

→ Finding solutions for the parking problem in Sandanski

Country Bulgaria

Project title Finding solutions for the parking problem in Sandanski

Twinning City Region Haaglanden (The Netherlands)

Municipality of Sandanski (Bulgaria)

Project period 1 January 2008 to 30 June 2009

Project budget € 68.933,27

Project objective

Finding and implementing solutions for the parking problem in the centre of the city of Sandanski and in the housing areas, with the participation of citizens and local companies.

Project summery

The project aimed to contribute to the following general objectives:

- The strengthening of the administration of the municipality through improving the effectiveness, efficiency, and transparency of the municipality and through developing a more client-oriented approach of service provision to the citizens.
- The growth of trust and confidence of the citizens of Sandanski in their local government.
- The establishment of a good operational network between the Bulgarian and the Dutch partners.

Core information

The municipality of Sandanski is situated in the Blagoevgrad Province in Southwest Bulgaria and has a population of 30,000 people. Sandanski has a high potential for development due to its geographical location, natural resources, and abundance of archaeological and historical objects on its territory.

Problem analysis

The main problem of Sandanski at the start of the project was an insufficient service provision, due to a lack of know-how and experience in the field of the modern public administration. Specifically regarding traffic circulation and parking problems, the municipality faced insufficient knowledge of methods and policies. Along with this problem, the lack of empty parking spaces in the city of Sandanski was another important issue.

Project implementation

The project aimed to find solutions for the lack of space for car parks and to

increase the involvement of citizens in the process of decision making. The experiences of the City Region Haaglanden were used to increase the citizens' involvement in the process of solving the parking problem. The project resulted in: the development of a survey routine to monitor the parking situation; sufficient public support for the parking policy among the citizens through a citizens' focus group; sufficient public support among the local companies through a focus group; introduction of regulation of parking, starting in the most critical area of the city; trained and better-qualified local experts on parking with increased knowledge of the Dutch practices; development of a Policy Recommendation, comprising a description of measures for effective improvement of the services in the above-mentioned areas; and a good functioning network between the City Region Haaglanden and the municipality of Sandanski.

Process management

A significant step in the project was the achievement of information exchange between the municipality, transport firms, hotel owners, and other local business. In order to achieve successful implementation of the activities foreseen it was necessary to draw up additional investment resources. All of the local administration departments, citizens, NGO's, and local business have been involved. Advertisers have been additionally enlisted. At the start of the preparation of the Policy Recommendation, municipal councillors have been engaged. Each of the parties involved had a different opinion regarding the organisation of the public transport, especially for solving the car parking problem in Sandanski. By collecting and combining these opinions the project could define the priorities and expected changes of all stakeholders.

Recommendations: do's and don'ts

- The project has been designed in a manner that makes it easy to apply the methods used to other municipalities. Bulgarian local authorities in general need to introduce a more client-oriented approach of service provision. For all of them it is important to obtain knowledge and skills for increasing citizens' trust and confidence in local government.
- The establishment of a well-functioning partner network for the transfer of knowledge and experiences may improve the local services.