

# GENiYOUTH

*Municipal Initiatives in South-East Europe*



Network of Associations of Local  
Authorities of South-East Europe



Implemented by

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*Documentation of GENiYOUTH Municipal Initiatives  
“Inclusion of Women and Youth in Local Government Affairs  
in South East Europe”*

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*based on the original descriptions of the municipal initiatives submitted at the open call  
for GENiYOUTH Municipal Initiatives Awards 2014*

Contact: [www.nalas.eu](http://www.nalas.eu) ; [info@nalas.eu](mailto:info@nalas.eu)

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*aimed to enrich the collection of experiences of gender and  
youth success stories in South East Europe,  
supported by the GIZ Project “Institutional Strengthening of NALAS”*

**2015**

# Foreword



Dear reader,

Women and young people are precious and indispensable part of local communities in South East Europe and it is therefore a responsibility of the local governments to implement activities that would include them in the local life as much as possible. Our region is already reach with excellent examples but for many local governments it is still not easy to make the change as it takes specific knowledge, policy approach and hands-on experience.

NALAS, as a network whose key value is knowledge exchange, has established GENiYOUTH Municipal Initiatives - an award scheme for best practices for fostering better flow of practical examples of how women and youth could be addresses at local level. We have set this up with the support from GIZ Project for Institutional Support to NALAS. Through an open collection process (October – November 2014) NALAS has documented and mapped 49 good practices from 10 countries of South East Europe implemented by local governments, local government associations and civil society organizations. I am happy that we received various types of good practices including examples of inclusion of women and/or youth in local government affairs, special activities for improving position of women/men, gender mainstreaming, gender sensitive budgeting, etc.

All these practices are elaborated in this publication so that they can serve as an inspiration for other local governments from the region to learn, analyze and replicate and therefore accelerate the impact of the innovations of their peers.

I'd like to stress that all eligible practices were evaluated by an independent and professional Evaluation Com-

mittee that based on a clearly set criteria and evaluation rules gave the highest grades to: "Gender Responsive Budgeting and Participatory Budgeting" implemented by the Municipality of Elbasan, Albania; "Youth Bank" implemented by the Municipality of Petrovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina; "Co-creation of social spaces - for youth with youth" implemented by the Municipality of Maribor, Slovenia; "Gender Equality at Local Level in Serbia" implemented by the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities – National Association of Local Authorities in Serbia, and "Local Youth Strategy of the Municipality of Ajdovščina" implemented by the Municipality of Ajdovščina, Slovenia. NALAS awarded Marmara Municipalities Union with a special recognition for achieving widest outreach for the GeniYouth municipal awards open call, also recognizing the municipality of Zeytinburnu as the most successful applicant from Marmara Municipalities Union, according to the results of the evaluation process.

I'd like to cordially thank all the mayors who supported activities for gender and youth in their local governments and their dedicated implementation teams. I'd also like to thank them for submitting the practices to NALAS and agreed to their publication and dissemination. We will make sure their work is not been left unnoticed and will promote it through all available vehicles. Let me also thank the NALAS Focal Points on Gender and Youth and NALAS Knowledge Management Assistants who worked hard to implement the GENiYOUTH activity.

NALAS President  
Djuro Bukvic

Dear reader,

We as GIZ are convinced that municipalities, towns and cities as well as local government associations in South-East Europe can learn from each other to meet the citizens' demands and play their vital role in EU rapprochement.

GIZ is a longstanding partner for NALAS in achieving the network's strategic objectives. Since 2010, GIZ implements, on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), the project "Institutional Strengthening of NALAS" that supports NALAS in achieving its own objective as defined in NALAS Strategic Plan 2013-2017. An integrated part of the Plan is its Gender and Youth Strategy which has been developed with our support and we were happy to enable meetings of NALAS Gender Focal points to coordinate activities and facilitate exchange.

With the Gender and Youth Municipal Initiatives Awards (GENiYOUTH), we aim to make experiences and practices available to the region. It is an achievement that over 50 municipalities and local government rep-

resentatives took part in the endeavor and submitted their good practices within NALAS' Open Call that was announced in November 2014. We are glad that GIZ has the opportunity to support NALAS, the GENiYOUTH Awards and this publication which is developed based on the information and documents provided by the applicants. We believe you will find this publication useful and we hope for many replications of the presented practices that can be easily adapted to your local context and applied in other local communities.

The project team believes that this knowledge product will serve as an initial resource and motivation tool for the local governments to initiate changes and to make a positive difference in Gender and Youth policies at the local level.

Hans Frühauf

Project Manager, GIZ  
Institutional Strengthening of NALAS

# Municipality of Elbasan, Albania

## Gender Responsive and Participatory Budgeting



The Municipality of Elbasan actively involves its citizens in local governance through participatory budgeting, thus upholding the law regarding local government. It was observed that only 15-20% of those involved in participatory budgeting were women and youth. The municipality realized that women and youth were not adequately represented and as such sought to address this issue. In 2010, Gender Responsive Budgeting was implemented at a local level, together with UN Women.

As a result of the issue being addressed a greater number of women and youth now participate in gender budgeting meetings. Now, 40% of the participants at meetings are women/girls and 50% of the commissioners selected by the participatory budgeting meetings are women, with 40% more investments with a direct impact allocated for this target group.

Women in the municipality now see the participatory budgeting meetings as a chance for them to be directly involved in the running of their municipalities and subsequently it has brought in an increased number of financed gender sensitive projects. Two nursing homes, nine primary schools, five small parks, five sports environments, street lighting and an increase in the number of garbage bins have been the result to date of the increased presence of women in the participatory budgeting meeting process.

The participatory budgeting is a co-managed process. It is a mechanism through which the local state

and private actors together determine spending and reporting for public sources. The involvement of all local community stakeholders is essential, which means the range of actors involved in the process is wide. In the case of Elbasan, the participation of ordinary citizens i. e. the local community, municipal employees, municipal council, representatives of the civic society, local businesses, media and universities is evident.

Still, the involvement of two local NGOs and the

Youth Council of the city seems to be one of the main success factors for overcoming the challenge to increase female and youth participation in the process. The staff of the municipality, directory of development policies, together with the NGOs "Woman's Forum, Elbasan" and "In Family for Family" organized different meetings with the women and youth, prior to the start of the gender budgeting process, so as to inform them about the specifics

of the process and benefits of their participation. These meetings are intended to be motivational for women and youth – to encourage them to become actively engaged in the process and fight for their needs.

The gender budgeting process lasts for almost three months (September – November). Twenty-three meetings are organized in the community and a Citizens Commission with members that are voted directly in the meeting is created. This commission acts as an Advisory Commission throughout any decision making



process and also is a bridge of communication. The meetings can be seen as structured public debates whereas citizens together with the municipality and all local actors, discuss problems, propose solutions and make priorities. The high participation of different actors at the participatory meetings is a result of different outreach and media techniques used in the public relations processes. Apart from informative and motivational meetings organized with the specific target groups, both women and youth, the municipality makes a public invitation through the local media and distributes brochures with information about the date, time and place for the meeting in every neighborhood. The very well know outreach method, called "door-to-door", as well as direct phone calls made by the municipal staff, are also used to invite citizens and ensure their active participation in local decision-making when it comes to prioritization in solving community problems.

The successful implementation of this process in the Municipality of Elbasan was the first of its kind in Albania, and has been used as a model for other NGOs and UN Women to try to replicate. Such has been the success of this endeavor that women are now represented equally in the Citizens' Commission of the municipality. They are involved in decision-making processes, in the accountability and transparency of public spending of local community leaders and as such their involvement has had a positive impact upon the way the city of Elbasan is now run and administered.

Thanks to this positive collaboration more women and youth have participated, and continue to do so, in



the budgeting meetings. When it comes to the issue of implementation of public investments, the Municipality can be proud with 70-90% of implementation of citizens' priorities and selected projects, as a result of the participatory budgeting process over the last four years.

And this practice still exists, although is known as quite a challenging one! The essence of success and sustainability can be found in the fact that the Municipality holds the ownership of this process and believes in it. The commitment is proven by having participatory budgeting as a crucial step in the municipal annual planning and budgeting. Also, municipal structure is established that is qualified to organize and manage the participatory budgeting by respecting the regulatory framework approved for this process.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Elbasan, Albania  
Qazim Sejдини  
Mayor of Elbasan  
sejdiniq@elbasani.gov.al  
sejdiniq@yahoo.it

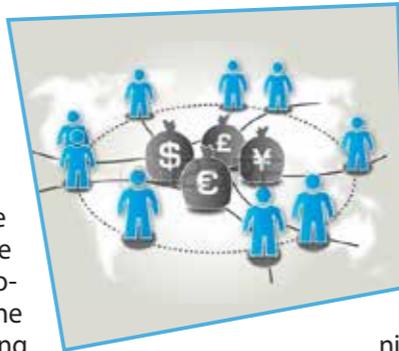


# Municipality of Petrovo, Bosnia and Herzegovina Youth Bank Project



The Municipality of Petrovo, in cooperation with the NGO 'Fondacija Mozaik', initiated the establishment of Youth Bank as a means of addressing and solving youth issues on the local level. Youth Bank has allowed young people to get involved in projects that they themselves create, by looking at existing issues and problems that are pertinent for them and the community as a whole.

Since the inception of Youth Bank in 2012 some of the projects that have been implemented dealt with areas of sport and recreation such as procurement of scoreboards and reflectors for a local sports hall, reconstruction of a sports field and a fitness centre. Other projects offered possibilities for employment of youth (for e. g. construction of a greenhouse used to teach people how to grow vegetables) and at the same time have impacted upon the local economy and the well-being of the community. These projects are among twenty-two that have been put in place through Youth Bank. So far, there has been a great variety of project types, being initiated and developed by youth who felt that the implementation of these projects would be to the benefit of the local community. The creation of the children's playground 'Children's Joy' has positively impacted upon young families with young children, while the project 'Illumination of the Sports Hall' has allowed the sports hall to be used in the evening, thus extending its working hours and as



such allowing more people to use it. The fact that projects are all written and submitted by young people means that the youth are directly involved in the improvement of their own community. Local businesses are also intrinsic to the success of the projects because of their funding and support for the Youth Bank project.

The Municipality of Petrovo, in cooperation with the NGO 'Fondacija Mozaik', raise the funds (60% Municipality of Petrovo, 40% NGO 'Fondacija Mozaik') that would allow for projects to be realized. After raising the funds, project proposals are written and submitted by young people, in accordance with the already established procedures and templates that are very simple and adequate for youth. Whenever required, youth are supported to develop their projects that should go in line with the "Youth Policy" strategic document, developed by the Municipality. The proposals are then evaluated by an Evaluation Commission, also comprised of young people. After selection of the best proposals, the required funding is granted by Youth Bank. One of the success factors can be also seen in the work of many volunteers who are involved in the actual implementation of these projects. Local businesses are also "here" to support the work of the youth and make their dreams come true.

This practice is unique because the young people are the actual engines of the ideas, from their con-

ceptualization to the very end of their implementation and usage. They create the idea, write the proposal, and work on its implementation. It works because it takes into account the ideas of the youth and allows them to set up projects for the benefit of the whole community.

One area that posed a challenge at the very start of Youth Bank was that young people had no knowledge of how to write a project proposal. Thankfully, citizens with experience of this were willing to assist and help the youth with the project proposals, thus getting the ball rolling. Once begun, the young people who were shown 'how to...' write the proposal shared their knowledge with other young people who needed assistance. This 'passing down' of knowledge has subsequently continued.

Another area that can be explained as being 'pleasantly' difficult was that more young people were interested in the project than had originally been envisioned.

The fact that, to date, twenty-two projects have been successfully implemented through Youth Bank shows the willingness of the municipality, NGO 'Fondacija Mozaik', local businesses and the youth of the community to improve the livelihood in their own



community. As Ivana Tomić, Kakmuž, says: "I am very proud...the project "Children's playground" helped us to get adequate space for play and fun with our children. "The fact that the projects have been successful and are relevant suggests that other young people are willing to submit project proposals for areas they wish to see improved, too. The wide variety of project types have impacted different groups within the community, and as such Youth Bank maybe considered to be truly 'community spirited'.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Petrovo,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina

++387 53 262 700  
nacelnik@petrovo.ba  
www.petrovo.ba

Nevena Petković, Independent  
expert for social affairs and public  
procurements  
++387 53 262 715  
++387 66 133 600  
nevena.petkovic@petrovo.ba



# Municipality of Maribor, Slovenia

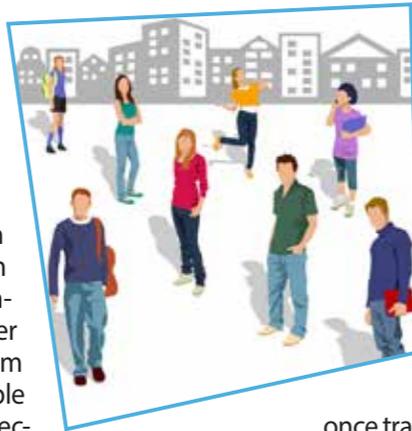
## Co-creation of Social Spaces - for Youth with Youth



After being awarded the 'European Youth Capital 2013' title in 2010, the Municipality of Maribor passed a 'youth-friendly city' strategic and development plan, aimed at helping to alleviate the problems young people face today – namely a lack of employment opportunities and employability. The Municipality also has a Local Action Plan "Let's do it together" that has been prepared to promote and strengthen the co-operation of the Municipality with the local stakeholders in the field of youth employment in Maribor.

The good practice "Co-creation of Social Spaces – for Youth with Youth" is a result of one of the youth projects "My Generation at Work", implemented by the Municipality, under the auspices of the European Program URBACT for promotion of sustainable urban development. The main objective of this program was to promote and foster employability of young people in a changing labor market with special focus on entrepreneurship skills and attitudes.

The project was designed by working with the Local Support Group to produce a Local Action Plan that "My Generation at Work" then began looking at and working on as small experiments called 'Go For It' (GFI's). Overall 6GFI's were implemented, while this good practice stems from GFI 5 – Active Youth. GFI 5 saw various workshops and lectures being organized for young people in order to help activate and mo-



tivate them, by providing them with new skills that could potentially help them in finding a job.

The rationale behind GFI 5 was to assist young people in acquiring and developing new skills that are required, but currently lacking on the labor market, such as carpentry, masonry and electricity. As an aside, given the success of the first workshop from GFI 5, 'Promotion of Occupations in Shortage', the workshop resulted in the renovation of the City Youth Council, Maribor. Accordingly, other city owned premises will be renovated as part of similar workshops.

The users of the good practices are the youth of Maribor who wish to learn, train and develop themselves by learning a trade/craft that will allow them to find employment once trained. Within the different GFI's were different stakeholders. The Municipality of Maribor was ever-present, as were the youth and the city youth council.

A major improvement has been the greater involvement of young people in the decision making process and their greater involvement in the community. The project encouraging young people to learn trades for which there is a demand for in the employment market has been successful. It helped young people gain employment, be it as employees or as self-employed entrepreneurs.

The Municipality of Maribor believes that the

uniqueness of this good practice derives from the approach itself, which is an innovation in the local environment. The Municipality of Maribor approached young people with a proposal of co-creating social space for youth with youth. The renovation of the premises was completed by young men and women in just four weeks at the end of 2013. The success was their involvement in work, giving their own ideas on how to improve the space, gaining valuable work experience and getting closer with the City Youth Council, Maribor and the environment they are offering. A great success was the low budget of this good practice and its big results.



The good practice will continue to be implemented with the plan to renovate different places owned by the Municipality of Maribor for use within similar workshops in 2015 – 2020. Also, there is an idea to place a JOB CAFÉ - INFO CENTER in the renovated premises of City Youth Council Maribor, which will provide a space for young people to socialize, meet and obtain advice and information on available services in the field of career guidance, job searching, education and training, (self)employment etc. Furthermore that place is then seen as a perfect example of co-creation of social spaces for youth with youth and through this improving their position in their community.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Maribor, Slovenia  
Dr.Martina Rauter  
Counselor for Youth & Project Leader  
of the European Youth Capital

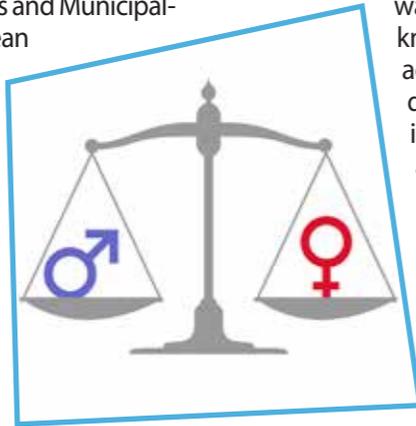
info@maribor.si  
martina.rauter@maribor.si  
www.maribor.si



# Promoting Gender Equality at Local Level



Following the adoption of a Law on Equality between genders in 2009, the local self-governments in Serbia received clear obligations in regard to promotion of gender equality. The municipalities were obliged to make gender-sensitive policies, to form gender equality bodies, or to assign such duties to an employee. However the implementation of this law was poor. Many of the municipalities failed to meet the minimal legal requirements even though the Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities (SCTM) promoted the European Charter on Equality between Men and Women (CEMR Charter) as a tool to support gender equality work on the local level. A clear need to intensify the efforts was identified and so SCTM decided to address the problem through the program "Support to Local Self Governments (LSGs) in Serbia in EU Integration".



The gender equality work in SCTM officially started in December 2011 and is performed in strong cooperation with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR), supported by the Swedish Government. The work of SCTM is focused on 1) enhancing the capacities of cities, municipalities and local bodies for gender equality in the creation and implementation of gender sensitive policies, and 2) promotion and public awareness raising activities.

In the first year, the goal was to establish a structure and develop capacities to perceive gender equality as one of the factors contributing to the overall local development. The Gender Equality Working Group (GEWG) was established including local experts, national officials and SCTM representatives. That group had to go through an intensive learning experience - following training courses and a study visit to Sweden. In the same year, a Pool of Local Experts was established with the aim of adding their knowledge and experience to assist SCTM's activities. Alongside this, the collection of data on situations in municipalities regarding gender equality, as well as many other analytical activities began.

In the second year, capacities of the GEWG were activated to propose Gender Equality Policy of the SCTM, but also to develop and deliver training courses. In 2013, the program became open for all municipalities in Serbia. More than 120 representative from 41 municipalities participated in 8 training courses and 2 conferences with the aim of contributing to the SCTM Gender Equality Policy, and learning how to improve their work on the local level. As a result of all activities the SCTM Policy on Gender Equality was adopted. This policy paper states that SCTM as an organisation is determined to work in the gender equality field through promotion of a gender equal society and to collect gender sensitive statistics within the Secretariat and among members. SCTM developed a

database on gender equality which is recognized by the stakeholders as the only public resource for gender equality work on the local level. The database provides contact details, exchange of experiences and it is highly decentralised and open for municipalities to fill and update the data themselves. In addition, SCTM has an online benchmarking system which is already enriched with the topic of gender equality. This free-of-charge tool provides a possibility to municipalities to evaluate their work, compare with others, and learn what they can do in order to promote gender equality.



The third year of the program is marked by maintaining and using the existing structure and capacities that were built in order to make improvements and upgrades based on the lessons learned.

One of the main challenges during the implementation process was to ensure institutional memory of the established structures that were set up during the implementation. Local elections and change of the people who were trained to work on gender, may jeopardise the results. Many local experts trained as GEWG members, or as participants of training courses, lost their positions as members in the gender equality (GE) bodies. This is indeed a threat for the sustainability of the GE bodies. To rebuild the structure and to work consistently with new people were methods applied by SCTM to overcome personnel changes in GE bodies.

It is generally a challenge to raise and work on gender issues, as they are often not recognised as important. A valuable lesson learnt is that political figures are crucial in decision making processes and they are very important stakeholders to be involved in all steps in promotion of gender equality. Also, using the 3R method seemed to be a very good and innovative approach taken by SCTM that ensures all policies and processes to involve a gender perspective.

## Contact details:

Standing Conference of Towns and Municipalities-SCTM, Serbia  
Rozeta Aleksov  
Gender Equality Coordinator

++381 11 3223-446  
secretariat@skgo.org  
rozeta.aleksov@skgo.org  
<http://skgo.org>





The Municipality of Ajdovščina has faced numerous, diverse and complex issues related to young people. One of the main problems facing young people was the fact that their inadequate education and qualifications coupled with their lack of work experience made them less attractive on the labour market, resulting in high unemployment rates. Housing problems have not allowed young people to move away from their parents and rent their own apartments until they are well into their 30's. Other problems were young people's inability to influence decision-making processes and policies that have an impact on youth and young people being uninformed and incapable in finding appropriate information to solve their problems.

The establishment of the Youth Council of Ajdovščina was seen as a proper way to address the identified problems. The council provided reinforcement to the various youth associations and societies, who were previously active in the field of youth-work but only had the capacity to tackle individual issues. The Council and the Municipality joined forces in 2011 which resulted in the creation of the Youth Strategy of the Municipality of Ajdovščina. Adopted in 2013, the strategy addresses education, employment, housing, mobility, leisure, youth organisations and information. A holistic approach addressing, analysing



and solving all these issues was seen as a model that could bring visible and concrete results.

For the purposes of strategy development comprehensive research was carried out in four fields. First, an analysis of existing policies and activities provided by the Municipality of Ajdovščina, second, an analysis of youth activities and organizations in the Municipality, third, an analysis of questionnaires completed by young people on their views on youth policies and fourth, a catalogue of their needs and wishes was compiled. For this purpose various methods and tools were used, i. e. roundtables and meetings with decision-makers and young people, nine youth workshops, detailed interviews with young people, registers of wishes for young people held on four locations (high school, youth centre, shopping centre, public library), action campaign "My Letter to the Mayor", boxes for suggestions and opinions, questionnaires and surveys. Data was also collected via social media (e. g. Facebook), e-mails and websites.

Resulting from the strategy the number of tangible products and measurable results were produced such as financially supported informal education activities, awards for talented young people, and entrepreneurial workshops. In reference to housing measures, young people were provided with subsidized interest rates for housing loans, subsidized rents and non-profit apartments. However, as the

main and most important impact of the Strategy was the increased involvement of young people in the local community and greater social engagement, this was most visible on the decision-making level, as three out of twenty-six Municipal Councillors under the age of 30 were elected, meaning that the interests of young people within the Municipality are now better represented in the Municipal Council of Ajdovščina.

Youth associations as well as young individuals have been the direct beneficiaries of these endeavours. The strategy with its holistic nature, accompanying all aspects of issues relevant for youth in the local community, identified the measures that need to be taken, introduced key objectives and goals, determined the time-frame and provided clear guidelines for its implementation. Such an approach was innovative and unique in the given local environment and established a good practice example. The success of the product lay in the fact that it included all relevant stakeholders in the field of youth, both in the drafting of the document and as well as in its actual implementation.

The strategy has been devised in a sustainable manner, since it envisages measures for a six-year period, i. e. 2013-2018. It foresees the adoption of action plans in accordance with the annual municipal budget and the adoption of annual progress reports as well as of a final progress report at the end of 2018. Based



on the final report, further steps will be determined and the continuation of the strategy assured.

The strategy is the basis for a sustainable development of youth policy in the Municipality. The strategy's holistic nature is in a way a sustainable approach to tackling youth issues, since it approaches the problems in a systematic and integrated manner to their very core.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Ajdovščina, Slovenia  
Erika Zavnik

++386 5 365 91 22  
++386 5 365 91 10

erika.zavnik@ajdovscina.si  
obcina@ajdovscina.si  
www.ajdovscina.si





Numerous problems are affecting the young population in Serbia emerging from a long-lasting and progressive economic crisis, such as poverty and high unemployment that has led to a 'brain-drain' of the young population or low activism and a lack of interest in the process related to community development.

The project "Divac Youth Funds - Matching Funds for Youth Initiatives", run by the "Ana and Vlade Divac Foundation" and the Municipality of Vladičin Han, have tackled some of the issues, through stakeholder partnerships and focused investments in youth led activities. The project promoted youth generated and youth led community development solutions, based on stakeholder collaboration and further fund-raising, including formal and informal youth groups, municipal authorities, local businesses, civil-society organizations (CSOs) and other relevant actors in the Municipality of Vladičin Han, as well as eight other towns in Serbia. They were working on increasing the participation of youth in local development processes, through grant-making to youth-led and youth-generated local development projects.

The case of Vladičin Han is based on a model called Youth Bank that engaged youth directly in grant making and has been previously implemented in other countries in South-East Europe. The model was ad-

justed to fit the needs, the context and the opportunities in Serbia. The so called Divac Youth Funds (DYFs) were set-up as informal groups of selected and trained ten young women and men in nine municipalities in Serbia.

All this work resulted in raising funds not only provided by the Foundation but also by the municipalities and local businesses. The total fund managed by DYFs was in total USD \$126, 000. 00 and it supported 94 youth-led initiatives, out of which 55% were from rural areas. Renovation of sport and cultural facilities, environment protection actions and different educational events were mainly the tangible initiatives supported by the Foundation.

This model of youth activism involved nearly 12, 000 young people across Serbia. The involved stakeholders (young population, local self-governments, local businesses, youth CSOs, individual philanthropists, media and educational institutions) recognized the potentials of this model in terms of youth empowerment for development initiatives and participation. In addition, the model managed to reach and include marginalized groups of young people and to change the perception of all the involved stakeholders of the capacity of young people to take action. The impact of this practice can be seen in three spheres: creation of local environment that attracts young people, promotion of youth activism, and raising support from the local business community.



This approach significantly increased participation of youth in the development of their communities and has had a strong appeal for young people because the model is very much hands on and youth-led.

The model identified certain challenges such as the non-existence of municipalities' mechanism for supporting youth activism and non-formal youth groups, lack of partnership with local businesses and CSOs, and the lack of transparency in the municipal budgets. The Youth Funds addressed these issues and made significant improvements in all aspects, but above all, raised awareness among all participating stakeholders. The youth were supported to identify their needs, generate solutions and take actions to solve the community-driven problems. This model presents innovative fundraising approaches, advocates for participatory stakeholders' models and builds capacities among the youth actors so to ensure sustainability.

The structure has been set up and is functioning under the Foundation's supervision, guidance, and coordination. At the moment, the Foundation is advocating for youth issues and making municipalities aware that their commitment and allocation of municipal funds for youth issues is essential. In parallel young people are trained and promoted to continue



the process of fundraising from local businesses and individuals. The municipal multi-stakeholder approach and the partnership-matching contribution mechanisms for youth initiatives can be seen as key factors for enabling youth activism and their involvement in decisions that directly affect their lives.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Vladičin Han, Serbia

++381 17 473-073

++381 62 801-2013

info@vladicinhan.org.rs

kosticvladimir.kv@gmail.com

www.vladicinhan.org.rs

# Institute of Youth Policy, Slovenia Youth-Friendly Community



The Youth-Friendly Community is a system of support, assistance and incentive for the development of local youth policies. The system has been initiated by the Institute of Youth Policy and the Youth Council of Ajdovščina (MSA) with the purpose of advancing and obtaining sustainability in addressing and solving local youth issues in Slovenia.

The initiative was triggered by the social situation of youth in Slovenia. An increase in the unemployment rate among the young population, and a labour market that offers less steady jobs has created a lack of financial stability among youth. The System was developed after four years of studying and analysing local youth policies in Slovenia. It is focused on taking the youth-friendly communities through a process of certification and implementing a support system for the development of local youth policies in all Slovenian communities.

The certification to youth friendly community, which is the first such certification in Europe, is arranged on an annual basis, with the validity of the certificate being four years. After this period, the municipalities with the certification have to prove they have advanced measures in the field of local youth policy. A certified municipality is seen as a municipality in which youth have the possibility of achieving full au-



tonomy in the social spheres of life and could actively participate in the community public affairs. The certificate is awarded to municipalities that present and give evidence of successful implementation of measures in the areas of vertical and horizontal youth policy, in accordance with the already specified conditions and criteria in the application form which is asked to be submitted as a result of a public call. When assessing the effectiveness of the measures' implementation,

a special emphasis is placed on the areas of youth participation, the systematic engaging of the youth, education, mobility, employment, housing policy, youth information and youth organization. Those applying for the certificate have to prove that they have implemented at least one measure from each area. Between 2012 and 2014, 22 municipalities received the certificate "Youth Friendly Community", which represents 10% of all Slovenian municipalities.

In order to exchange and transfer knowledge the program offers workshops and other training programs, targeting not only youth willing to acquire new skills but also representatives of local authorities who like to become familiar with practical aspects of the role of local communities in creating youth-friendly environments. The program offers conferences on local youth policy where re-

nown experts discuss the conditions and development of local and national youth policy in Slovenia, by taking examples of good practices, and showing how opportunities for cooperation are best identified. Also, there is an evidence of enhanced cooperation between different stakeholders working in the youth sector due to the continual professional support (education, information and counselling for local communities, young people and youth organizations) that this program provides. From 2012, over 50 local communities benefited from being involved in the field of local youth policies and more than 600 young people were directly involved in the related activities.

Developing a new approach, like the process of certification, brought some challenges as well. To find a right way to verify the measures implemented by the municipalities and evaluate their effects were some of the difficulties that were identified. It was learned that one of the key success factor is cooperation and involvement of all relevant stakeholders, while the award, meaning the certificate itself, is a great motivation for the local-self-governments to focus and work on a particular theme. Most interestingly was the fact that young people are eager to participate in a process of shaping the local communities. However, the methods must follow the modern trends of today's communication and for that purpose various forums on a web platform were established. The web portal allows for involvement of young people and



their online participation in addressing the youth issues directly to their own communities.

In the past few years, the reactions about this program are exceptionally positive. The certification process, including all benefits that it brings, shown strong potential in strengthening the systematic engagement of the youth population at a local level. The local communities, national authorities and the media have recognised the unique and effective approach in dealing with the youth issues.

## Contact details:

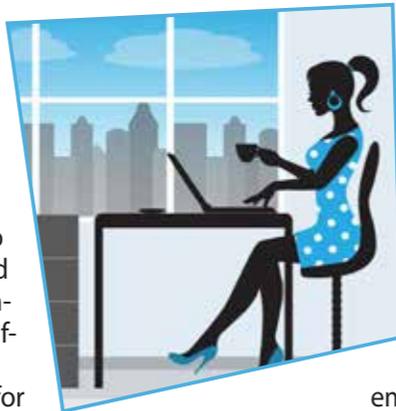
Institute of Youth Policy, Slovenia  
Rozana Mužica  
Program Director

++386 40 475 677

rozana.mužica@msa.si  
www.mladi-in-obcina.si



Statistics from the Labour and Employment Agency of Bosnia and Herzegovina reveal that the unemployment rate has continually risen and in 2014 the number of unemployed young people in the country reached over 380,000. The causes of this high unemployment have been seen in an educational system not following the demand of the labour market, the country's economy not creating new jobs and the perceived lassitude and unresponsiveness of young people. The country has not offered free services for young people that would enable them to combat the high unemployment rate in the direction of increasing employability (e.g. how to apply for a job, how to write a CV and how to behave during a job interview). Secondary and tertiary education lacks examples of good practice, and many young people in Bosnia and Herzegovina have decided to continue their undergraduate and postgraduate studies in EU countries with only few coming back after graduation.



As part of the Youth Strategy for 2012-2014 'Youth Activism', the Democratic Youth Movement, with financial support from the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo, established an Info Centre for young people of the Municipality of Novo Sarajevo. The main task of the Info Centre for the Youth of Novo Sarajevo was to provide a free of charge information service for young people to increase their em-

ployability, information about available scholarships in Bosnia and Herzegovina, education of youth, student exchanges, etc. The Info Centre created an archive of available job opportunities, scholarship grants, and provided advertisements for education and student exchange, etc. Its services are promoted through the website [www.infozamlade.ba](http://www.infozamlade.ba), but also through media, social networks and municipal campaigns. On its website the centre's team regularly publishes adverts related to new job opportunities, scholarships, education events and student-exchange visits. The website has had over 20,000 hits, with over 150 adverts also posted on the web page itself. Their Facebook profile has over 2,500 followers.

The active work of the Info Centre began in earnest with the centre's inception. Daily visits to the Info Centre from July to the end of November 2014 reached 350 people, looking for information related to employment, scholarships, education and student exchanges. All users are entered into an Info Centre database and users regularly (via email or by telephone) receive updated and new information according to their interests.

Aside from having merely an informative role, the Info Centre organizes training sessions for young people. In cooperation with the Labour and Employment Agency a workshop 'Writing a CV and Motivation Letter' was organised, in order to teach specific job searching techniques.

In order to respond adequately to the demands of its clients, the Info Centre has developed a questionnaire that serves as a tool to collect information about the actual needs of the young people. The answers are analysed in order to identify what information the user wants to receive and later the centre passes the right information to the user.

Within a short time frame the centre has achieved very satisfactory results. Members of the centre have become interns in state institutions, others have found jobs, and two students became postgraduate students in Austria (Vienna) and were provided with scholarships worth 10,000 Euros.

This centre is the first of its kind in Bosnia & Herzegovina. The centre saw its success through directly dealing with young people, providing accurate tailored-made information, providing consulting services for free, additional training, providing information that applies exclusively to young people in Sarajevo. This practice could easily be applied in other municipalities, everywhere where young people are facing similar problems.

What makes this Centre sustainable is the ensured support from the Municipality, both logistical and fi-

nancial, as well as the fact that it is a part of the municipal youth strategy. Still, in order to achieve even greater level of sustainability, the centre works on creating action plans that in the future will broaden its portfolio and will provide more services in the sphere of education and consulting through establishment of a Student Voluntary Service.



#### Contact details:

Municipality of Novo Sarajevo,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Faruk Pršeš  
Deputy Mayor  
Department of Social Services

++387 33 492 188  
++387 61 191 077

[drustvened@novosarajevo.ba](mailto:drustvened@novosarajevo.ba)  
[prsesf@novosarajevo.ba](mailto:prsesf@novosarajevo.ba)



Macedonia suffers from one of the highest unemployment rates in Europe. The town of Gostivar, with its comparatively high proportion of young people and diverse ethnic composition, has been particularly vulnerable to this economic phenomenon. Affected by the social instability in the country and with no instrument to formally express themselves, the youth of Gostivar have faced considerable obstacles in their growth into productive and active members of society.

The Youth Council of Gostivar was founded on 10th July 2013 as a public institution to address youth unemployment, social inclusion and youth activism. Its mission was to create an environment that would ensure possibilities for young people to be able to raise their voice through advocacy, lobbying and community leadership. The work has led to empowering young people with the confidence and ability to bring about positive change and to gain recognition for their contributions to our community.

Their good practice proposal recounts the foundation of the Youth Council of Gostivar and its activities to support the youth community of Gostivar. They have achieved tangible and sustainable results concerning youth development in the fields of: (1) ethnic and gender inclusion, (2) youth investment and employment support and (3) social awareness and activism.

Regarding employment support, the Youth Council regularly supplies numerous workshops, seminars and volunteer opportunities to promote skills-building and acquire new knowledge in the field of budget development and project design, project cycle management, PR and communication skills and youth activism.

Many organised plays, concerts and art exhibits highlighted the merits of local talents offering practical experience and public exposure for contributors.



Ethnic and gender inclusion are standard features in all Youth Council endeavours. The Youth Council make sure that project beneficiaries and volunteers represent the various ethnic communities within the community. Social awareness campaigns not only provided the social benefits associated with increased public knowledge, but served as a proactive and positive form of social expression among youth. The campaigns and seminars in the field of Cancer Awareness, Battle Against Addiction, and International Heart Day raised awareness and understanding on various illnesses and discussed lifestyles (nutrition, exercise, smoking, etc.) as contributing factors to one's health.

Due to its pro-active form, successful approach and status as a government entity the Youth Council has secured partnerships with large international organi-

sations and it lists a growing catalogue of youth projects. The partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) local office has resulted in the organisation of training workshops for their target group and small-scale grants. It also collaborated with United States Peace Corps representatives in the field of grant writing and project design.

Its success and sustainability owes a great deal to the efforts put forth to form a local network of stakeholders to support a common youth-driven agenda. Local partners include high schools, NGOs and other public institutions. Difficulties and some challenges arose during the initial stages of the formation of the Youth Council. Converting the latent interest into actual participation among young people resulted in the creation of a balanced, comprehensive outreach campaign among the Albanian, Macedonian and Turkish communities of Gostivar. Equal representation among these ethnic groups proved essential to earn their trust. Finding a correct yet ever fluid balance still stands as the most pressing challenge to such an engaged target group as the Youth Council.

The official position as an established and permanent presence in Gostivar, as well as the growing network and the internal involvement with young people, strongly indicates a sustainable model within community. Due to the voluntary participation and contribution of young people, the Youth Council does



not require any paid staff or personnel. This approach does not only reinforces a sense of ownership among young people that the Youth Council is their organisation, but also leaves more room in the budget for delivering services to the target group in lieu of wage expenses. In terms of budget, the Youth Council is allotted a budget

from the municipal government based on the proposed projects planned for the subsequent year. Up to a certain extent, the position the Youth Council has built allows to invest more time and resources on delivering relevant services and enlarging its network with other partners and donors.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Gostivar,  
Republic of Macedonia  
Sefer Selimi  
Senior Coordinator

++389 42 213 511  
++389 72 303 142

sefer.selimi@gostivari.gov.mk  
www.gosyc.com

# Municipality of Zeytinburnu, Turkey Knowledge Houses



The children and teenagers of the Zeytinburnu Municipality have spent much of their after-school hours on the street. A lack of finances in many families meant various courses or extra-school activities was not affordable for their children. Many students were hardly finding the means with which to do their homework when they needed computer, printer or access to the Internet. The available Internet cafes were not seen as the most 'appropriate' places for school children. Since libraries were usually built in city centres, borrowing books or conducting research were things most of the students could not perform. Most of the students were not properly guided by their teachers in schools because of the high number of students. Aside from the fact that the school progress of these children was under jeopardy, spending many hours on the streets meant that they were under risk of being involved in crime, or of being harassed, and exposed to violence or crime and with little or no control from any adult.

Such a situation was of great concern for parents and for the municipality's managers responsible for local governance.

The school children and students needed spaces to spend effective and quality time outside the school and home that provided them the opportunity of learning by having fun and the opportunity of learn-

ing universal and local values. In addition, the works of public organizations and NGOs towards increasing the education quality in Zeytinburnu and leading children and youngsters to social, cultural, artistic, intellectual, educative and sportive activities were not satisfactory.

For these reasons, the Municipality prepared the project of "Knowledge Houses". The main goal was to provide free services and appropriate premises for children and students where they could spend quality time. The first two Knowledge Houses were opened on February 1st, 2005 and today there are seven Knowledge Houses in total. The main aim was to provide children and youngsters the chance to spend time in performing social, cultural, artistic, sportive and educational activities for free; to create an alternative to internet cafes, free access to computers, the internet and printer services, and also to provide opportunities for borrowing books and support for completing homework.

There are many small activities that the Knowledge Houses organise – from reading contests to library services, club activities for art, social studies, literature, science and technology, games and sports. There are educational workshops, designated spaces for reading and study, activity rooms and multi-purpose rooms for research and meetings. The premises are open not only for the children but also for their parents. That approach contributes very much towards strengthening and fostering a community spirit and family values.



Aside from the learning opportunities, the Knowledge House also offers fun opportunities, many brain and intelligence games, and sports tournaments. The so-called 'Wise Generation' special group programs "With Youngsters in Private" has managed to bring students and local writers together.

The impact was significant among the targeted groups. The Knowledge Houses can now count over 45, 000 members. The students that were members of Knowledge Houses showed substantial and concrete progress in school classes. Guidance and support were provided to the academic and physical development of their members. Those children exhibited a positive personal and social development and benefited from increased self-confidence that could greatly impact their career and post-secondary development. As one of the students said: "When I started spending time in the Knowledge House, it has been as the barriers among me and the life started to bringing down one by one... I have turned into a person who is self-confident, responsible and capable to become successful... The Knowledge House brings a lot of beauty and values in the life of a student!"

The concept of Knowledge Houses is unique in Turkey. Certain bureaucratic institutes did not allow Knowledge Houses to be accepted from the very beginning and duly recognised. However, with the passage of time and growing positive results, it has been understood by all organisations and the general public



that Knowledge Houses are corporate and professional bodies useful for the entire community. The Municipality of Zeytinburnu is proud to say that it has supported the establishment and management of a total of 41 Knowledge Houses in Turkey. Their efforts and work are fully accepted and recognised by other stakeholder groups that has resulted in Knowledge Houses being now widespread across Turkey.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Zeytinburnu, Turkey  
Veli Koç  
Coordinator of Knowledge Houses

++90 021 2679 50 69  
++90 050 5503 12 32

[www.bilgievi.org.tr](http://www.bilgievi.org.tr)

[bilgievi@zeytinburnu.bel.tr](mailto:bilgievi@zeytinburnu.bel.tr)  
[vkoc@zeytinburnu.bel.tr](mailto:vkoc@zeytinburnu.bel.tr)

# Municipality of Kamza, Albania

## Municipal Gender-Sensitive Data Collection System



The Municipality of Kamza by its administrative status is regarded as rural district. In 1996 when social, economic, demographic and urban development took place in the country the town of Kamza was transformed into a local administrative unit. Political and demographic changes allowed a massive migration of citizens from the countryside towards major urban areas. From a population of 12, 500 at the beginning of the '90's, Kamza's population increased by 91, 000 inhabitants in 2010. Such demographic changes brought many challenges for the municipalities. They had to develop and establish many procedures related to housing and registration of businesses. The Municipality of Kamza still faced challenges that were created by the informal procedures applied, especially in the areas of employment, housing, property, land use, trade, education, health and social care. Consequently, the process of data collection was organised based on practical needs rather than having a systematic approach.

Following the adoption of the Local Development Strategy 2008 - 2015 the municipality clearly identified the need to improve the system of collecting and processing data in order to implement the strategy effectively. Also, the approval of the Gender Action Plan in 2010, urged the municipality to establish a data collec-

tion system that included gender-disaggregated data. That gave a further impetus to the municipality to move towards formalisation of data collection. A local expert was engaged who worked with the Municipality and developed a unified methodology for collecting data for each unit within the municipality, making it possible to collect data disaggregated by gender.

The process began with the development of a statistical mapping report, which identified the gaps in data collection system and further proposed intervention measures for the municipality. The statistical mapping report found that data disaggregated by gender did exist at source level. However, disaggregation was not applied during all collection and all processing stages, with some data being sometimes aggregated, or not

passed on to the municipal directorates involved in development planning. The next step involved developing gender-disaggregation criteria that could be applied to all data collection systems of all units within the municipality. IT personnel were put in charge of upgrading the internal information system. Memorandums of Understanding were then signed between the Municipality and other state institutions (such as the Health Clinic and the Education Directorate) to formalise the exchange of collected data twice a year, including gender-disaggregated

ed statistics. The expert and the municipal administration defined a methodology for gender-disaggregated data collection at the source. Likewise, the Social Services Directorate provides incentives for families receiving social welfare and for people with disabilities. While the Directorate identifies the gender of the head of family (the person who receives the welfare), family members were identified by age but not by gender. In the education sector, there is now an improved system of collecting gender-disaggregated and age group data on enrolment and attendance (twice per year).

A key step in this process was to define a list of indicators relevant for the local level, identified their source, and developed a calculation formula that would apply to a local level, for each of the main objectives of the local development strategy. That was indeed a progressive step forward for the Municipality of Kamza in its efforts to comply with national policy and strategy (including gender equality priorities), whilst at the same time making national policies relevant, applicable and measurable at a local level.

In order to make engendered statistics a sustainable enterprise, however, Kamza Municipality must ensure that structures involved in coordinating and monitoring the collection of gender-disaggregated data are properly financed, empowered and supported to fulfil these functions. Gender Equality Employ-



ees are tasked with the ensuring that gender-disaggregated data is collected and utilized by all directorates in the Municipality. However, for Gender Equality Employees to function effectively, continuous capacity development support is required and the mandate needs to be legitimised. Both require dedication of financial resources as well as political will and commitment among local government leaders.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Kamza, Albania  
Valentina Baja  
Director of Coordination &  
Development Directory

++355 47 20 01 77

baskiakamez@gmail.com  
www.kamza.gov.al

# Municipality of Krusevac, Serbia

## Youth Career Info Centre



Part of an extensive research implemented for the purpose of the creation of local youth strategy resulted in a list of problems that young people in the Municipality of Krusevac identified, among which priority was given to: a lack of information in regards to a career-path, employment and non-formal education. 84% of the interviewed youth listed that professional orientation and career guidance should be part of the regular high-school curricula, while the Youth Office of the Municipality is seen as one of the key actors in solving the identified problems.

That was the initial spark that made the Municipal Youth Office consider thinking and implementing activities regarding career-guidance and professional orientation on a more youth-friendly level while ensuring a gender aspect of it is a main point. Thus in the local youth plan 2010-2014 the top priorities were listed tackling youth unemployment and non-formal education.

The role of the strategy may be explained with the words of the Minister for Youth and Sport: "The task of the strategy, amongst other things, is to inform and support young people in planning their career depending on their personal interests and abilities and to prepare them for the dynamic changes in the labour market and lifelong learning."



The main objective was providing information to youth about career-guidance and career counselling as a part of the program "Professional Orientation and Education of Young People" that will further help them in choosing the right profession. A formal network was created by all local stakeholders whose aim was to provide career-guidance and counselling for youth: the Municipality of Krusevac and its Youth Office, the National Service for Employment of Serbia, Union of Employers of Serbia, Regional Chamber of Commerce, Centre for Professional Development, Business Incubator, Union of Independent Syndicates of Serbia and various NGOs. The next step was to make a database of high-school students who are interested in the program.

The methodology foresaw five stages in which students have the opportunity to gain a real picture of their talents, skills and abilities through workshops with their peers.

They received information about their desired career, about further education opportunities and also the situation on the labour market. An opportunity was given to young people to become familiar with occupations they are interested in and to meet experts in areas of their profession. Based on all collected information, young people are able to reach a decision as to what they really want to do. In the final phase, students learned basic skills on how to manage

their career, continue learning and adapt and change their plans in accordance with changes in their life circumstances. Other methods include one-on-one counselling, work groups, seminars and peer-to-peer approach.

The gender issue was treated as a crosscutting. Aside from offering equal opportunities to girls and boys in all activities, the program also tackled the traditionally set gender roles perceived in certain occupations. In the minds of girls and their parents there is still that classic division between male and female jobs. The organisation of the event 'Girls Day' was with the idea of breaking the concept of gender-divided occupations. It primarily targeted young girls and their parents. They were subsequently given the opportunity to meet various entrepreneurs so the girls could learn about jobs that are atypical for females.

The entire program targeted youth, between the ages of 15 and 30, as the main beneficiaries and paid special attention to vulnerable groups in accordance with the National Strategy of Youth in Serbia. Other beneficiaries were seen to be teachers, psychologists, youth workers, and coordinators of youth offices, activists, as well as the general public. The program introduced significant innovations by directly addressing students, by recognising and developing the personal abilities of each of them through taking an interactive and "hands-on" approach.

Sustainability of the program was further assured through its recognition as a good practice that granted further involvement in other youth projects. As of 2012, the Youth Office became part of the GIZ project oriented towards professional orientation for young people on a local level. In November 2014, the Youth Office was ranked in the top 15 Youth offices in Serbia, out of 157, for the continuation of the professional orientation project entirely funded by the Ministry of Youth and Sports of the Republic of Serbia.



### Contact details:

Municipality of Krusevac, Serbia  
Jasmina Palurovic  
Vice-Mayor

++381 37 414 700  
++381 37 414 753

protokol@krusevac.rs  
zamenik.gradonacelnika@krusevac.rs  
www.krusevac.rs

# Municipality of Mizia, Bulgaria

## Coordination and Partnership for Effective Local Policies and Sustainable Development



One of the main functions of modern municipal services is to achieve transparency and accountability in the municipal administration and to constantly strive toward improving the mechanism for control over its activities. Aware of its duties and responsibilities, the Municipality of Mizia had to find a mechanism to overcome the problems created by a lack of practice of participatory planning and decision-making. Almost all policies were developed without public discussion. Many strategic documents regulating various municipal policies existed only on paper, the municipal councillors often voted formally and nobody looked into their actual implementation and impact. The need for capacity building was evident. The municipal structures needed training for participatory, accountable and effective policy making.

In this context, the Project "Coordination and Partnership for Effective Policies and Sustainable Development of the Municipality of Mizia" run with financial support of the operational programme "Administrative Capacity" and co-financed by the European Social Fund, was seen as a right move. There were 4 specific objectives: 1) improving the activities for the implementation of effective policies leading to sustainable socio-economic development; 2) Introduction of



mechanisms, rules and methods for monitoring and control of implementation of policies; 3) Increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of the mechanisms of cooperation between local authorities and stakeholders; and 4) Development of planning and strategy documents through broad public consultation and implementing methods for monitoring and control.

The model for the application of the principle of partnership and coordination helped the management of the municipality in creating effective local policies with broad public support, improved governance and quality implementation. The application of mechanisms and rules for monitoring and control has increased the role of Municipal Council as the controlling body. The structures of civil society were also engaged to monitor compliance they formed with their participation and support policies.

The choice of a methodology founded at demand for effective and efficient implementation of the project, taking into account the EU's horizontal policies for good governance, transparency and respect for the views of all stakeholders, the maximum promotion of the project objectives, opportunities for replication of the given methodology ensured gender equality, equal opportunities and non-discrimination in the selection of participants for the various activities that was seen as one of the key success factors.

The target groups involved in its implementation were as follows: 40 employees and management team members of the Municipal Administration; 13 municipal councillors representing the entire Municipal Council and the local civil society structures which were active in the municipality. All parties equally participated in the drafting process of local policies and are committed to their implementation, monitoring and control. The final beneficiaries who gained directly from the results in the long term and already felt the effects of the implementation of successful municipal policies are all residents of the Municipality of Mizia.

The methodologies and rules on monitoring, control and subsequent evaluation of municipal policies, for which there was an objective risk of their successful application was seen as an innovation in the work of the Municipality.

As a result, it can be seen that the project contributed and enhanced the role and capacity of the Municipal Council. However, the success and importance of the project lies in the fact that all key stakeholders - the municipal administration, the municipal council and the civil society representatives - had the opportunity to discuss and participate in the development of municipal policies and are fully committed to their im-



plementation, monitoring and control. The sustainability of this practice is ensured with the fact that the actual implementation of the strategic and action documents is supported with the municipal budget funds.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Mizia, Bulgaria  
Marinova Ventsislava Parvanova  
Chief Expert

++359 09161 23 15

++359 09161 20 12

obsh.mz@abv.bg  
www.miziabg.com

# Municipality of Sancaktepe, Turkey

## Happy Homes



Research conducted at the local level in the Municipality of Sancaktepe, in Istanbul, showed that many problems were affecting family, community and social life in general, that have knock on effects across the rest of the country as well. A lack of transparent communication within the family, domestic violence, disrupted neighbourly relations, and ever present loneliness were some of the identified factors that were impacting upon the well-being of the women in the family, and as such women of the wider community, too. Legally, women have an equal standing to men, but in reality women have remained in the background in the social life of society. Those problems have had a negative impact on women as individuals and have brought about their loss of self-confidence and depression.

A project initiated by the Municipality of Sancaktepe was undertaken with the aim to promote women's role in society. The project named 'Sancaktepe Happy Homes', implemented by the Women's Coordination Centre, began in 2012. It received diverse institutional and organisational support, thus many organisations and official institutions contributed toward its successful realisation. Aside from the Municipality, the Ministry of Family and Social Policy, the Directorate of Religious Affairs, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry, various



district directorates, health organisations and universities also provided support.

The main objective was to create healthy and steady environments in Sancaktepe for women, whose role is seen as being that of an important pillar in society and to ensure the traditional family ties and values be passed down to future generations. That objective as such encompasses many measures, such as offering women numerous activities that could improve various aspect of their everyday life in terms of health, socio-cultural life, education, vocational

training and sport. Statistical studies were conducted in order to reveal the position of women in context of legal, social and family life. Centres specific for women were created in which educational seminars, trainings and conferences could take place. A Guidance and Counselling Unit, equipped with professionals that had been trained to work at resolving individual problems, as well as various psychological disorders that were affecting those women or members of their family, arranged interviews and counselling

for women.

In order to raise awareness of the mission of "Happy Homes", many events designed to promote the centre were organised and miscellaneous promotional materials were produced (banners, posters, introductory videos, etc. ). Although exclusively women residing on the territory of Sancaktepe were targeted via

different measures, the beneficiaries were not only women but also indirectly their immediate families, meaning the majority of the population.

Free of charge trainings and seminars were given on the issues that concern women the most and were designed to be in line with their needs and request. Shuttle vehicles were offered to those who could not come to the Centre by themselves. A kids' playroom was built for the women who wanted to participate in the courses but had no opportunity to leave their children. Women were helped to make job applications within the program of certified courses.

The impact of this practice to the community has been great, and numbers can testify to this! Today, the number of registered members of Happy Homes is over 10, 000. Under the Happy Homes, Neighbourhood Mothers and Regional Representatives 40, 000 people were visited. Under the guidance of the Minis-



try of Family and Social Policy 104 training sessions were given in the subject related to family and household that included 3, 000 people. Almost 38, 000 people took part in training and seminar programs related to topics such as education and children. From the beginning of 2012 through October 2014, a total of 3, 201 people received consultancy services through the Counselling and Consulting Unit.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Sancaktepe, Turkey  
İsmail Erdem  
Mayor

++90 216 622 33 33

ozelkalem@sancaktepe.bel.tr  
cankatar@sancaktepe.bel.tr

www.sancaktepe.bel.tr  
www.sancaktepemutluevler.com

# Municipality of Bar, Montenegro Empowered Women - Richer Society



The main problem that the majority of women from the rural areas of Bar are facing is related to unequal opportunities between women and men, that continue to hamper women's ability to lift themselves out of poverty and have more options available so as to improve their lives. The unequal opportunities are reflected in all spheres of life such as social, economic and political areas. Women in rural areas are often more exposed to poverty, a lack of social connections and power positions, leading to isolation and marginalization of women's standing. The Statistical Office of Montenegro has registered an increase of unemployment and poverty in rural areas of 5.9% compared to an increase of only 0.2% in urban areas.

During the process of reforming Montenegrin legislation, it was concluded that it was necessary to decentralise decision making processes and to create local plans and services that would be easier to address women in rural areas. This was the reason why the Municipality of Bar identified women in rural areas as the main target group that needed to be reached out to, in order to deal with the problems of poverty and exclusion. With the implementation of the Local Action Plan for Gender Equality 2010-2012, the position of women in rural areas was identified as being a key challenge.

The Municipality of Bar created a partnership with

the Business Start-up Centre (BSC) in Bar and jointly they have developed a program for the support of economic and political participation of women from rural areas of Bar. Priority was given to women from the areas of Ostros, Virpazar and Sutomore. Women from the areas of Ostros are an Albanian-speaking minority working mainly in agriculture and the issue of language made their position even more difficult. Distance of those local communities (within 50km from town of Bar) made access to information and possibilities to further education and skills improvement difficult to achieve.

The activities were focused on efforts to enhance the involvement of women and women associations connected with the local economic development of Bar by advancing gender equality and the rights of women. Interventions such as organising education activities, forums, networking and awareness raising activities for economic and political empowerment of women were done.

The crucial challenge was finding suitable and good partners for the implementation of the project. BSC Bar was recognised as a good implementing partner because the office had good knowledge and capacities to provide the most suitable answer to the problems identified. Support from international organisations, the donor society, and government institutions such as ministries and employment agencies were also needed. By promot-

ing the project and implementing good practices, results included the involvement of other stakeholders that work in the same field of expertise, such as UN Women, OEBS, UNDP, USA Embassy in Montenegro, Ministry for Women and Minority Rights, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, Employment Agency, etc.

One of the key results was the establishment of local NGO Kranjanija in Ostros, where women that initially participated in the project decided to establish their own organisation that would continue to support local citizens further.

One of the actions that led toward sustainability was the adoption of the Local Plan for Improving Gender Equality for 2015 - 2017 by the Parliament of the Municipality of Bar. This plan clearly addresses the work on improvement of support to rural women and it also envisages the budget for implementation of activities. Further sustainability is ensured with the creation of a women's network consisting of local NGOs dealing with women's rights, Investment Development Fund-programs for Women, Employment Agency and women business associations. The network enables the overcoming of the gender gap and secures more funds for financing women business initiatives.

The idea to empower women as economic agents and better their ability to access markets on competitive and equitable terms are the strategic goals.

Together with partners, the Municipality of Bar aims to integrate gender perspectives into institution activities. Such an approach improves the likelihood of having economically and politically empowered women in society.



## Contact details:

Municipality of Bar,  
Montenegro  
Milojka Glisic

++382 30 301 491  
++382 30 301 484

Milojka.glisic@bar.me  
www.bar.me



Kucura, a small village in the province of Vojvodina, offers a peaceful and relaxed way of life, but not many opportunities for the young population to spend its free time. Spontaneously an idea came about for a local association to be established, which would initiate activities that local people plan and organise, especially in the field of youth activism. As a result, the initiative “Lend Your Hand” was born.

There are three different nationalities, each practicing different religions, within the community. Therefore all actions of “Lend Your Hand” were always designed to promote multicultural and multi-faith life. While the initiative targeted and involved local youth, the beneficiaries were elderly people and the community as a whole. The concept was designed as a volunteer work known as ‘work action’. Volunteers would split into smaller groups depending on the kind of the job were directed to complete. There were two types of volunteer activities: helping elderly people in activities they were not able to do by themselves and working in public areas, such as streets or river/channel banks. Sponsors and donors allowed for adequate funds that covered the cost of all material needed, expenses for volunteers, meals, drinks and snacks, even down to T-shirts and organized transport. Besides work action, different programs were organized for the youth activists such as motivational speeches, night swimming, prayer meetings, picnics, karaoke nights, and cookery classes amongst other activities.

The results of the work done were obvious. Each year about 400 square metres of grassland were mowed, fifteen cubic meters firewood were stored,

railings and benches were painted, and the streets were cleared of trash. What has endured and had a long-term impact on society have been the initiation and increase of civil activism within the community.

One could argue that the initiative came about not as a result of great strategic planning, but due to pragmatic and honest thoughts being put into action. Although the youth were seen as agents of their development, adults and the entire community played important roles in supporting the experience of those young people – be it in the form of donations or in a form of recognition for the work done.

In the eyes of its implementers the project has been seen as a successful practice because something launched four years ago is still growing and shaping the community. Despite the challenges that have arisen from having limited funds and volunteers, the project has encouraged many people to put ideas forth for the betterment of a common future and to strengthen the community spirit.

#### Contact details:

Municipality of Vrbas, Serbia  
Stevan Samočeta,  
President of NGO KUM

++381 62 152 8864

kumkucura@email.com  
www.kumkucura.wix.com/official

The Academy Of Women is seen as a “governance and participation” model project and its main goal is to increase the presence of women in public life and administrative structures. The slogan “Knowledge is Power, Knowledgeable Women are Powerful”, reveals the main reasons for establishment of such an Academy. It has a multi-faceted approach, meaning many educational programs were arranged to increase the existing knowledge, skills and potentials of women to a higher level.

The Academy Of Women developed a methodology that works on developing and increasing the capacity of women in every respect. When considering that women’s ability to have a ‘voice’ is directly proportional to their capacity, the method used has resulted in success. With women being empowered in terms of politics, representation, experience, professionally and technically, they will be more effective in society, a point that has emerged as a self-confirming idea.

The project was designed to target women who wish to participate in both, political or civilian society sector. Criteria such as level of education, social status, marital status and age were ignored since the logic behind was that housewives have a right to get involved in politics due to the ability of each woman to produce different solutions from her own perspective. Many different national and local institutions and individuals, from the academic community to politics, sociologists to celebrities, were brought together to work on the success of the project.

Thanks to very good risk analysis, the trainers and teaching organizations have not faced any serious

issues. A survey conducted among the participants while the project was carried out was good grounds for conducting impact analysis on a later stage. More than 95% of the responses to these questions were positive, thus the effect of the project was perceived as positive. Based on the work of the Women’s Academy, in general, it was made possible a systematic increase in the capacity, knowledge and skills women need.

The Women Academy Project was carried out in a district where the population is 752, 000, with the last census showing that 49% are women. Therefore, a systematic project, which begins and ends at a certain period, with the same structure as the given one can be applied each year. The data was obtained at the end of 2014 and has been offset against training programs in 2015. The project was not limited by any concrete resource such as time, location, finance and content. That ensures a certain flexibility and offers greater attractiveness in the eyes of the prospective participants. Therefore the system which has been established is of a structure which can easily be transferred and used by many other interested parties.

#### Contact details:

Municipality of Bağcılar, Turkey  
Kenan Gültürk  
Municipal Vice President

++90 212 410 06 00

ozcancaymaz@gmail.com  
www.bagcilar.bel.tr

# City of Skopje, Republic of Macedonia

## Women's Rights Nights



Women's Rights Nights (WRN) is a unique multi-day event offering the opportunity for Skopje's citizens to learn about the real meaning of International Women's Day (IWD), to see women's rights and gender equality from a new angle and to reflect about these issues in a more complex manner.

The event promotes the work of film directors working in the area of gender equality and of young people studying gender and audio-visual arts at university institutes in Skopje. Each event focuses on a specific theme (e. g. gender and youth, social and political rights of women) and encompasses related film screenings, debates and side-events featuring young people's perceptions on gender issues.

Prior to WRN, the celebrations of IWD in Skopje did not sufficiently reflect the significance of the day for women's empowerment and gender equality contributing to the progressive fading of these issues away from the celebrations as well as the public and media discourse.

WRN was introduced with the objective to offer a cultural alternative to these types of IWD celebrations, to bring back the status of women's rights to discussions surrounding IWD and to encourage joint reflec-

tions of women and men, especially of young people in Skopje regarding gender equality achievements and challenges.

All activities of WRN are aimed at:

- Raising public awareness of the status of women's rights and gender equality;
- Initiating debates on women's rights and gender equality using arts and culture;
- Encouraging the creative expression of young people regarding women's rights and gender equality;
- Supporting youth activism to further the advancement of the status of women and gender equality in Skopje.

WRN exists as a result of a collaboration between the City of Skopje, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN Women) Skopje office, the Institute for Gender Studies at the Faculty of Philosophy at "St. Cyril and Methodius University" and the University of Audio-visual Arts ESRA, Skopje.

Although it started as an initiative of UN Women, the Institute for Gender Studies and ESRA, the involvement and patronage of the City of Skopje since 2013 has greatly contributed to the WRN in becoming the main cultural event in the City of Skopje on IWD and a fundamental part of the City of Skopje Local Strategy on Gender Equality.



The impact of WRN has been widespread. The event has:

- Increased the public and media interest on women's rights and gender equality issues;
- Enhanced the presence of gender equality issues in media discourse surrounding IWD;
- Opened discussions on women's rights and gender equality between ordinary citizens, students of gender studies, students of audio-visual arts, high-level officials and experts;
- Introduced the opportunity for young people to creatively express their views on the status on women's rights and gender equality;
- Inspired new initiatives from individuals, groups and organizations on the occasion of the IWD
- Changed the tradition from IWD celebrations, which put gender equality achievements and challenges in the corner, to IWD celebrations that brought these issues to its core.

To date the WRN has seen five events organized annually between 2010 and 2014. Starting from an average number of between eighty and ninety in 2010, the WRN attendance rates have risen up to 250 - 270 at the closing events in 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014. The



progressive increase in attendance rates has not only reaffirmed the need of the citizens of Skopje to engage with alternative cultural platforms for observing IWD, but it has also signaled a wider recognition for the quality of the WRN program.

### Contact details:

City of Skopje, Republic of Macedonia  
Eleonora Pancevska Nikolovska  
Head of Unit for Social, Child and  
Health Protection

++389 2 32 97 204  
++389 2 32 97 321

gradonacalnik@skopje.gov.mk  
eleonoran@skopje.gov.mk  
www.skopje.gov.mk

# Municipality of Burgas, Bulgaria Youth Entrepreneurial Exchange



In Burgas, Bulgaria as well as in other smaller places in Europe, young people are becoming more and more socially isolated and inactive, a phenomena that somehow is linked to the modern culture of increasing individualism. The modern technologies of communication connect young individuals no longer to the local surrounding but rather to a global hub. As such their needs have changed and they have distanced themselves from their local situation and habitat.

It is obvious, then, of the need for local authorities, private organisations as well as NGOs to modernize their business practices. The reasons for such changes are not only to do with being able to communicate and inform citizens of what's going on, but also to remain up-to-date and to be able to relate to the current social problems cities are facing. Changes also require the assistance of active citizens, to assist in becoming more aware, more understanding and more responsive.

For these reasons, the Municipality of Burgas created an initiative that has set out to promote the creation of the best entrepreneurial ideas and plans. The Youth Entrepreneurial Exchange was held for the first time in Burgas and gave young people an opportunity to present and develop their business ideas and find potential investors and partners that would willingly finance their development.



The participants in the initiative were youth from 14 to 24 years of age. Young people had the chance to develop their ideas with the help of business incubator and further submit them to an appointed jury, which had the task of assessing them. The best ideas and business plans that could make a real contribution to sustainable economic development in the community were awarded.

The first step toward realisation of the idea was to popularize the Exchange. A Public Relations plan including a campaign was developed in order to raise awareness of the positive benefits for young people to participate in the initiative. An invitation was sent to all high schools and universities in the city of Burgas seeking the support of lecturers and teachers in motivating students to participate in the initiative.

A research conducted on different practices dealing with youth development and young entrepreneurship and volunteering which showed that approximately 40% of youth volunteers said that they had become involved simply because they were approached by an organisation. 21% get involved because people in school asked them to, whilst 16.5% of the volunteers reported that they became involved because people they knew asked them, particularly friends and family. The results encouraged the Municipality to develop a marketing campaign targeting schools, parent-school associa-

tions and social media groups of interests. The turnout was high with more than 300 young people from the municipality and the region, who were further provided with three distinct types of support, specifically tailored to their needs – technical support, mentoring and technical training.

For the reason of supporting of the initiative, a partnership was created among the Municipality, the Business Incubator and Regional Administration, the International University College, and American International Business Centre in Burgas. The initiative was made compatible with municipal and educational institutions politics for encouraging active citizenship of young people and establishing effective mechanisms to reflect the views of the younger generation in making important political and social decisions at a municipal level. Further in the processes, the implementation was monitored and the outcome of the initiative measured. Constant work was done in the direction of motivating young people to participate in other initiatives as well.

The main message received from the Youth Entrepreneurial Exchange experience was the development of highly creative collaborations between business, administration and youth. Uniting forces and learning from each other is one of the main positive lessons learnt. The initiative contributed in the increased capacity of the participants and encouraged



them to take bolder and braver steps toward their goals. The ability of young minds to put any situation in a different perspective allowed the swift creation of innovative business case solutions and city projects. The practice is innovative and unique, as it has taught the youth to reinvent the somehow disrupted link and logic of learning, developing, improving, creating and achieving.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Burgas, Bulgaria  
Atanaska Nikolova  
Deputy Mayor

++359 56 840915-19  
++359 56 907272

obshtina@burgas.bg  
a.nikolova@burgas.bg

# Municipality of Pirot, Serbia Local Action Plan for Economic Empowerment of Roma Women



A survey conducted in March 2012 in the Municipality of Pirot within the sample of 200 members of the Roma population, was arranged with the purpose to obtain data on the Roma population and their working activities at the local level. The aim was to determine the economic position of women in the Municipality of Pirot in order to open up the possibility of directing and improving their potential. The survey showed that the Roma population is much younger than the national average. The largest number of women involved in the survey was married (87.5%), while the average age of marriage was eighteen years of age, and the majority have two children (61.7%).

The education of Roma women, as the survey showed, was well under national average and in the Municipality of Pirot was considered to be very low with 48.2% of the respondents having had only primary school education, and 20.6% were with no formal education at all. The lack of educational profiles of Roma women reflects the low number of employed Roma women (only 17% earn a living). According to the results, the largest number of Roma women is housewives who take care of the home and

children (45.3%). From the small percentage of those who work, many are not official employed, while 18.8% work in agriculture for themselves or for others.

In addition to this the Pirot district is characterised by unfavourable indicators of the labour market: the unemployment rate is much higher (35.3%) than the national average (19.21%). Under such unfavourable conditions in the labour market, women are in a less favourable position compared to men.

Based on the situation analysis a conclusion was brought about that for the economic empowerment of Roma women specific measures should be arranged. Those measures should work in the direction of the improvement of education and qualifications of Roma women, active participation in job searches to assist in their employability. The method of achieving the objectives was through information, education, and involvement in the program of affirmative measures of the National Employment Service.

A local action plan was prepared based on the excellent cooperation and communication between the Municipality and the Roma community. The local action plan laid out specific policy proposals and



planning, including institutional and policy structures that a local government would use to develop and implement the strategy for economic empowerment of Roma women.

Activities such as training and preparing for interviews and workshops for improving craft and trade (marketing and management) skills were organised by the NGO sector. With the support of the National Employment Service a workshop was organised with a view to providing information on how to apply for a job, self-employment programs, and methods for determining the working ability. Specialised training in the field of collection of secondary raw materials and agricultural cooperative were also offered, and the last session even included the aspect of applying for IPA funds.

The main obstacles were the lack of motivation of Roma women, their poor level of education and their financial and decision-making dependence that were overcome by organization of door-to-door visits, as well as awareness raising, educational and promotional activities.

The strong cooperation between the local government, NGOs and other institutions acting as donors, which has been achieved through years of involvement and dealing with important issues in the field of gender equality is seen as an example of good practice. The implementation of the local action plan is in the hands of the Municipality in cooperation with the local NGOs and other relevant actors working in this field.



## Contact details:

Municipality of Pirot, Serbia  
Boban Nikolic  
Municipal Council Member

++381 64 8979 209  
++381 10 305 528

kabinet@pirot.rs  
boban.nikolic@pirot.rs

# Municipality of Mojkovac, Montenegro

## Economic Empowerment of Women



One can argue that traditionally in Montenegro, women never had equal opportunities compared to men, to contribute to the national, political, economic, social and cultural development, and consequently to benefit from these opportunities. Despite the fact that more women are highly qualified and their participation in the labour market increases day-by-day, positions in politics and business, particularly at the highest level are male-dominated. The right of women to equal treatment is above all a fundamental human right. Discrimination is recognised as politically unacceptable, economically ungrateful and legally prohibited. The development of a local action plan for achieving gender equality in the Municipality of Mojkovac, for a period 2013-2015 (hereinafter LAPRR), was seen as a strategic document for the implementation of gender equality. It is based on international and domestic legal sources that deal with gender equality.

Development of policy and legislation in recent years has created a good ground for addressing these problems. Now it is important to ensure the implementation of these laws and policies, but also to com-

bat the social-economic problems in the municipality, such as high unemployment rates (out of which 44% are women), lack of business opportunities and consequently high migration rates.

For that reason an initiative was begun to give unemployed women, or women who already work in some sort of business, an opportunity to expand their knowledge and upgrade their skills in the area of their profession, as well as to provide help in finding sources of financial support and establishing business contacts in related or connected jobs.

The project "Economic Empowerment of Women" was implemented by the UNDP and the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights from 2011 to 2014 within the wider program funded by EU - the Gender Programme IPA 2010. One specific part of the Gender Program was implemented in Mojkovac. It was designed to address the obstacles related to economic opportunities for women on different levels (societal, personal and at institutional/systemic level). The program activities were implemented in three phases: 1) preparatory phase - focused on assessing the potentials, barriers and possibilities for development of women entrepreneurship; 2) training and mentorship phase - included development



and implementation of detailed and tailor-made specialized training programs for entrepreneurial skills as well as individual in-depth interviews, individual consultations and coaching 3) sustainability phase - worked on developing local capacity for support in entrepreneurship, development of a web-portal, and organization of matchmaking events to present business ideas of women to potential investors. During this process, 10 start-up business plans were financially supported.

The result achieved not only improved entrepreneurship skills and increased employment but also developed the capacities and services that local authorities could offer to women entrepreneurs. The multi-level impact could be seen in the improving personal skills, by developing and utilisation of local potentials and by achieving gender equality policies. The program directly met the goals of both, the national and local action plans for gender equality.

The cooperation with local NGOs in finding, nurturing and training the women was crucial and extremely important to achieving success. The role models created in the process will continue to be good examples for other potential female entrepreneurs and for the local authorities in keeping up the good development. A very important step is that the Municipality of Mojkovac developed its own measures in order to promote female entrepreneurship and also



developed strong cooperation with the local NGOs working within this field. The female entrepreneurs are now vital role models in their local communities and other women who were reluctant to participate when the project started are now waiting to participate in the next round. The web portal developed by the pro-

gram ([www.zenski-biznis.com](http://www.zenski-biznis.com)) should be further developed and will be crucial in order to retain the network, the inspiration and the possible marketing for female entrepreneurs.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Mojkovac, Montenegro  
Maja Ikervari  
Coordinator

++382 50 470 272  
++382 50 470 288

[opstinamojkovac@t-com.me](mailto:opstinamojkovac@t-com.me)  
[administratormo@t-com.me](mailto:administratormo@t-com.me)

[www.mojkovac.me](http://www.mojkovac.me)

# Municipality of Prijepolje, Serbia

## Women on the Political Scene in the Local Community



The Municipality of Prijepolje, a multi-ethnic community, is located in southwestern Serbia. It belongs to the group of 40 less developed municipalities in Serbia, with the unemployment rate at around 50%. Women make up around 50% of population. The mainly patriarchal environment has created a stereotypical gender role – with woman being mainly housewives. Most of them are unemployed and economically dependent on their husbands or parents. About 70% of the women reported losing their jobs in the 1990s, the turbulent years for many of the Balkan states. That period was one of the worst for women in the region – unemployed and with no hope of finding a job, they withdrew into houses and accepted inflicted stereotypes. Consequently their participation in social life was no more part of their reality.



Although there have been some changes in recent years (in 2009 the Gender Equality Law was adopted, committed to raising female representation to 30%), still they are underrepresented and their presence in politics is not sufficiently valued. Those women who are employed mostly work in low paid positions – mainly positions in administration, despite some having a degree. Prijepolje has 30 local communities and each has a council that

consists of 7 to 15 members who participate in the work the local communities do by resolving everyday problems of its citizens. As such, from at least 210 people, members of the councils, there was not a single woman. A woman had never been in a decision-making position at the higher levels of local government.

In 2013, with support from the Embassy of Finland, the non-governmental organization 'Women's Forum Prijepolje' in cooperation with the Municipality, started with implementation of the project "Women on Political Scene in the Local Community" with main aim of sensitizing women about political participation and increasing their numbers within decision-making positions. The activities were aimed at four different directions: project presentation and media promotion, organisation of seminars on topics of political participation, meeting with the local community and representatives of local governments and advocacy, and study visits in order to share experiences and good practices.

The main challenges were breaking stereotypes created about women and showing to women and their family members that women can be as equally successful as men in politics. Using a personal approach seems to be a good one – meetings were organized with women to discuss their needs, concerns and challenges, while at the same time providing support to their initiatives.

These efforts resulted by imposing certain changes in the local policies and structures. The proposed amendment to change the statute of local community

councils that would allow, through the quota system, to include 30% of the under-represented sex was accepted by the municipal government. Although a few months later the government changed the rules on election and disabled the quota system, the Women's Forum of Prijepolje continued to work on the same initiative. More women became encouraged and prepared for work in politics, and on the other hand the awareness on the gender equality was raised. The number of women at the higher level in local government has increased. The Head of the Municipality Administration is a woman. Of the five departments, women are managers of two of them: the Department for Local Economic Development and Department of Urban Planning. In the Committees of the Municipal Assembly, from a total of 111 members, thirty-three are women (29.73%). Out of 15 committees, women are presidents of 4. After the elections for members of local community councils, held in June 2014, there are now 10 female members in councils. One of them is chosen for vice-president of the council.

The Local Authority and Gender Equality Committee are keeping gender equality issues current. Also, the local media is committed to ensure visibility when



it comes to promotion of this issue. The impact of the project contributed by an increased number of women interested in politics who started to implement actions to achieve their rights, as in this case, to enter the council of local community, which is one of the most important components for the sustainability of the project.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Prijepolje, Serbia  
Mileva Malesic  
Director of the "Women's Forum Prijepolje" Association

++381 33 714 147  
++381 64 19 33 962

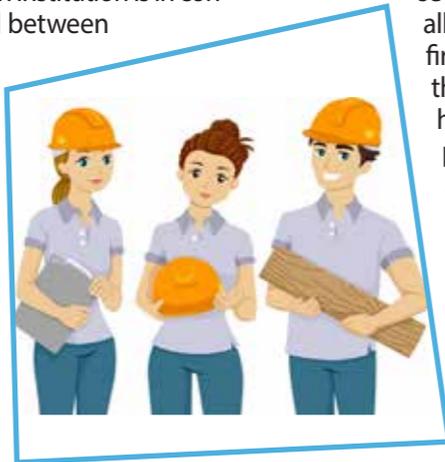
televizijaforum@gmail.com  
www.forumtv.rs

# Municipality of Silistra, Bulgaria Competition Session for Youth Initiatives



Statistics and experience serve as a constant reminder that in the life of many children and young people among the most important problems are violence, aggression, harassment, insufficient communication skills, and low emotional intelligence. Such occurrences have a significant impact on the well-being of the young person, their family and wider community as well. The Municipality of Silistra's department "Education and Youth Activities", as an institution is in constant contact with children aged between twelve and eighteen years of age and it has observed low activity and interest in this age group in social activities related to greater participation in public life or directed towards the development of the community to which they belong.

The topic of young people and their successful professional, social and personal realisation action is a priority for any society that would like to build on the belief in the potential of all young people and the commitment to help each of them realise that potential. That is the very case with Municipal Administration of Silistra whose important priority is to meet the needs and interests of young people. Through its structures, the municipality aims to include children and young people of Silistra in various activities and events and to encourage greater civic engagement.



The Municipality had two calls for financing projects developed by young people that would have a positive impact on their development. The aim with those calls was to support development of initiative, enterprise, creativity, volunteerism and civic activism, as well as to communicate the message and idea of the project to the widest possible range of individuals.

The target groups were students aged between seven and nineteen years of age who actually became the users of the practice. The first call was supporting action related to the prevention of violence, aggression, harassment and unlawful behaviour; prevention of the use of psychoactive substances; prevention of human trafficking; promotion of road safety; and improving the sexual health and education of adolescents. The second call was in tackling different topics such as environmental protection and formation of ecological culture, democratic values and culture, and promotion of creativity, young talents and cultural events.

Financing of youth initiatives and delegating more rights to young people makes the community a more attractive place for these young people. They can freely express themselves and their success comes through realising their individual potential. Those small projects enriched life in the municipality with new initiatives; the environment in which young people live was aestheticized, their free time was di-

versified and rationalised. They set an alternative against the influence of mediocre culture for many children and young people.

The practice was extremely successful and created great interest after its promotion, so the circle of participants was expanded. More young people have already expressed their interest to participate in a new competition. What the participants shared about their achievements brings one to the opinion that this is the most appropriate and effective form of action. It offers young people the opportunity to show creativity, energy and activity in the planning, organisation and implementation of an action. Through the work done their knowledge and skills have been enhanced, some personal qualities have been developed, thus measuring a wider impact on the young individuals.

The call allowed young people to initiate, develop and implement projects themselves, which is one of the elements that contributes to the sustainability of the practice. Some informal groups, thanks to this initiative, became official clubs and they have continued with their activities under the initial developed project "No to drugs . . . with chess". Urbanized areas created comfort and beauty, implying constant engagement



of young people for their protection. Concerts, performed during the project "The Feeling of the Dance" enabled many child dancers to express themselves on stage, and this has motivated them to continue with ballet rehearsals. Extending the fields of application, by bringing new topics to the attention of young people from both the city and the region, can successfully continue the advancement of the good practice.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Silistra, Bulgaria  
Denka Mihailova  
Deputy Mayor

++359 86 816 214

mihailova\_d@abv.bg  
mk.silisra@mail.bg  
www.silistra.bg

# Municipality of Pendik, Turkey Career Development and Guidance Centre



Internal migration has had a great impact on Turkey's population dynamics for decades. Internal migrants usually come from a socio-economic disadvantaged background and are socially excluded, especially in urban settings. In comparison to the national average, the education level and vocational qualifications of these young people among migrants is low. Pendik is a district of Istanbul and is considered to be a high productive area, also affected by the internal migration and its population has doubled since the 1990's.

As a local policy maker the Municipality of Pendik looked at ways of tackling unemployment levels and social exclusion issues arising from lack of qualifications, training and mentoring within its five year strategic plan. For that purpose a project was developed named "Pendik Career Development and Guidance Center" and submitted to Istanbul Regional Development Agency for funding. The objective was to increase young people's participation in society and work life as empowered individuals and to work on the continual improving of their vocational and personal skills and competences. The project envisaged several activities to run parallel with each other, these being:



- Conducting vocational guidance and mentoring services for the transition from school/university life to working life;
- Increasing the employment rate by improving the vocational knowledge and skills of young people;
- Enhancing both the entrepreneurship and innovation capacity of young people; and
- Providing rehabilitation services and increasing education, sports, culture and other social services for young people.

The target group consisted of 300 young people between the ages of eighteen and thirty and their sixty trainers. Special attention was paid to disadvantaged young people in schools and their teachers, the selection of whom was made with the support of the Pendik District Governorship.

The methodology involved non-formal education/training, and participation of young people in planning and implementation of activities. Prior to training activities, guidance services and a SWOT analysis of participants was conducted to determine their needs and skills. Based on the data, tailor-made vocational training was provided. After the training sessions, the project brought together the labour needs of businesses and potential employees. These studies implemented prior and after the training sessions increased the impact of training sessions and guidance services.

The project resulted in a significant impact on the participants: Whilst achieving objectives such as the balance between the needs and the offer of the labour market and increased knowledge skills and competences, thirty participants from the entrepreneurship trainings applied for funding in order to set-up their businesses from the government grant support program. The average ratio for benefitting from government support is 5%. However in this case this ratio was doubled. The success rate rose because of the involvement of professional trainers and support in the activities.



Pendik Municipality is a local policy maker and local administration, whose goal is to improve the happiness and wellbeing of its citizen. The project was created with this aim being clear. In this context, sustainability of this project is an important element and training will continue as free of charge service. Further financial sustainability is ensured by the Municipality of Pendik and contributions in kind from other partners. Involving other stakeholder groups and partners, especially from the business community, ensures institutional and political sustainability as they enjoy benefits from employing skilled workers.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Pendik, Turkey

++90 216 585 11 66

absasmaz@pendik.bel.tr  
a.bahadirsasmaz@gmail.com

www.pendik.bel.tr

# Municipality of Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria

## Consultative Youth Council



Leading an active youth policy aims to keep young people away from making wrong choices and taking wrong directions in their lives and to help them create a legitimate channel for communication and mediation between them, the local authorities and the municipal councillors for the policy and activities of the municipality.

In order for the social activity of young people to be increased and for them to become part of the process of taking decisions on matters which concern them it is necessary that they are encouraged to participate in civil society and to become engaged in the public life of the municipality while encouraging their mobility, cooperation, creativity, entrepreneurship and exchange of informal experience. The dialogue with young people at national, regional, district and local levels on matters affecting them is under process of structuring, following the established European models of representation through national, regional and local youth councils.

Led by the described objectives and in order to tackle the challenges and obstacles that concern the youth in their transition from childhood to adulthood, the Municipal Council of Dimitrovgrad adopted the "Municipal Strategy for Youth 2013-2017". The Youth

Strategy is based on the National Strategy for Youth Policy and other worldwide-recognised programs on youth policy. In June 2013 a Consultative Youth Council to the Mayor of Dimitrovgrad (CYC) was founded with the task of structuring, organising and establishing the inter-institutional relations between the local authority and youth society. The Youth Council functions as a municipal consultative body to the Municipality of Dimitrovgrad on issues of local youth policy.

According to this Strategy "the main idea in the existing national policies is the young people to be the source of ideas and actions and the state authorities to be their coordinating body. The support of the local authorities is a contribution to the social integration of the youth."

To date a great many tasks have been performed by the CYC, in the field of assistance to developing programmes connected to youth activities; analysing the state of the determinate factors and youth environment; funding youth projects; participating in voluntary and other campaigns; networking with similar organisations and institutions; and promoting the activity of CYC to the public.

One of the most innovative methods and approaches in the work of the CYC was in the administration of the programme "Dimitrovgrad of the Youth" i. e. examination, evaluation, approval and monitoring of the submitted youth projects under the programme

was performed by an expert commission, nominated from the members of CYC. The projects were developed and implemented entirely by children and young people. In this case the municipal administration was performing only the role of a coordinating, consulting and supporting body.

The success lay in the cooperation between the youth and the local authority through enabling the opportunity for young people to create and perform



campaigns and initiatives, and expressing their personal engagement through voluntary activities, to encourage their initiative, entrepreneurship and creativity. The work of CYC is seen as a foundation that will need further advancement and constant upgrade in order to achieve a better outcomes and a brighter future for the youth on local level.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Dimitrovgrad, Bulgaria  
Veneta Stoimenova  
Secretary

+359 391 68 209  
+359 885 290 290

obshina@dimitrovgrad.bg  
sekretar@dimitrovgrad.bg

[www.dimitrovgrad.bg](http://www.dimitrovgrad.bg)

# Municipality of Trebnje, Slovenia

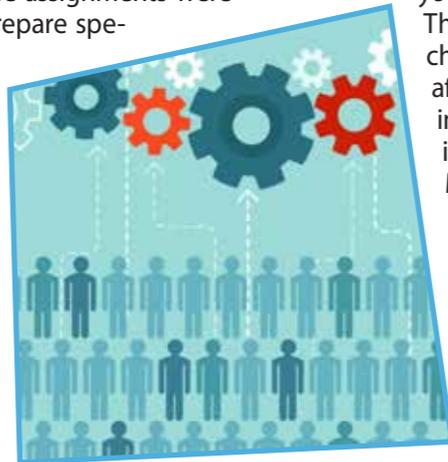
## Youth and Municipality

### Working Together on Increasing Youth Participation



Certain issues concerning youth were not addressed in Trebnje, a small Slovenian municipality, to the degree they should have been, due in part to a reduction of personnel in the Municipality. The local government, both municipal administration and the Mayor were aware that the problems and issues concerning youth would not disappear. At the beginning of 2014 a youth advisor was employed through the public work program, whose assignments were to advance youth programs, prepare special activities for improving the position of youth in the municipality and to include youth in local government affairs as much as possible and to interest them in taking part at local elections and actively participating in society.

A significant problem of the Municipality was the migration of youth towards the cities, for the reasons of high school or university education. Many of them remain in the towns where they study. By addressing this problem the idea was to stop the “brain drain” to bigger municipalities in Slovenia, by providing environments where young people will feel welcomed, would be listened to and taken care of. The second problem observed was the decline in interest of young people taking an active part in community life or of participating actively in society. Therefore, it became



difficult to prepare any local documents that regulate the rights and needs of young population in a situation where there was no involvement or cooperation from the youth.

The primary action was to activate the interest and encourage active citizenship among youth. After a few months and a few informal meetings between municipal administration employees and representatives of youth organisations progress was made. This resulted with youth organisations changing their perception and getting affirmations that the municipality is willing to listen to the youth, to their opinions, wishes, plans for activities, etc. The Municipality also became pro-active in responding to the requests.

Once this co-operation was established, the further agenda was requested in developing a two-year programme on youth activities. The programme defined the basic standpoints for the development of the youth sector; it included the contents and areas of measure that have to be taken in order to achieve progress and it also defines the ways these measures were going to be financed. The public institutes of the municipality (schools, health centre, police department, employment service and centre for education and culture) were also included in the preparation of this program. Once the programme had been developed, the youth had an overview of all measures and activities that

were or would be taken and became more aware that the key to success is in cooperation and in active participation. The programme also defined the way the execution of the programme would be tracked and evaluated. After this came the work on drafting the Youth Strategy. Aside from giving guidelines about further development, the Municipal administration employees will put an emphasis on two wider areas - to ensure more and equal opportunities for young people in the job market, and to encourage young people to actively participate in society.

The Youth Council of Trebnje (or TREMS) despite having existed for several years, since the beginning of 2014, has been more active in local society and politics. Representatives of TREMS are also representatives of the Commission on Youth Questions, which is a working body of the Municipal Council. Their opinions, suggestions and decisions have to be considered by the Council. With the election in October 2014, a representative of TREMS was elected as a member to the Municipal Council. So now the youth has their own representative in the Municipal Council also.

This good practice has helped in building relationships between the local youth actors and municipal administration. It has also assisted in better un-

derstanding the actual needs and views of youth. On the other hand, the youth has a better understanding of the processes and abilities of the municipality. All youth organisations have become far more active. The municipal administration became aware of the fact, that the youth (represented by the youth organisations) need support (from pointing them in the right direction, helping with ideas and solutions to interpretation of laws and decrees etc.) before it can function on its own. The circumstances from Trebnje’s experience were lessons to both parties that it is easier and more efficient to work together.



#### Contact details:

Municipality of Trebnje, Slovenia  
Mateja Zupančič

++386 73 48 11 00  
++386 73 48 11 43

obcina.trebnje@trebnje.si  
mateja.zupancic@trebnje.si

www.trebnje.si

# Municipality of Kochani, Republic of Macedonia

## Men and Women Can Do It!



Many laws and other strategy documents have been passed guaranteeing equality between men and women – in principle. Yet women are still under-represented in politics, and they lack equal access to jobs and are far more involved in childcare than men. Their roles in society are not equal. Through an analysis on the topic of gender equality, the Municipality of Kochani has only confirmed that out-dated gender roles in regards to professions is still very much present in the municipality.

With an aim to promote gender equality across all of the community, the Municipality of Kochani developed a Local Action Plan for Equal Opportunities. The idea behind this document was to raise awareness among citizens on the situation with gender issues. The Municipality of Kochani stands for the gender equality in a very original way – and decided to use sport in order to combat the gender roles and stereotypes.

Kochani has had a long tradition of playing male football, but Kochani has never before heard of female football. It was simply considered that women couldn't play as well as men. In order to show this to be untrue, the municipality created two female football clubs (FFC "Kochani" and FFC "Mladost Idnina S") and they started to work actively. With adequate support they began to show results, so at the end of the championship of the 2012/13



year, the team of FFC "Kochani" was in first place, and FFC "Mladost idnina S" in the second place.

At the beginning, a media campaign was made highlighting and supporting female football as equal opportunity endeavour. Then a strategy was created to help female football. Suddenly, the idea about the "most popular male sport" attracted girls and soon gender prejudice began to crumble. Initially only a modest number of girls were interested in the sport –

but numbers began to grow and grow. The clubs were active not only in the field of sport. An excellent cooperation with NGO's and non-profit organisations (such as the Francophone Society in Skopje), took both clubs on friendly international tournaments. Football club "Kochani" in the 2013/14 year won the Award of the Municipality of Kochani for significant achievements.

With the achievement and excellent results, both clubs have contributed to the actualisation of the situation for equal gender opportunities. The development in the community started to change the citizens' awareness and certainly the gender barrier started slowly disappearing.

The Council of the Municipality of Kochani, during a meeting in December 2013, adopted the Local Action Plan for Equal Opportunities for the period 2014-15 year. This plan is guided by the principle of gender equality and equal human rights guaranteed by the Constitution. The plan is set according to the specif-

ics and features of the municipality in terms of demographics, culture and social aspects. In this plan, gender equality is not treated as an issue that should only include women, but as a need to create equal opportunities for men and women. The Local Action Plan for Equal Opportunities foresees co-funding of female football in Kochani, as successful representation of the municipality and the state.

The main output of this action is that the local community has accepted female football as an equal among other sports and new opportunity for youth. Female football nowadays creates great interest in



the local community. Although there are no great financial benefits in this case, the impact created in gender equality in the community is huge.

Equal opportunities for men and women means promoting the principle of introducing equal participation of women and men in all areas of the public and private sector (including sport, as in this good practice), equal treatment in the exercise of all rights in the development of their individual potential, through which they contribute to social and economic development of their community.

ing sport, as in this good practice), equal treatment in the exercise of all rights in the development of their individual potential, through which they contribute to social and economic development of their community.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Kochani, Republic of Macedonia  
Elena Dimitrovska  
Assistant Head of Department  
for Planning and Development

++389 33 274 001  
++389 70 249 370

info@kocani.gov.mk  
elena.dimitrovska@kocani.gov.mk

www.kocani.gov.mk

# Municipality of Tesanj, Bosnia and Herzegovina

## Youth Business Ideas



The high unemployment rate in Bosnia and Herzegovina, especially among young people, is reflected on the level of small local communities. In the Municipality of Tesanj in 2013, 8, 160 people were registered as unemployed, of which 46% were people between the ages of 15 to 35. Therefore the Municipality has started to decisively deal with the unemployment issue, and is aiming to improve the employability and increase the self-esteem of vulnerable young people. Searching for a solution to lower the unemployment rate, the Municipality has directed its activities towards approaching experienced entrepreneurs as well as young people who already run or had business plans and wanted to start their own businesses. From these discussions with young businessmen the Municipality found out what are the issues and difficulties while starting the business.

As a measure to lower the unemployment rate and as well to support young potential businessmen, the Municipality started a project called "Best Youth Business Ideas", that became part of the "Youth Strategy" in 2010. After the project proved to be useful and sustainable it was incorporated into the Municipal Development Strategy 2013-2018. The Municipality continues to support young entrepreneurs by designing sets of activ-

ities, and by doing so achieving the municipal strategic objectives.

The idea of the project "Best Youth Business Ideas" was to finance business ideas of young people between the ages of fifteen to thirty-five, who were selected through a public call. The Association of Entrepreneurs, being the most competent and appropriate body, was invited to make the evaluation of the submitted business plans. Prior to the submission of their business plans, the young entrepreneurs were given examples of prepared business plans as well training on how to prepare a business plan. Announcements on local media and on the municipal web sites, as well as leaflets and posters were made in order to publicise the call for submissions and give relevant information about it. This is considered as the first project providing a complete 'set' of support to young entrepreneurs that was fully and successfully implemented by a local authority in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The selected best business plans received financial assistance to cover the cost of business registration, employee's insurance costs in the first year of operations, and the cost of renting space in the first three years of operation. After signing the contract with the young entrepreneurs, the Municipality and the Association of Entrepreneurs monitored the work of these young entrepreneurs through monthly reports, and



both organisations remained at the disposal of the young entrepreneurs for any additional support, if required, to help their business succeed and become competitive on the market.

Within four years of its implementation the project resulted in 25 new businesses being established and 46 young people being employed. Aside from the main achievement, 10 young people were employed part time, and cooperation was established with over 30 companies.

The Municipality of Tesanj is the first municipality in Bosnia and Herzegovina that started and implemented a project that directly contributed to lowering the unemployment rate by boosting creativity, motivation and self-confidence of young people. The success of the project was reported across both regional and state media, which caused a great deal of interest from other organisations. With a memorandum of cooperation in place, cooperation between other partners and organisations willing to replicate the project in other parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina began and today the Municipality is providing consultative support for the implementation of similar projects in different municipalities across Bosnia and Herzegovina.

What's more, it's evident that all businesses that were initiated and set-up are still functioning. The



number of interested applicants is growing each year. In 2014 there were 22 project proposals, out of which 10 were awarded and they are now in the implementation phase.

Cooperation with young people was also a good experience for the Municipality. It opened new ideas and fields of cooperation, and the youth now intensively show greater initiative and interest to get involved in different activities of community life.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Tesanj,  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Mirnes Dedukic  
Human Resources Officer

++387 32 650 022  
++387 32 650 220

mirnes.dedukic@opcina-tesanj.ba  
www.opcina-tesanj.ba

# Forum "Dialogue with Young People – a Guarantee for Change"

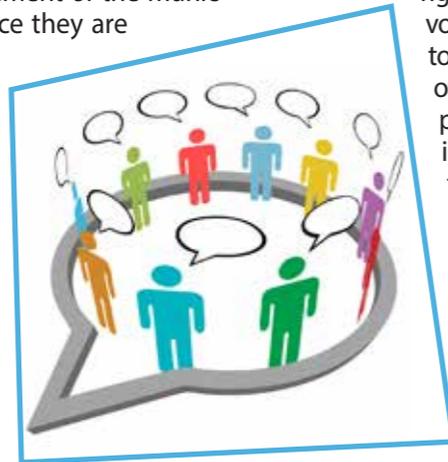


A dialogue between young people and their communities is a process that has to be established and maintained to create positive change in the community and improve service delivery and outcomes for young people. With the possibility to have an open and constructive dialogue, the Municipality of Silistra facilitated a Youth Forum "Dialogue with young people – a guarantee for a change". The forum became one of priorities for the management of the municipality, because with this practice they are promoting democracy and good governance in the community through:

- Developing the municipality's long-term ability and capacity to listen and respond to the voices of young people; and
- Providing short term, specialist capacity and advice in the area of youth participation and youth engagement.

Participants discussed the challenges and their resolution that comes after the completion of education, civic involvement and initiative, development of youth creativity and sports activities. The Forum is another step to creating an already established dialogue and place where the younger generation can openly discuss their prosperity at the country level.

The Youth Forums that have taken place until now



have been held at the end of the year and were linked with closure of the youth activities of the given year. The discussions included over sixty young people aged between fifteen and twenty-nine years of age - representatives from schools and student councils, informal youth organisations, and representatives from local government. They were divided into four working groups to discuss their career development, their

rights as citizens of the country, civic involvement and initiative, as well as access to culture, art and sport. Representatives of institutions working with young people, councillors and active citizens are invited to take part as moderators of the working groups. Representatives of ministries, MPs, members of national youth organisations also participate in the work of the Forum. Many of the problems discussed were included in the municipal plan for youth.

Determining what is an 'important' topic, selecting the agenda and providing the most appropriate speakers and moderators is a challenging and long process that goes through many conversations and meetings and requests a lot of contacts and networking. Nevertheless, the outcome of the forum has created a big impact on the implementation and further development of the youth policy.

As a result of the discussions during the Forum many youth initiatives received support from the mayor's administration such as competition sessions

"Youth for Silistra" and "Youth against Violence and Drugs", as well as Day of Youth Self-Government, cultural and sporting events, and preventive campaigns. However, the dialogue must be intensified, seeking new topics (sports, education, informal education, prevention campaigns) as well as actual issues – more funds for the implementation of youth activities.

Conducting this type of event as the Youth Forum is an innovation not only for our region but nationwide. Over sixty young people have been given



the opportunity to discuss and present their views on the problems of the local communities and to look for ways to solve them. Summarised proposals of the forums were sent to the respective institutions, whose mandate is to address them. The fact that young people want to extend the duration and scope of the Forum gives assurance that this is a successful model for direct contact

with young people, an attractive practice to upgrade and to make a regular event on the municipality's annual calendar.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Silistra, Bulgaria  
Denka Mihailova  
Deputy Mayor

++359 86 816 214

mihailova\_d@abv.bg  
mk.silistra@mail.bg

www.silistra.bg

# Municipality of Sancaktepe, Turkey Youth Next Clubs



Sancaktepe Province is considered to be a region that attracts migration. The very first priority of people coming to this region is to meet their basic needs, even if only to a minimal standard: financial stability and housing. Topics like education, culture and art are often not considered as priorities among these people. In families where the number of children is bigger, the focus of education is placed on boys, while the girls are engaged in housekeeping jobs, helping their mothers. With this kind of segregation, these girls remain deprived of educational opportunities and as such, fundamental human rights are not met. According to the results of the surveys conducted in a local context the children left without life guidance, being alienated from the family or having communication problems within family are more inclined to have difficulties developing into a healthy social individual.

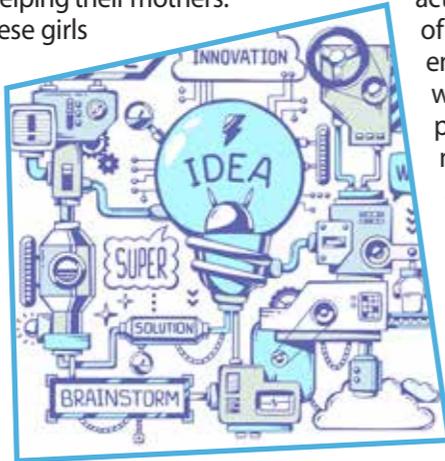
In order to address those issues, the project 'Youth Next Clubs' was initiated with the aim of contributing to children's social, cultural, ethnical and educational development. The social progress of youth would mean interventions and measures to help children create awareness of their social responsibilities, to discover their abilities and to boost them, to devise activities for their physical progress, to make them aware of nature and environment, to arrange

their socialising regardless of their background, and to let them take an active role in their environment. In light of this, Youth Clubs were established, which numbered twenty in 2012. The clubs were equipped with classrooms, areas of activity, workshops, conference halls and auditoriums, and reading halls.

These clubs offered programmes and activities that covered all school subjects, culture, art and sport. The activities that were designed to take care of their further development and even employability were in the area of support with university entrance exams, official post vacancy employment exams, communication techniques and various researches. The clubs also organised talks with renowned specialists (writers, academics, politicians), as well as panels, seminars, conferences, and city tours free of charge.

The number of youth, between the ages of 15 and 25, registered to Youth Next Clubs is now over 10,000. For the purposes of promotion the work of the youth clubs, surveys, phone calls and face-to-face interviews were used. Social media (Facebook and Twitter) profiles were created, as well as many other promotional materials (noticeboards, banners, and posters) were shared.

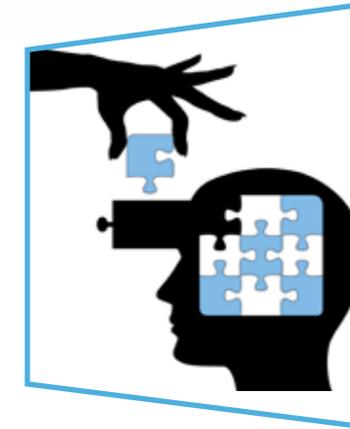
The clubs are proud of the number of 250 events and 90 seminars organised since 2012, when the clubs were formed. One can realise how great the impact is on the young population when the achievements of



the children that have been through the programme are listed: increased university acceptance rates in the municipality; support given with state exams to future civil servants; special support in education to Syrian refugees; positive developments in children's studies and their increased success rate in primary education are among the many successes. The Ministry of Education fully recognised the project and gave its support.

Challenges were present in the course of implementation and majority of them linked to the parent of the children who wanted to continue their education. Aside of the programme to work with children, a special program was developed involving those parents. They were invited to regular parent meetings, counselling, guidance and promotional activities held for the purpose of making youngster's parents comfortable with the ideas of how their children are educated. Extra effort was made in organising campaigns in order to attract more children by making them aware of the benefit from going through such a programme. Also, free of charge participation, free of charge services and catering increased the number of participants in these activities. Problems experienced in finding qualified training staff for Youth Centres was overcome with in-service training.

The most important factor of sustainability is the demand coming from the primary target - youth



and their families. The education programme is constantly evolving, changing and expanding, hence the offer becomes more attractive and consequently demand grows. Following the beneficiaries' demands and making the benefits of participation recognised is very important on the way to keep this practise alive!

## Contact details:

Municipality of Sancaktepe, Turkey  
İsmail Eesdm,  
Mayor

++90 216 622 33 33

ozelkalem@sancaktepe.bel.tr  
cankatar@sancaktepe.bel.tr

www.sancaktepe.bel.tr  
www.sancaktepemutluevler.com

# I like Izmit: I am riding a Bicycle



The air pollution that comes from industrial region in Kocaeli and the carbon dioxide emission resulting from human activities in the region is constantly increasing. Due to the fact that population is gradually increasing in Izmit, there has been an increase in the number of vehicles used for transportation. The effect of air pollution and as well noise pollution is especially noticeable in settlements and in the area where there are schools. Needless to say there is a negative impact upon the growth and health of children.

This situation was not improving and the local youth were rather concerned and upset about the influence of air pollution to their general living conditions. A citizens' initiative from a group of young people asked the Municipality of Izmit to design and construct paved bicycle paths, to which the Municipality of Izmit said it would. The Municipality, by implementing this initiative, has managed to resolve many issues such as: reducing the existing traffic problem, improving living conditions by reducing air pollution, raising awareness about environmental issues and convincing citizens to improve their health by riding a bicycle. On the other hand, by acting and accepting the proposal the Municipality fully recognises the youth as a valid partner, and has proved that the youth have a voice in local govern-



ment and could easily lend their ideas to meaningful projects.

In regards to the promotion of healthy lifestyle, the Municipality organised several activities including: training, provided in Traffic Training Park; constructing paved bicycle paths; arranging bicycle tours on Sundays and weekends, at which the Mayor was also in attendance; and donating bicycles to 5th grade students.

At the beginning, a Traffic Training Park was designed and constructed. Riding a bicycle was not an easy job especially when children need to pay attention to traffic regulations. Therefore traffic training was organised by bicycle educators. Feedback became significant as more and more people could be seen on the streets riding bicycles.

The project's initial target group was the municipal youth, children from the primary schools. The Associations of Bike Riders was a partner in this project. So far 28, 000 students has been trained at Traffic Training Park, over 16, 000 people have attended bicycle tours arranged at weekends and the number of bicycles donated to 5th grade students is 15, 250. Since this initiative, riding a bicycle and using bicycle paths has become very common practice. The Kocaeli Clever Bicycle Transport System (<http://kobis.com.tr/>) became operational - essentially a project of Kocaeli Büyükşehir Municipality that proposes rent-a-bike of-

fers, which initiation came after the increasing trend of riding a bike.

Weaknesses regarding urban planning and unplanned urbanization have created delays in the implementation of this initiative. However, it was seen as positive and the team that was implementing it was very eager and devoted to make it come true and acknowledged.

The effects of riding a bicycle are positive, not only to the health but also to the economy. People in the Municipality realised this very quickly and very soon the idea of cycling came to them as a great innovation. The reduction of environmental pollution in the city has also become noticeable; a reduction in traffic



problems was a joy to everyone. The project that began in the Municipality of Izmit has now been implemented in the Municipality of Kocaeli, which was launched after successful results from initial activities. There are pending requests for spreading more bike paths further in the municipality and as well connecting it with the villages in the district. It is important to remember that bike paths are transportation routes.

The increased use of bicycles is a great success and the Municipality remains firm in the belief that cycling will become a lifestyle in the coming years within the community.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Izmit, Turkey  
Betul Ozcan

++90 262 318 00 00  
++90 262 332 40 33

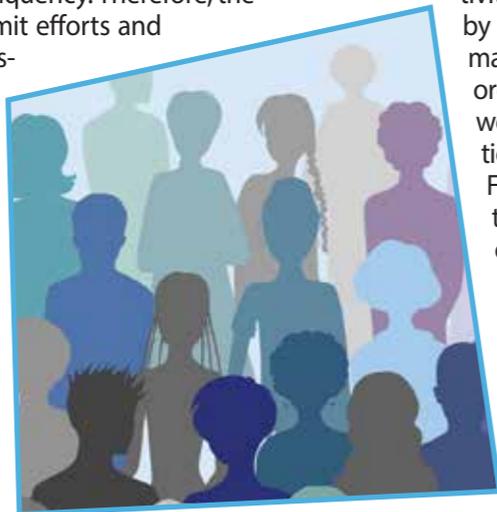
betul.taser@izmit.bel.tr  
www.izmit.bel.tr

# Municipality of Radovis, Republic of Macedonia Joint Efforts Towards Building a Strong Community



The Municipality of Radovis aimed to equalize the position of the youth in rural and urban areas in order to create comparable development perspectives for all. Several problems were detected, especially in the rural areas: unorganized use of leisure time for children and youth, lack of conditions for quality teaching in physical and health education, as well as increased aggressiveness and juvenile delinquency. Therefore, the Municipality decided to commit efforts and municipal resources in addressing youth issues and challenges thus creating a youth friendly community.

In this process, the municipality ensured that the principles of participatory planning and democratic approaches to decision making involving young people and their organizations were in place. A focus group was formed comprising of people directly involved in the implementation of activities, and supporting the process of improving cooperation with the municipal authorities. The main partners involved were the Youth Council, local NGOs and primary schools. Their input was vital because with their help, ideas and initiative, the real needs and requirements of the young people of the village were understood and therefore taken fully into account. The Municipality was the only financier



of the project with funds from the municipal budget amounting to 3,000,000 million MKD.

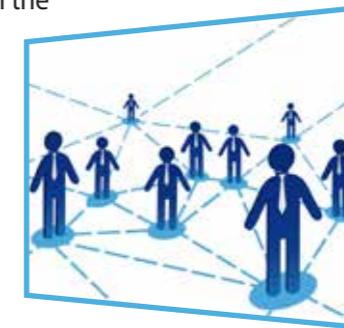
What has been done and has changed? Firstly, in the village of Injevo an educational fun park was built. Secondly, involvement of young people from rural areas in local development activities through various activities was undertaken. Thirdly, a program of activities was established involving youth by running summer schools, as well as maintenance of local events and events organized by young people. Fourthly, a web portal was made for the presentation of various programs and activities. Finally, 3D visualization of the activities were made and a constant flood of media promotion activities were set in place.

The citizens followed all activities with great excitement. The location where the park is now built was constantly visited by parents, children and young people - those with a great interest and excitement in the project, who followed daily all the steps that were taken regarding the construction of the park, and gave their comments and suggestions on the contents of the park, some of which were accepted and implemented.

By actively involving the citizens in discussions on how to improve this and get citizens involved in the project, actually not only served to lessen the discrepancy between rural and urban citizens, but also

brought citizens into the fold in terms of working together as a community.

The project was developed in cooperation between the municipal administration and association of citizens, 'Crown Plus', with a clear set of criteria for the development of cooperation in the implementation of future projects with local civil society organizations. Now funds in the municipal budget are specifically earmarked for the implementation of initiatives, ideas and projects by the civil society. The Municipality established ways to how to work and cooperate with the civil society, meaning there are established procedures for the application process and selection of projects, as well as feedback and cooperation mechanisms.



What the Municipality has learnt from this practice is that the development and implementation of projects that are of interest to the wider community can be successfully implemented with transparency and openness in the municipal work and functioning of the municipal administration and the good budgeting of financial resources based on citizens' needs.

The sustainability of this good practice is seen in the future foundation of good and fruitful cooperation between the Municipality of Radovis and the local civil society organizations (CSOs) which has been laid down. The Municipality has adopted process and criteria for funding of CSOs that include two compo-

nents: 1) a fixed component-building that could only be considered as a transfer of certain powers of the municipality to the civil society organizations in monitoring and management of the Municipal Administration and 2) implementation of soft measures by civil society organizations that are also very important so as to determine the process of development of the local community.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Radovis,  
Republic of Macedonia  
Sasko Nikolov  
Mayor

++389 75 493 192

ler\_radovis@radovis.gov.mk  
verica.gazepova@gmail.com

www.radovis.gov.mk

# Commission for Youth Policy



The beginnings of the Commission for Youth Policy of the Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS) goes back to 2004 with the EU accession of Slovenia and the adoption of laws for the youth sector.

At a national level a need to formulate strategies for youth was detected. Those strategies would identify key areas of youth policy and the establishment of objectives, measures and programs in the relevant areas that would further improve conditions for youth work. In the meantime, at the local level, a large number of youth centres, local community youth councils, local youth organisations, youth initiatives and local committees for youth were already created, acting independently and with no correlation with each other.

With the establishment of the Commission for Youth Policy within the Association, the country wanted to establish connections between them, to assist in the sharing of best practices and experiences, thus increasing the spread of knowledge, ideas and youth workers. At the same time SOS wanted to provide a platform for the creation of such legislative proposals to the central government, taking into account the needs and specifics of the local communities in Slovenia.

The main tasks of the Commission is to create an overview of the challenges and good practices of

youth policy in municipalities through involvement of relevant stakeholders, to adopt a work program, to provide and formulate opinions, recommendations and suggestions on legislation affecting youth policy and to propose to the Board the adoption of decisions in relation to youth policy. Through organising workshops, trainings, and seminars and in cooperation with

different stakeholders the Commission encourages members of local government to work in the interest of the youth. The Commission also stresses the importance of the youth issue, supports, promotes and improves local government's work in the youth sector.

In Slovenia there are no systematically-set mandatory tasks for the municipalities that care for the young and for the implementation of activities to promote youth participation in local communities. The main challenge over the years was the constant persuasion of municipalities to implement measures for young people with information materials, through conferences and training courses. It is important to point out that by far the most effective way to do this was through the establishment of this type of Commission for Youth Policy.

The Association believes that the participation of all stakeholders in the field of youth policy can support the development of youth policies and that is

why those stakeholders are gathered for meetings and discussions. In this way, all relevant actors build up mutual respect and the appropriate approach to the problems in the field of youth, so the actions later become more constructive and coherent.

The sustainability of the Commission is ensured through broader participation, collaboration and structured dialogue with the Government (Office for Youth), Municipalities, Lo-



cal Community's Youth Councils, the Youth Council of Slovenia, Youth Network MaMa, Youth Centres and the NGO sector. The involvement and participation of various stakeholder groups was crucial for the success of the Commission. Also the practice is easily replicable and adjustable in any other Association with a 'step-by-step' approach of building a platform for youth issues.

## Contact details:

Association of Municipalities and Towns of Slovenia (SOS), Slovenia  
Barbara Horvat  
Advisor for International Affairs

++386 2 234 15 05

info@skupnostobcin.si  
Barbara.horvat@skupnostobcin.si

www.skupnostobcin.si

The Local Juvenile Delinquency Combating Commission is an institution that was established under the Juvenile Delinquency Act, 1958. The Commission is composed of representatives and departments of the municipal government and its main responsibility is to organise and coordinate the social and preventive activity locally.

The idea for the project came about after the Commission had received 58 reports within same period of time with requests to initiate disciplinary cases in regard to children from Roma minority who do not attend school. The Commission, together with the municipal management realised that this was a problem that requires a timely and proactive approach.

The beginning of the project started with arranging field research. 150 children and 150 parents of Roma origin, who were residents of the municipality, were interviewed. The parents who participated in the project, created a so-called 'parent club', where they could discuss various topics and exchange their experiences. The main constraint was the lack of trust among beneficiaries. Certain innovative techniques of communication that the team used and particularly chosen activities attracted the attention of the beneficiaries

and they started collaborating with the project team. The team used the assistance of a moderator from the same Roma minority, and that helped to ease and improve communication.

Over the course of the project, children and parents were invited to attend different programs and certain trainings were implemented. The activity that left the biggest impression to both children and parents turned out to be the meetings with famous and successful citizens of Roma origin. The guests, using themselves as examples, managed to illustrate what in ones personal life means ambition and focus to rise higher up in society; that ethnicity is irrelevant and that education plays a meaningful role in our careers. A member of the parliament and a leading professional were invited as guest speakers, too.

In this initiative implemented by the Municipality of Asenovgrad, the Local Juvenile Delinquency Combating Commission joined as a partner institution and it was funded by the Center for Integration of Children and Students from Ethnic Minorities in Bulgaria. The target group was the Roma minority in Asenovgrad and special attention was paid to 50 children who did not want to attend the school, and their parents.

The most important results that have been achieved are the following: 50 students have com-

pleted the school year with significantly fewer absences than in the previous year; 50 parents became more supportive and willing their children to continue their education; the 'Parent Club' was established; and the guidebook "Aid for the Parent" was published and distributed in the local community.

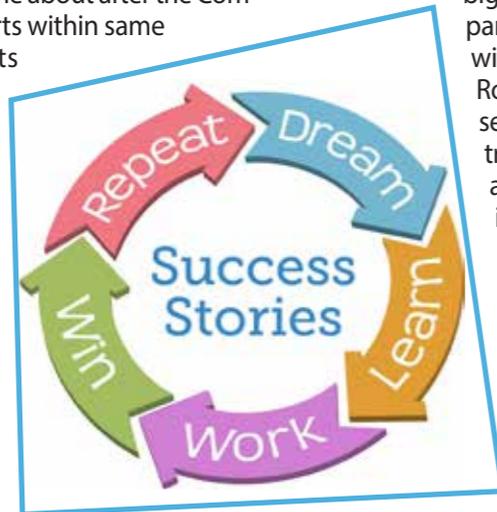
At the end of the project a survey was conducted among the beneficiaries to cross-check the impact of this initiative. Both, parents and children have changed their approaches and perception in regards to education.

It was noticed that children wanted to look further ahead in their life, have ideas about their future work and careers, and see themselves in a better position than their parents. The survey showed a change



of perception even among the parents. They openly expressed their desires for their children to have a better future, with better prospects and they showed honest commitment that they will support their children in the personal development and education.

The success of this practice with one generation of children will, hopefully, have a knock-on effect. Today's young people who will successfully train and become educated will have a better chance for personal realisation of their goals. Aside from the idea that their chances for employability will improve, they will one day become parents who will have the opportunity to raise their children promoting the same values that brought them to better position in life.



**Contact details:**

Municipality of Asenovgrad, Bulgaria  
Maria Valkanova  
Deputy Mayor

++359 (0) 331 20313,  
++359 (0) 331 62050

mari\_valkanova@abv.bg  
www.assenovgrad.com

## Municipality of Avcilar, Turkey Municipal Conservatory for Youth & Art



The Municipality of Avcilar has struggled with socio-cultural disparities in the community. The reason for this has come from the fact that many people, due to economic instability, have had to live their life on the margins of society. The difficulties that a family usually go through have a significant impact on children's development. In last few years, lots of children and teenagers have begun to use drugs, which have created additional difficulties and an increase the crime rate.

Poverty, ignorance and also keeping youth away from using drugs were serious challenges that the municipality have been facing with. However, the municipality looked at the perspective that local authorities should improve the 'wealth' of social life besides the physical conditions of the people. Improving people's knowledge of art strengthens the connection with art and is one of the key success factors in developing a peaceful society.

The Mayor of Avcilar, together with the municipal administration, developed a new initiative with the aim of bringing to Avcilar culture and art, something that would also bring the citizens together. Very soon after the Mayor stepped into her position, the Municipality formed the Conservatory. Today the Municipality of Avcilar is the proud holder of the title of 'the only district municipality to found a conservatory under its structure' in Istanbul.

The Conservatory offers education in three main branches: music, theatre and folk dancing. There are in total 120 students and the education's period is between two and four years.

Children and young people holding many differences inside the district boundaries have come together with a common purpose - making and enjoying music together. Through the form of art they have learned sharing, socialising, and have improved the way they express themselves. The success followed with this establishment is taken from the good practice of the El Sistema project implemented in Venezuela. The main purpose of this project is to change children and young people's lives, normally surrounded by poverty and crime, through music education. The Conservatory gathers children from families that are struggling with poverty, refugee children from Syria and children who were former drugs users. All these children have one common interest - to get support in order to integrate into society.

In order to reach to disadvantaged children and families, it was important that trainers were familiar with the district population, so they could be quickly accepted and positively perceived. The trainers were searched among local community members, with the support of the municipal's Cultural and Social Affairs' Department. The project did not want to harm the local business offering private education, so it decided to include them as well in the project that resulted in a joint project, and an exchange of ideas and cooperation.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Avcilar, Turkey  
Selcuk Sariyar  
Advisor to the Mayor on Foreign Affairs

[www.avcilar.bel.tr](http://www.avcilar.bel.tr)

## Municipality of Lüleburgaz, Turkey Gender, Egalitarian Approaches and Directives

Egalitarian doctrines maintain that all humans are equal in fundamental worth or social status, meaning having equal rights, regardless of social, economic, or other distinctions such as income, race, religious or political beliefs. In Turkey, since the establishment of the Turkish Republic in the 1920s, women have had equal status with men in Turkish society. Turkish women obtained the right to vote, to hold political office, and to bequeath and to inherit wealth in their own right.

Today many women are fully enjoying their right. But, the role of women in contemporary Turkey is defined by an on going gender equality struggle. As in many other municipalities, the Municipality of Lüleburgaz is constantly striving for greater equality by achieving gender equality within its structure.

The Municipality of Lüleburgaz has in total 225 employees. Out of sixty-four female employees eleven hold managerial positions. This number represents 58% of the total managers. One of the two vice-presidents of the Municipality of Lüleburgaz is a woman. Women share half of the duties and responsibilities of senior management. Four out of the seven committees have women councillors.

In terms of gender representation the statistical indicator for the year 2012 showed that the ratio of women employed in the government sector was only 4%, while in Lüleburgaz it was 29%. This was a great leap forward in terms of local governments' fight against gender imbalance.

Female employees in the local services have taken an active role in the decision-making process. The ratio between men and women was observed constant-

ly over a long period. For the municipality it was very important that after the last local elections, there were no changes to the female employees in management positions after the election.

Women's contribution to employees' participation in management has created a positive impact on all employees and the community. The staff at the municipal workers union representation is composed of female employees.

Today, Lüleburgaz Municipality is invited to sign and introduce the Charter for Gender Equality in Local Life - A Charter for Europe's local and regional governments to commit themselves to use their powers and partnerships to achieve greater equality for their people. The Municipality also organises training on gender-sensitive planning and budgeting.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Lüleburgaz, Turkey  
Reside Candan  
Culture and Social Affairs Director

++90 288 417 10 73  
++90 533 212 54 56

[residecandan@luleburgaz.bel.tr](mailto:residecandan@luleburgaz.bel.tr)  
[residecandan1@hotmail.com](mailto:residecandan1@hotmail.com)

[www.luleburgaz.bel.tr](http://www.luleburgaz.bel.tr)

# Free Vocational Training and Free Preschool Education



Yildirim is a home of poor immigrants and as such the Municipality decided to start a practice of providing free professional education for women and free preschool education for their children. The women are given a free professional education, with the aim of carrying out traditional handicrafts in the future, and with a view to later use learnt skills as a source of employment, while at the same time have their children educated by professional and experienced teachers. These municipal efforts are recognized under the slogan "Support for Free Education, Profession in the Future".

Starting back in 2006 the project originally had 13 different branches. Today there are 32 different branches which include courses of guitar, violin, piano, reed, Turkish folk music, German, Arabic, English, Ottoman, Russian, skin care, clothing, hand embroidery, home furnishings, handicrafts, calligraphy, illumination, marbling, painting, theater, hairdressing, childcare at home, cooking, etc. Over the course of the project, 3,786 women have taken free professional education courses in 117 classes, whilst 1,040 children have taken free preschool education in 29 different classes in 53 branches. Initially, the main beneficiaries have been women and children, but now also men



and youth can take free professional education, too, thus the wider community is also benefiting from the project. The municipality uses posters and brochures to inform the target group about the specifics and benefits of participation. Also, the usage of social media has been confirmed as a very good promotional and outreach tool.

At the end of each year the women who have attended the courses receive a certificate approved by the Ministry of National Education. Additionally women earn money from selling their works created during the courses at an exhibition organized at the end of each year. As for the children at the end of each year a festival is organized to present their work.

A major part of this project's success is that careful thought has been paid to the simple fact that many women cannot attend a course of any sort if their child is not being looked after. The fact that the courses for women run in conjunction with preschool classes for their children ensures that mothers can focus on their classes, safe in the knowledge that their child is safe, and engaged with professional teaching staff. The fact that both sets of classes are free-of-charge ensures continued popularity and helps more women develop useful skills. The municipality covers all organizational costs, while the free educational services are

provided by the National Education Directorate and the Public Education Centre in Yildirim.

Given the growing popularity of this practice sometimes it is a challenge to find suitable premises where the courses can be organized. However, suitable spaces have been located to meet the demands such as some empty commu-



nity premises and cultural centers. This practice enjoys continued success after nearly ten years of existence! Having in mind the growing demands for its replication in certain communities, the Municipality believes it will continue for the foreseeable future, too.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Yildirim,  
Turkey  
Mrs.Hülya ADAK

++90 224 363 55 00  
++90 541 407 70 85

hulyatikad@hotmai.com  
<http://www.yildirim.bel.tr/>

## Municipality of Patos, Albania

# Friday's Women



The City of Patos is a town in central Albania with approximately 33,000 inhabitants. Originally it was built as an industrial city, where the oil industry was the main economic sector. The industry development attracted many well-educated and highly trained people to move to the city. Nevertheless, the change in the state economy created a reverse effect and today the town is facing the 'brain drain' phenomena.

Later, migration flows were mostly from the rural regions to Patos. The change of demographics created socio-cultural disparities among the local population. Among other changes it was noticed that the position of women in society had become weaker.

The Municipality of Patos, led by a female mayor, designed and implemented a series of policies for strengthening the role and positions of women in social and public life. Today over 50% women represent municipality administration. Out of fifteen leading positions at the regional directorate and sector, women run eight of them. Reaching this number of representation of women in local government came after implementing many directives toward gender equality policies.

Triggered by low engagement of women in the life of their community, the Chairwoman of the Municipality of Patos came up with a project idea that would target and organise all women in the community. The project had no budget and created no cost. The project was aimed at enhancing and strengthening the position of women in social and public life.

'Friday's Woman' is a project which targets women over the age of eighteen, by giving the possibility that

one day a week they get together in order to discuss, and exchange their ideas and views on any topic. It raised the spirit among many of these women, and has given them the opportunity to socialise and to make new acquaintances.

The main challenge was to involve more housewives, as in general these women are more difficult to approach than employed women. The invitations sent through neighbours, via word-of-mouth communication and using online sites to publish previous activity increased the participation of women/housewives. The gatherings involved women from different stratum in society, with different education and social backgrounds.

'Friday's Women' can be considered a successful innovative practice, easy to replicate and to implement in any other surrounding. It is a cost-free measure. Through this practice the Municipality of Patos has identified women with pro-active approaches and interest in community work, which then invited them to participate in round-tables and social affairs and gender commission meetings.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Patos, Albania  
Elda Goxhaj  
Head of Department of Public Relations

++355 344 10 663  
++355 69 69 35 211

patosmunicipality@gmail.com  
goxhajelda@hotmail.com

## Municipality of Rahovec, Kosovo\*

# Increasing Youth Participation in Decision Making Processes on the Local Level

Generally, the public participation in Kosovo is low when it comes to decision-making processes and for youth the participation rate is even lower – due to a lack of understanding of their own rights and how governments and institutions work and provide services. To this end the Municipality of Rahovec has established the Local Youth Action Council (LYAC) and adopted a Youth Action Plan for 2015 aimed at giving young people a chance to voice their opinions on issues that affect them.

Citizens of Kosovo of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities represent traditional ethnic groups that are both active and relatively well integrated into the social life of the country. To further integrate these groups a Local Action Plan (LAP) was drafted in 2014 by a working group made up of different relevant stakeholders and the same was approved by the Municipal Assembly. Whilst this is still all in the implementation phase, the immediate effect has been that there has been active engagement of youth – in particular females – in LYAC activities and participation of members from Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities, too.

Users of this good practice were the youth from all communities, but especially those from the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian communities. Various agencies were involved in implementing this good practice including the Municipality of Rahovec, the OSCE, the civil society, youth activists and the European Council.

The youth from three ethnic groups were looked at and it was realized that these people did not have an adequate voice. As such, amends were made to empower the youth from these communities so that they

could be better involved in the life and running of the wider community.

An area of difficulty that was overcome was the lack of knowledge both the youth and women had regarding their civil rights and responsibilities. Through various meetings, training seminars and workshops awareness was brought about these points.

The sustainability of this good practice may be observed by seeing the active and effective participation of youth, women and minority communities at municipal forum meetings where these groups have the opportunity to be involved in the decision making process and as such empower themselves and the wider community by working towards creating a better society. The action plans are also backed by a sufficient budget and are monitored by the related working groups that are obliged to issue periodical reports to the municipality on the implementation of the various plans.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Rahovec, Kosovo  
Habibe Haxhimustafa  
Coordinator of Municipal Human Rights Unit

++381 029 27 60 37  
++381 044 200 740

habibe.haxhimustafa@gmail.com  
<http://kk.rks-gov.net/rahovec/>

\* "This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSC 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence."

# Municipality of Bijelo Polje, Montenegro Municipal Youth Office and Local Action Plan for Youth



The Municipality of Bijelo Polje is the first municipality in Montenegro that has established an Office for Youth that has directly addressed issues regarding the problems and needs of young people. In its very first year of existence, the Office has adopted a Local Youth Action Plan for period 2011 to 2016. The plan included the following nine areas: education, employment, health, and participation in the life of society, human rights, culture, information and youth mobility, leisure, and family. Prior to setting up the office there was no formally appointed organisation that could adequately deal with the problems and needs of young people.

The first step that was taken was to conduct a detailed analysis of the situation, which comprehensively presented the current situation of young people in the local community and the degree of their discontent. The adoption of the plan had set actions and proposed solutions that were adequate for the next five years. In addition, a one-year work plan was adopted, presenting the strategy of addressing the problems.

The target group were all young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-nine living in the Municipality of Bijelo Polje, which according to the census of 2011 number about 15,000. The users of the good practice, in addition to the young people from Bijelo Polje were all the young people from the north of

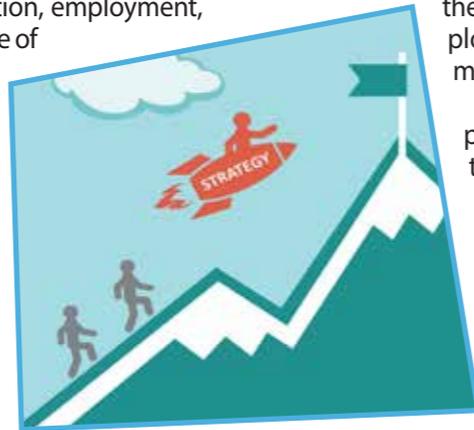
Montenegro as well as organisations and institutions dealing with issues and problems of youth.

The project included a large number of young people in the design and delivery mechanism, raising awareness about the importance of involving young people, improved living conditions in the local community in the field of employment, education, leisure, and human rights.

In particular, it is important to emphasize the development of volunteerism that happened through implementation of several activities: environmental actions, organising charity concerts, working at the day centre 'Tisa' and the nursing home, etc. Offering volunteering work allowed the youth to connect to the community and as such made it a better place. With their volunteer work, they had the opportunity to

strengthen their ties with the community and broaden support networks, become exposed to people with common interests and neighbourhood resources, while at the same time to have fun in fulfilling activities and working for the wellbeing of the youth in their own community.

The main challenges and difficulties were seen in the readiness for cooperation between relevant institutions dealing with issues and problems of youth. Cooperation with relevant institutions was established through various forms of memorandums on coopera-



tion and partnership arrangements for the implementation of activities. A lack of information on ways to get involved and insufficient information for young people regarding this was something the Youth Office had to deal.

A strategic approach to solving problems and identifying relevant partners is seen as the key to success in the implementation of activities. Provision of opportunities for young people to get involved in the planning phase but then also to work



directly in solving their problems and fulfilling their expectations is indeed an indicator for a successful implementation of the Local Action Plan for Youth.

This model of action plan development and the establishment of the youth office was perceived in the region as an example of a good practice. There is an evidence that other municipalities then conducted similar activities in a same manner as the Municipality of Bijelo Polje.

## Contact details:

Municipality of Bijelo Polje,  
Montenegro  
Sanelj Ljuskovic,  
Head of the Service of the Manager

++382 50 484 793  
++382 67 505 248

sanelj@hotmail.com  
projektibp@gmail.com

www.bijelopolje.co.me

## Municipality of Izmit, Turkey Breast Feeding and Infant Care Cabins



Within the Municipality, it was observed that young mothers with babies were unable to find suitable places for breastfeeding their babies or changing their diapers whilst out and about in the city centre. Mothers had been forced to enter shopping malls to find a quiet, private place to feed their baby or change the baby's diaper – often calling upon the goodwill of a shop owner to let them use their shop/facility. As such, the Municipality set about working on a project that would attempt to find a solution to this problem – thus making it easier for women with babies to be a part of the social life of the city by having a safe, well-protected and clean place available to them where they can breastfeed and change their baby's diaper.

The Municipality has made portable cabins, replete with sinks, lower opening tables to allow changing of babies' diapers, and breastfeeding seats. The cabins also have electricity and plumbing connections and cabins are regularly cleaned. The first cabin was placed in front of the municipal building in the city centre. The success of this first cabin has led to a second cabin being emplaced, too.

Users of this good practice are young mothers who have a safe, clean and private place to look after their babies, and as such, are not dependant on the generosity of local shopkeepers.

Some of the difficulties encountered were from the target group of users – with some smoking in the cabin, and the disposal of waste in the bin outside the cabin (namely diapers) being observed. To counter this, the frequency of cleaning checks to the cabin was increased and signs were hung in the cabinet detailing

the 'do's and don'ts' within the cabin. A decorative wall-hanging cabinet mirror was taken so a fixed mirror was put in its place. Other than the production cost of the cabin, running costs are low, with very little water and electricity used. Other costs are the cleaning and maintenance and security (both of the physical structure and of the mother and baby inside the cabin) – ensuring no one other than the target group uses the cabin and that no one stays in the cabin overnight.

The creation of the cabins has been widely applauded, with users communicating their thanks to the Mayor by letter and e-mail or social media, as well as offering complaints and suggestions.

The relatively low costs of the cabins and their importance for mothers and their babies has meant that new cabins are to be added in the city, and in different locations, thus ensuring that mothers have safe, hygienic and private places to breastfeed and change their babies' diapers. This project has brought about an innovation in terms of municipal work, with Kocaeli being the first municipality in Turkey to provide a breastfeeding and caring cabin.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Izmit, Turkey  
Betul Ozcan

++90 262 318 00 00  
++90 262 332 40 33

betul.taser@izmit.bel.tr  
www.izmit.bel.tr

## Municipality of Faith, Turkey Youth Volunteers as Tourist Delegates

Istanbul being the largest city in Turkey and named as a European Capital of Culture, it's definitely one of the world's most popular tourist destinations that attracts around 10 million foreign visitors a year. Plenty of historical, natural and cultural places are on the tourists' list of famous destinations to be visited but some of them are not easily to be found considering the challenges that the big city brings.

Being aware of the need for free-of-charge and easy-to-access information, the Municipal District of Fatih introduced a new practice of youth volunteer services for tourists. One reason more to invest in this initiative was the fact that a lot of young people in Turkey like to work in the tourism sector, having in mind the country's potentials and the possibilities for professional development.

In the heart of the Program "Volunteer Tourist Delegates" are exactly the young people from 14-29 years who are eager to provide unpaid services to tourists while enjoying the benefits of learning and improving foreign languages, communication and social skills.

Nowadays, being already in its fifth year of practice, the program had over 1, 500 young people working as volunteers and assisting the visitors in Istanbul to find their route and destinations and learn more about the town whilst also building a sense of social responsibility and acting as city representatives.

The methodology and approach to develop and establish this practice can be seen as quite straightforward. Young people between the age of 14 and 29, who can speak at least one foreign language, were tested in that language via an examination. Upon suc-

cessful completion of the examination, potential delegates received training in communication and historical education to equip them with the necessary knowledge and skills required to work with tourists. Once these training sessions were completed volunteers were given a blue T-shirt with 'Ask Me' and 'Free Information' printed on it. Volunteers then positioned themselves in areas with many tourists so they can easily be noticed and approached for free-of-charge information.

The success of this practice lies in the fact that it has provided young people with learning opportunities that contributes to their personal and professional development. Meeting people from different cultures, being in a service of your own city, and working for the community are only some of the main features of this practice. Since the scheme has been in place for five years, and has involved around 1, 500 volunteers to date, one can see the success and the importance of this program. Also, being completely developed and managed by the municipality with a low-cost budget makes this program sustainable and attractive for replication for all municipalities that see themselves as a tourists' destinations.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Faith, Turkey  
Abdullah Köse  
Youth and Sports Centre Officer

++90 21 2523 04 34  
++90 53 5496 47 24

abdullakose@fatih.bel.tr

# Municipality of Kocaeli, Turkey White Hearts Training and Orientation Center



In Kocaeli a number of children are working on the streets and living under social risk. These children are in need of protection, perhaps involved in crime, and have problems keeping up with their education. The Municipality of Kocaeli - being aware of the situation - decided to provide support to these children.

By first defining their social and psychological needs, these children were offered specific vocational training, so as to make social transformations by acquiring the support of local resources. In this way they were raised as individuals who are of benefit to themselves, whilst also being aware of their responsibilities to their families, the city and the country where they live – in short, to help them to become good, solid citizens.

Professional workshops and individual-oriented programs, prepared specifically for each individual, were part of the municipal “White Hearts Training and Orientation Center” that has been applied in Turkey for the first time. So far the feedback regarding the program has been positive with participants being recorded as saying that they feel better being a part of this.

Research was conducted by sociologists and psychologists in the centre, from the schools where the children are educated, to assess and identify the risks arising from children being out of school. Data was gathered and processed by the local administrators,

non-governmental organisations and other official agents – project partners. The data collected and gathered was prepared within nearly one month by making social research, conducting individual interviews and psychological assessments.

A committee consisting of experts in order to determine the best course of action for that child then assessed the files belonging to the children. In the end, the committee made a decision as to whether the children are accepted to the centre for training, which is to last for one year.

The children who were deemed suitable to be acceptable to the centre were oriented to various activities and trainings according to their risk state. Training is made in two forms as in hobby workshops and professional workshops.

Over a period of one year, 104 children have been accepted by the center. The children involved in the program as well as their

families, schools and social environment, provided positive feedback and requested to extend their time in the center. The feedback was gathered in a form of correspondence, voice recordings and images.

The problems of the children are considered from many different angles by using various techniques of drama training. While children enjoyed the rhythm training, they practically discharged their energy to percussion instruments.



‘Reading books’ training have been practised by sociologists and the children acquired reading books practices at early ages. By the movie séances organised in attending by psychologists cinema therapy is practised and the movies have deep messages analysed together with the children. In this way, the messages have been passed on to the children.

The program of the center is unique in regards of concentrating on all aspects of development. It aims to be beneficial for more children in the shortest



time and gives to them new livings by experiencing necessary patient and self-devotion together with its training model and workshops, applied for the first time.

The Municipality believes that this ‘White Hearts Training and Orientation Center’ has a great potential to be replicated in other communi-

ties. What proved to be an important success

factor is the approach based on ‘affection and trust’ feelings among all stakeholders and target groups involved in this story!

## Contact details:

Municipality of Kocaeli, Turkey  
Mücahit ARSLAN  
Deputy Manager

++90 262 335 29 53

[mucahitarслан@kocaeli.bel.tr](mailto:mucahitarслан@kocaeli.bel.tr)  
[www.kocaeli.bel.tr](http://www.kocaeli.bel.tr)

# Municipality of Silistra, Bulgaria

## Children's Summer Clubs



Years of experience revealed to relevant staff at the Municipality of Silistra that socio-economic positions of family couples with changing moral values impact upon a child's overall development. Parents and families are often working longer hours nowadays and have less time to spend with their children and those children from lower income families lack the resources to take part in extra-curricular activities.

As such, the Municipality Commission for Combating Antisocial Behavior of Minors and Under-aged (MCCABMU) organized summer clubs to actively engage children in activities that would stimulate children to learn, communicate and use their free time over the summer months in a positive way. The main objective was to engage part of the children's free time in the summer, giving them the opportunity to join in various activities, to find their hobby, to stimulate the development of their talents and their willingness to participate in similar forms in the future.

Summer clubs began in 2013 and being excellently acknowledged, continued in 2014. The summer clubs organized in 2014 were composed of twelve different clubs, with classes held twice in a week, for two hours a time. All classes were instructed by a qualified teacher. The twelve clubs were: swimming, tennis, rowing, shooting, chess, football, photography, applied arts, cardboard mod-



els, singing, drama and adventure, scouts. Children were allowed to take part in more than one club if they wanted. Enrollment to the clubs was free for children between seven and eighteen years old and this was also dependent on the specifics of each club age. To round off summer club, a finale-style celebration was organized for the children to show what they had learned: a theater play, songs, cardboard models, works of art, etc.

Since its inception in 2013, the summer clubs have involved over 300 children. The children were united in small, friendly groups, in which they were able to commit themselves to different activities. For many it was the first time they had taken part in certain activities due to economic constraints or a lack of free time.

The idea of establishment of such summer clubs was initiated by the Municipality and was entirely designed and implemented on their own, without involving any partner institutions. The main challenge was to promote the work of the clubs and spread the information about the benefits of taking part in it. The clubs offer activities which are very popular and desired by the youth, and the municipality realized that the best way to promote the work of the clubs was by word of mouth.

The noteworthiness of this initiative is the duration of the project (all summer), the method of engaging the children and young people (scheduled,

regular and continuous activities in a hobby / sport in different areas) and free participation in the summer clubs. The areas in which the activities were organized proved to be interesting for children and parents, as most of them are not exposed to these sorts of activities throughout the year. In 2014 we added three new clubs to those of 2013.

Feedback has been wholly positive, with parents commenting that their children need this sort of activity. Further proof of summer club's success can be seen by the fact that before the official announcement of bookings for 2014, parents of children who had participated in the previous year



were already interested in whether the project would be replicated. About 25% of the children who enrolled in summer classes in 2013 participated for the second year (2014), which for us is an indication that their needs were adequately met. They were able to build on skills already acquired in the first year and try new activities. The large number of new participants showed us that the initiative may be extended in the future to engage a wider range of children and to add positively to the life of children over the long summer months.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Silistra, Bulgaria  
Denka Mihailova  
Deputy Mayor

++359 86 816 214

mihailova\_d@abv.bg  
mk.silistra@mail.bg  
www.silistra.bg

## Municipality of Üsküdar, Turkey

# Women's Handicrafts Market



The program 'Women's Handicrafts Market' was designed to ensure an easy access and effective participation of marginalized women in the local economic and public life by looking at and bringing down the barriers to active involvement of women. The program has empowered female handicraft producers to build up and develop their own businesses by providing support and tailored-made trainings for product development, start-up businesses and sales markets.

The municipality aimed to increase the participation and involvement of women, aged over 45 into the labour market and thus ensuring their economic empowerment. The educational program aimed to ensure transfer of know-how by involving the trained and experienced producers to share their knowledge and experiences. Also, the participants enjoyed the possibility of regional knowledge and experience sharing on women's political and economic rights.

As a result of 'Women's Handicrafts Market', the women of Üsküdar have produced beautiful traditional handicrafts for sale. The program empowers women to successfully market and sell their products whilst at the same time it promotes and strengthens women's role in the process of local economic development.

The development of this program included a series of different activities. At the beginning market research was done in order to assess the needs of the market. Based on this a specifically tailored-made program, suitable for the women's needs and the local context was designed to serve the market needs. The training focused on production and marketing skills as well as business planning. 570 women have taken part in

training sessions that qualify them in technical skills such as sewing, quality assurance, design development and entrepreneurship skills.

The handicrafts produced by the women of Üsküdar are inspired by Ottoman traditions; as such they have a great cultural significance. The handicrafts are sold to both tourists and local people and the handicrafts produced are the products of women who are trying to improve their economic position. The project has therefore utilized skills and culture that these women already have and used these skills to empower and assist the women, giving new employment opportunities based on existing skill sets and locations and taking advantage of tourism to assist in the project's development. Such a model could be replicated in other municipalities by looking at existing skills that local citizens have that could be used to their economic advantage with the assistance of some training and focus.

Women's Handicrafts Market Project has empowered female handicraft producers to build up their own business. Thanks to the project women are supported in developing their products, being trained in business skills and are connected to markets for their products.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Üsküdar, Turkey  
Cihan Eroğlu  
Strategic Development Manager

++90 216 531 30 00  
++90 549 775 44 29

sgm@uskudar.bel.tr  
www.uskudar.bel.tr

## Municipality of Svrlijig, Serbia

# Women on Managerial Positions

The Municipality of Svrlijig has paid a great deal of attention, over the past ten years, to ensure that women are included in work and employment and essentially have a greater presence and voice in the life of the community.

In 2009, ETNO Forum, an association for women, was formed to implement various projects and to assist single mothers, Roma women, women in rural areas, people with disabilities and children and youth. From this point on, women began to take on leadership roles within the Municipality of Svrlijig. They worked hard to achieve positions of authority where their voices and actions could positively assist other women in the municipality. The Municipality of Svrlijig now has women in a variety of leadership positions, including the Mayor of Svrlijig, Deputy Mayor, Head of Municipal Administration, Head of the Budget, the Protector of Patients' Rights & Legal Aid, Head of Department of Urban Planning, Head of Property Legal Services, Public Attorney, Head of Child Protection and Veterans' Affairs, and Head of the Tax Office. In fact within the local administration twenty-four women are employed compared to twenty-two men.

Attention has been paid to improve the situation of marginalized groups and their position in society. The President of the Municipality of Svrlijig has made herself available to local citizens to assist in all matters when required. Fund raising events have also been organized to assist socially disadvantaged women and to raise money to cover the costs of operations for sick children. The municipality has also improved rural roads to allow easier access into towns for citizens re-

quiring medical assistance. Also, work was undertaken on a project to assist language impaired citizens improve their employment and self-employment prospects. The Municipality has received recognition from EU for its work on Roma integration in 2014.

By placing women in managerial positions, the Municipality has contributed to a greater appreciation of women. The focus of the municipal work has shifted to also address problems of women living in rural areas as well as the issue of unemployment and economic independence of women. All these interventions also contributed toward improving the life of children and youth and the well-being of these families.

In the beginning people were skeptical about the functionality of a municipal administration with this particular composition but thanks to the success of undertaken projects, the initial negative perception of the municipal administration has turned to a positive one and it is believed that the good work the Municipality has done so far will keep the good practice sustainable.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Svrlijig, Serbia  
Jelena Radojkovic  
Deputy Mayor

++381 18 821018

ousvrlijig@gmail.com  
etnoforum@gmail.com

www.svrlijig.rs  
www.etnoforumsvrlijig.rs

## Municipality of Kotor, Montenegro No to Violence!



In order to gain an insight into domestic violence in the Municipality of Kotor, the Police Administration was asked to provide information on reported cases in the year 2013. Based on this request, the administration reported that the total number of reported cases of domestic violence was nineteen (five criminal acts in accordance with the Criminal Law; fourteen violations of the Law on Protection against Domestic Violence), while fifteen perpetrators were male and four female. The total number of victims was twenty-three, out of which eighteen were female and five male. In 2013 fifteen women reported domestic violence.

Recognizing the importance of this issue, the Municipality of Kotor signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with the OSCE and the Department for Gender Equality within the Ministry for Human and Minority Rights. The Local Action Plan for Achieving Gender Equality for the Municipality of Kotor was adopted during an assembly meeting on 24th May 2013, and it is in accordance with the activity plan for achieving gender equality in Montenegro for the period to 2017 that also addresses domestic violence.

Furthermore, in order to mark the International Day for Elimination of Violence against Women, the Municipal Department of Culture, Sport and Social Services gave its contribution by producing the publication No to Violence! The aim of this publication

was to present the situation of women in the Municipality of Kotor, as well as to display data about domestic violence in a very transparent manner. Also, the aim was to present the activities carried out by the Municipality of Kotor in partnership with non-governmental

organizations that are very active in the field of human rights and support the local sustainable development.

"No to Violence!" is presented as an educative document, as part of the implementation of the Local Action plan, to raise awareness on domestic violence and provides additional knowledge that should trigger broader thinking about gender practices. The data presented in this publication could be useful for development of future initiatives.

All kinds of violence hold back the progress of society, impedes peace and security, as well as belittling an individual and certainly does not communicate a healthy message to future generations.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Kotor, Montenegro  
Aleksandra Milic

++382 32 325 874  
++382 67 511 645

kultura.manifestacije@opstinakotor.com

## Municipality of Suleymanpasa, Turkey Women Entrepreneurship Education

Suleymanpasa Municipality and KOSGEB Cooperation determined that women are underrepresented in the workforce of the community. Today women in Suleymanpasa both want and need to work but lack basic skills to meet the demand of employers.

In view of this, the Municipality of Suleymanpasa with KOSGEB started working on projects focused on women empowerment and gender equality.

Being aware of the fact that women lack knowledge about employment opportunities and skills to start a business, the Municipality provided tailored-made trainings for women who were interested to enter the labor market and gain economic independence. So far, around 30 women participated in the training program, while 19 of them have successfully finished the education and were awarded a certificate for a start-up business. The nineteen women who were certified were asked to decide what type of business they would like to start with. If the business idea was in line with KOSGEB's goals, it was financially supported with a business startup grant of 30,000 Turkish Lira.

So far the project has been a success since it has a record of enabled and empowered women from the community who already started and run their own

businesses. The direct beneficiaries are undoubtedly the women, but also their families and the community as a whole, because this practice also contributes to reducing the unemployment rate and by doing so it supports the local economic development. Therefore the Municipality works on encouraging more women to take part in this program and believes the number of self-employed women individuals will grow in near future.



### Contact details:

Municipality of Suleymanpasa, Turkey  
Sevda Taşkol  
Research and Development Specialist

++90 850 450 59 59  
++90 545 265 44 42

sevda\_taskol@hotmail.com  
<http://www.suleymanpasa.bel.tr/>

# Municipality of Peja/Pec, Kosovo

## Raising Awareness for Prevention of Breast Cancer



With an increased prevalence of women affected by breast cancer, the Municipality of Peja decided to provide free access to relevant health care services to women of different ethnicities living in both urban and rural areas within the Municipality. The main activities were focused on disseminating information and raising awareness about the detection and prevention of breast cancer.

Often there was hesitation in taking part in examinations due to fear that others would simply assume that they had cancer, merely from deciding to be examined. As such, these families who adhered to this belief were visited and explanation was given to them about the importance of prevention. As such, the local attitudes have changed from fear and skepticism to understanding and positive acceptance, reflected in an increased number of participants who are willing to be examined.

This activity was implemented jointly by the Health Institutions and the Municipality of Peja/Pec. Various round table events were organized, ensuring women of different ethnicities to be present, where health specialists could inform them for the importance of the prevention of breast cancer through free access to examinations, distribution of information leaflets, posters, and advertisements through various media sources. Due to the high number of women who wish to have a health examination a request has been submitted to Municipal officials to open a diagnostic sector within the Main Family Health Centre in order to afford easy access of health examinations for women. The Municipality has approved this request and in addition it requested support from international donors

to provide multipurpose ultrasound equipment which will be used exclusively for detection of breast cancer. This request has been accepted and a donor already found. The Office of Gender Equality with representatives from the Diagnostic Centre and Office for Community have drafted a schedule of health examinations for women from different ethnicities to have free access to the examination.

Such an approach to help the women learn about breast cancer and to be offered free examinations is of benefit not only to the women but also to their families and as such the community as a whole. The initiative has done much to eradicate fear and ignorance of breast cancer and to promote regular check-ups for women. The project's success is visible in the high number of women who have participated in round tables, presentations and the health examinations. Health services and examinations are provided by professionals using new innovative technology. The Municipality provides transport for the most vulnerable individuals and people with special needs. This practice has a positive impact on the community and the overall well-being of women's health in the community.

### Contact details:

Municipality of Peja/Pec, Kosovo  
Sebahate Qorkadiu  
Office for Gender Equality

++381 49 786 402

sebi\_956@hotmail.com  
www.komuna.peje



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