

PRESS RELEASE



United Nations Development Programme

Better Services for the Citizens through New and Innovative Models of Inter-municipal Cooperation

Skopje, 15 October, 2010

The Ministry of Self-government and UNDP signed today 8 Project Cooperation Agreements in the value 100,000 USD with 18 municipalities. These projects provide support for inter-municipal cooperation in the areas of Social Protection and Environment and Nature Protection. The projects are in the frame of a Programme financially supported by the Norwegian Government. The Evaluation Commission was composed of the representatives from the Ministry of Local Self-Government, Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning and Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, as well as UNDP.

The following municipalities have joined forces in drafting joint projects to provide services to citizens in the area of Environment and nature protection:

- Gostivar with Mavrovo i Rostuse and Vrapciste;
- Kriva Palanka and Rankovce
- Negotino and Demir Kapija
- Dolneni and Krivogastani
- Radovis and Konce

Other municipalities like:

- Zajas and Oslomej;
- Novo Selo, Bosilovo and Vasilevo;
- Gevgelija and Dojran will work together to provide Social protection services to their citizens.

This initiative is a part of the Programme "Inter-municipal Cooperation for Better Service Provision and EU Accession", funded by the Norwegian Government and implemented in partnership between the Ministry of Local Self-government and UNDP since 2007.

Last year, 11 grant agreements were signed by 25 municipalities. The recent announcements called for proposals in innovative areas and forms of inter-municipal cooperation, such are the areas of Social Protection and Environment and Nature Protection. The good results and findings from the partnership projects for service delivery in the areas of financial management and audit, tax collection, urban planning, inspection services and economic development were motivation for further expansion of the activities.

These two areas offer direct service delivery to citizens and are one of the most significant areas for the process of the country's EU accession.

On the signing ceremony, the **Minister of Self-government, Mr. Musa Xhaferi** said:"

"The IMC is one of the instruments for successful effecting of the competences by the local authorities, an instrument which is stirring interest even among countries with rich experience in the development of local self-government system. Our model of IMC is a possibility for promoting Republic of Macedonia as a country which is successfully implementing the decentralization and is building sustainable and functional system of local self-government based on the European values and standards. In that sense, the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the other department ministries will promote, initiate, and support the Inter-Municipal Cooperation in future. I am convinced that these IMC projects, which will be implemented in the forthcoming six months, shall serve as a good example which can be applied in the other municipalities as well".

The UNDP Resident Representative, Ms. Deirdre Boyd underlined that: *"To mitigate municipal disparities, UNDP has been continuously supporting establishment of cooperative arrangements for cooperation, particularly among smaller municipalities, to allow for more cost-effective and pro-poor provision of local public services. The work on inter-municipal cooperation has already brought about tangible benefits for local administrations and citizens not only in terms of enriched and improved IT-based services (in the areas of tax collection, urban planning and financial management) and better administrative organization, but also in terms of cost-effectiveness, client-orientation and the opportunity for the smaller municipalities to reach out to women and men and cover the most vulnerable groups with basic services. Thus far, the IMC service provision intervention implemented in 34 municipalities, outreached to 570,000 people and 170,000 households which otherwise had limited or no services available in the target service areas. Further on, IMC encourages consultation, compromise, transparent monitoring and evaluation and generally promotes a culture of organizational cooperation and building of trust."*

Mayor of Radovich, Robert Velkov illustrated the results from his own experience from the previous cycle of similar projects: *"Through the first call for proposals for IMC projects and with the support from UNDP, municipalities of Radovich and Konche established an effective inter-municipal cooperation in the area of local taxes and duties. With the financial and technical assistance we received, we raised the capacity of the staff, short-term employment for 15 new persons, we created a sophisticated and joint data base and equipped technically our administration. The recent analyses show increase in the number of real estate tax payers for more than 30%. In very near future we expect increased income in the budgets for over 50%."*

Similar is the case with municipality of Zelenikovo and Petrovec, two rural municipalities near the capitol of Skopje. *"We are two rural municipalities with lots of technical problems, we have many current issues. We have the channels, they have the water pumps, so, if it were not for the inter-municipal cooperation, we wouldn't have been able to function,"* says **Dejan Dimitrovski, LED (local economic development) Coordinator in the Municipality of Zelenikovo**. *"With the grant we received through the UNDP project last year, we organized for our citizens trainings with very experienced consultants, drafted a Strategy for Local Development, created the website in 2 languages and procured technical equipment. This makes us able to provide services to citizens from both municipalities, primarily in the area of advice and documentation for applying for IPARD and other funds, so as to help them increase their businesses or agricultural production".*

"Inter-municipal Cooperation for Better Service Provision and EU Accession" Programme

The objective of this initiative is to contribute to the development of inter-municipal cooperation in the country as a support to achieve one of the main objectives of decentralization i.e. the efficient provision of affordable and quality public services to citizens. It aims to ensure that institutions and civil servants have the necessary professional and technical knowledge and systems to deliver affordable and quality services to the citizens. Ultimately, the programme seeks to establish an effective and sustainable system for supporting IMC which would be adopted and expanded by the Government through its own policies and resources. The experience shows that the municipalities in the country are open to cooperation and have practical ideas how to join efforts and to work together for the better future of their citizens. The programme, in total value of 1.200.000 \$, is financed by the Norwegian Government.

For further reference please visit: www.undp.org.mk and www.imc.org.mk

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Note to editors:

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