

→ Improving EU project management capacity

Country Romania

Project title Getting ready for Europe

Twinning Province of Zuid-Holland (the Netherlands)
Constanta County (Romania)

Project period 1 August 2006 to 30 September 2007

Project budget € 41,083

Project objective

Improve project management capacity of the Constanta county council staff in attracting EU post-accession funds, improve financial management through enhancing networking with stakeholders by means of best practices and an instruction manual.

Project summary

The County Council needed expertise to manage European Union projects that comply with regulations and quality standards. For this reason, the project activities focused on financial management, project management and networking at county level to facilitate this compliance.

Core information

Constanta County (the country's eighth largest) has some 725.000 inhabitants and is situated in east Romania. The main economic activities are transport, agriculture, and the chemical industry. Constanta is an important tourist destination because of its seaside location and historical heritage.

Problem analysis

Three main problems were addressed: 1) a shortage of knowledge and experience with regard to European projects; 2) a shortage of financial resources (especially co-financing) and; 3) poor co-operation among local government, NGOs and private companies. By addressing these problems, Constanta County Council was enabled to make efficient use of EU funds as well as enhancing the internal management of the organization.

A practice to improve internal management of local governments

Project implementation

The project provided trainings on EU issues, communication techniques and tools and risk management. The multi-year budgeting concept was introduced and assistance was provided in improving tax collection. A best practice guide and manual for EU projects were designed and further training was provided. The conference 'Ready for Europe' was organized. The project resulted in improved skills and knowledge for civil servants on project management, improved relations between the County Council and other local authorities at the county level and strengthened capacity of the Financial Department in the County Council.

Process management

The multi-year budgeting and project co-financing issues were introduced in the Constanta County Council through training activities organized for civil servants. Including the Director of the Financial Department of the Constanta County Council in the project activities positively influenced project implementation by awareness building in modern financial techniques. This project also facilitated writing of further project proposals for two important stakeholders, namely the Autonomous Body for Roads and Bridges Constanta, and, the Autonomous Body for Constanta Water. Project management knowledge and skills acquired by the representatives in the local authorities are enabling them to better address local needs and priorities in project proposals designed at the county level.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- Establishing twinning partnerships with foreign local authorities that have acquired experience and expertise in similar local issues;
- Have local authorities who benefited from capacity building to further initiate partnerships with other entities that could enable access to other project funding sources (European Union Structural or Cohesion Funds);
- Facilitate an active dialogue with all partners involved.