known as Bulgaria's 'sea capital', in 2006 the immediate region welcomed 5 million tourists.

Problem analysis

Social services for the young, though inadequate, mainly target those with specific problems, like homeless, disabled and orphans. Services targeting prevention, early warning, discovering and solving the problems were lacking. The municipality of Varna wanted to improve the quality and increase the quantity of social services for the young by unifying the efforts of the various involved institutions and NGOs and creating a long-term action strategy.

Project implementation

During the project, representatives of the municipality of Varna were introduced to good practices and ideas on providing social services by the municipality of Dordrecht. The advantages and disadvantages of current work were evaluated as well as the need for a new approach to Varna residents. In preparing the strategy, all institutions related to the target group in fields of personal and physical care and development of the

A practice to improve service delivery of local governments

young were involved. Civil servants were trained how to delegate social services to NGOs. A municipal strategy for the care to the young was prepared for the period 2007-2013. Its priorities are prevention, early warning and preparation of solutions to problems, upgraded care and the creation of a more attractive living environment.

Process management

Firstly efforts were invested in unifying the work of state, the municipality and NGOs. Secondly, a new long-term approach to the target group with new types of services focusing on prevention and early warning were investigated and introduced. In practice that meant change in political participation, awareness raising and organizational changes. Parties involved included state institutions (Social Assistance Directorate, Child Protection Unit, Regional Educational Inspectorate), NGOs, children and parents. This offered an assurance that the strategy's priorities were appropriate to customer needs.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Create an integrated strategic approach to the solution of problems by involving all relevant stakeholders;
- The services delivered should not be limited to children and the young with problems;
- Create early warning indicators to allow for rapid reaction;
- Put the needs of customers as top priority, and not the capacity of the state or local government. If these are not sufficient then invest efforts to upgrade them.