

→ Improving public transport services

Country Bulgaria

Project title Improving public transport services in the municipality of Sandanski

Twinning City region of Haaglanden (the Netherlands)

Municipality of Sandanski (Bulgaria)

Project period 1 December 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 58,115

Project objective

Create a logical bus network with clear information about how to use the bus system, a clear ticketing system and attractive stops.

Project summary

The project improved the public transport system by creating better bus routes, better connections between lines and upgraded the stops. The project contributed to the general improvement of services by the local administration.

Core information

Sandanski, with a population of 42,000 is mainly an agricultural municipality with high potential for development due to its geographical location, natural resources and abundance of archaeological and historical sites. Spa tourism is the main economic sector.

Problem analysis

Sandanski suffered from insufficient know-how in the field of modern public administration and lacked experience in solving problems of regional imbalances, especially the relationship city-countryside. Also, it had insufficient experience in Public Private Partnerships to address urban planning issues and revitalize the region and weak interaction within local government bodies and underdeveloped citizen participation.

Project implementation

The project was based on exchange of experience between partners and discussing and specifying concrete initiatives to improve transport services in Sandanski. A communication programme covered publications, press releases, newsletters, updating websites and advertising in local media. The integration of ticketing systems could not be implemented due to

A practice to improve service delivery of local governments

accounting problems. The project resulted in a provision of transport information to passengers on routes, time-tables and connections on the stops. This information is provided in brochures and on the internet. Bus stops were refurbished and their quality improved. The bus routes and stops were restructured according to the passengers' needs. Many local people were trained and a policy recommendation was prepared.

Process management

Significant steps were made in solving the problems of information exchange between the municipality and transport firms. Passengers were made aware of the information available and at the same time the changes in transport time-tables. All local administration departments, citizens, NGOs and transport firms were involved. Advertisers were also enlisted. Municipal councilors were involved in the preparation of the policy recommendation document. As each of these parties had a somewhat different view about the organization of public transport, it was important to involve them all in discovering priorities, making decisions and introducing changes.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Design the project in a manner that makes it easily applicable for other municipalities;
- Encourage other local authorities to take on a more client-oriented approach to service provision. This will require them to obtain the knowledge and skills to increase the trust and confidence of citizens;
- While it is evident that concrete products such as time-tables and local priorities might not be directly transferable to other municipalities, the general principles will apply;
- A well-functioning partner network for transfer of experiences improves local services.