



MINISTRY OF LABOR AND SOCIAL POLICY
OPERATIONAL PROGRAMME
„HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT“ 2014-2020
PROJECT: BG05M9OP001-4.003-0046-C01

„Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalised Groups through Public Procurement“



EVALUATION REPORT

of the achieved results on the applicability of the innovative elements of the project „Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for the Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement “

Sofia, November 2020



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I. Introduction

This report provides a comprehensive assessment of the results achieved within the implementation of the project BG05M9OP001-4.003-0046-C01 "Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement." The project is implemented under the priority axis "Transnational Cooperation" and the procedure "Transnational Partnerships" code BG05M9OP001-4.003, funded by the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund through the Operational Program "Human Resources Development 2014-2020".

The Lead beneficiary under the Grant contract is the Municipal Administration - Botevgrad¹, and the National Institute for Health and Welfare² of Finland is the project partner. The partner organization has a crucial role in the project reflected in sharing the developed models and the experience gained so far on job creation opportunities for people from marginalized groups³ by applying employment criteria in public procurement in Helsinki and Vantaa's cities.

In the context of the ESF and Regulation 1304/201313, this practice is rightly seen as 'social innovation.' The conclusion is due to the new model application that provides a sustainable response to social needs that affect social interactions and improve the capacity for active individuals.

Within the project "Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement," the Municipality of Botevgrad has successfully implemented all planned activities, which can be summarized as follows:

¹ Bulgaria, Sofia region, municipality Botevgrad, Botevgrad, Osvobozhdenie Square №13, p.k. 2140, phone +359 723 66608, E-mail: bborisov@botevgrad.org

² Mannerheimintie 166 A P.O. Box 30, FI-00271 Helsinki, Finland, 00271 Helsinki Finland, тел. +358 29 524 7921 E-mail: eeva.mielonen@thl.fi

³ Marginalization is a condition in which people (mostly from the Roma community) live on the edge due to severely limited access to resources and opportunities needed to lead a dignified life.



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- a) Activities related to the study of Finnish practice such as social innovation - forming a team to implement project activities and achieve the set goals; mutual information, research, consulting by organizing Internet-based workshops; exchange of knowledge and good practices by organizing a working visit on-site; reports for evaluation of the critical characteristics of the Finnish social innovation and its applicability in the procurement in the municipality of Botevgrad;
- b) Activities for creating preconditions and preparation for the application of the studied social innovation from Finland within the municipality of Botevgrad - establishment, equipment, and furnishing of a Community center for work with vulnerable groups and people; organizing and conducting a series of meetings between the mediators involved in the project and people from marginalized groups in order to inform, motivate and support them; preparation of part of the project team to participate in the public procurement process according to the shared experience of the Finnish partners;
- c) Activities for validation of the good Finnish practice by adapting and transforming the social innovation - preparation and announcement of a public procurement under Chapter 26 of the Public Procurement Act (PPA) with included employment criterion; selection of a contractor under an announced public procurement with the included criterion for employment⁴ and conclusion of a contract with a contractor; implementation and analysis of the public procurement for pilot employment of persons from the target group and application of the good Finnish practice at a local level.

All of the above demonstrates the Municipal Administration's efforts - Botevgrad Municipality to apply the approach of enhanced cooperation between experts involved in

⁴ On 12.06.2020, The Public Procurement Agency (PPA) announced a procedure № C-10 (ID 9099615), with a contracting authority Botevgrad Municipality and a subject the field of construction.



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awarding public procurement and social workers⁵ in the municipality. The need to solve some of the identified problems with the deepening isolation of individuals and families in the municipality of Botevgrad (economic, social, health, educational, legal, housing, etc.), generates the development of tools to resolve them. Efforts to implement various innovations applicable at the local level are systematic and consistent. Partnership initiatives are being actively created.

II. Project objectives and results achievement monitoring and their connection with meeting the needs of the target group

Through project "Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement" development, the team has set several hierarchically constructed objectives. In line with the objectives of the Transnational Partnerships procedure of OPHRD 2014-2020, the following general transnational objective is formulated **"to study how to create jobs, internship and apprenticeship opportunities, work habits for people remote from the labor market with much low education and professional experience through the application of employment criteria in public procurement"**. Presented in this way, this goal is perceived as reasonable, achievable and pragmatically oriented. With its complexity, it gives a request for a professional view on the relationship between its individual elements. In addition, it can be said that this application has an inspiring effect, it motivates efforts to achieve improvement and growth of local communities.

The project does not blindly follow the main challenges arising from the contractors' local conditions and administrative responsibilities. Still, it rethinks and gives adaptability and flexibility to its primary functions. Thus, the goals envisage to improve on the one hand the capacity of the municipal employees involved in the process of public procurement, and on the other hand, the labor, health, educational, social mediators who work with the Roma community in the municipality of Botevgrad. Simultaneously, strategic documents and socio-economic analyzes at

⁵ See "Guide to Socially Responsible Public Procurement" - published by the Finnish Ministry of Economy and Employment, 2017. - MEAE guidelines and other publication 12/2017



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the municipal level show that about 30 families at the local level are permanently experiencing complementary forms of isolation and even stigma. The practical approach used in setting the project objectives is to propose and test solutions to overcome the already identified challenges.

For the defined goals to be the basis for effective action, the chosen partnership model plays a positive role. When the most disadvantaged groups in society directly or indirectly benefit from the project, it is essential to involve organizations and experts aware of the actions needed to achieve the objectives. Undoubtedly, the partners, represented by experts from the National Institute of Health and Social Care, have "know-how" that they are ready to share, and the Bulgarian team is prepared to adopt and implement it in the specific Bulgarian environment.

The identified target groups' needs are met by dividing the main project objective into separate elements, with an implementation schedule for each one of them. For example, the specific objective of building institutional capacity in municipal officials and mediators is complemented by actions to build and equip a Community Center, which will continue to operate after the project end. There, mediators will continue to organize and hold meetings to inform people from marginalized groups about job opportunities, motivate individuals in social isolation, and support them in integrating into the labor market and public life in general.

This evaluation report will also pay attention to the practical goal of validating good Finnish practice in the form of social innovation by adapting and implementing it in public procurement with an employment criterion included. The performed actions demonstrate that the defined project's goal has been achieved, and its results have been analyzed and evaluated as useful. This fact brings us back to the project's overall purpose and broadly justifies its potential to generate added value. The sustainability of the initiative exceeds the beneficiary Municipality prospects and can be perceived also at national level.

By realizing the project's final products, including the current evaluation report of the achieved results regarding the applicability of the innovative elements and the planned Information event for disseminating the results among the stakeholders, it is logical to look for an opportunity to multiply the results of the project. On the part of the beneficiary, these



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opportunities are expressed in other public procurements, on the part of the other municipalities in Bulgaria - through social innovation and on the part of other countries - through ROMACT program.

The achieved general and specific objectives and obtained individual results fully correspond to the project initial concept. Satisfying the target groups' needs under the project also covers the maximum of the envisaged number of persons - representatives of the marginalized groups⁶. Outside the project, however, the tested pilot practice can be further developed, both quantitatively and qualitatively. Accordingly, we can conclude that the project objectives correspond to significant public needs. Therefore, the achieved results are reasonable to declare that they will not remain unsatisfied after the end of project implementation.

III. Activities implementation features and their connection with project objectives and achieved results

The perfect relation between the objectives of the project "Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement" and the achieved important results were ensured through the logical framework of the planned project activities. Although only four of them are listed, due to their organic connection with the set project goals, they are to be segmented by analogy within the present evaluation report. Regarding their implementation, there were registered some particularities arising from:

- 🚦 **The time range** - to ensure the project results' ultimate effectiveness, the activities are organized in an open chain. Thus, only the positive outcome of the previous activity becomes the beginning of the next. Even after the project is completed, the circuit remains open, allowing it to be upgraded. Beyond the good internal schedule, the implementation of some of the activities had to be carried out in the

⁶ 10 (ten) persons were employed with contracts by the company "David 2015" EOOD, selected as a contractor for construction, based on a public procurement with number C-10 from 12.06.2020 with id.№ 9099615 of ROP, in which an employment criterion was included.

limiting conditions of the crisis caused by COVID-19, but it did not have a crucial impact on their successful implementation;

The persons involved

- ***On the first place*** is the team implementing the project activities. They participate from the beginning in the process of research and consultation, then in the process of knowledge exchange, and finally in the development and award of the public procurement with an announced employment criterion. Throughout and after completing this particular project, the experts will continue to work with people from the Roma community. The project team consists of 14 people (8 public procurement experts, municipal employees in the administration of Botevgrad Municipality, 5 social workers, and 1 external expert), who participated in all the 21 project team meetings within the implementation process.

- ***On the second place*** are the representatives of the marginalized groups identified under the project. A total of 13 information meetings were organized in the Roma neighborhoods from different settlements within the territory of Botevgrad municipality. At the moment, there are about 50 direct users, but the activities set can achieve enormous interest, and in that case, the work of the Community Center established under the project will continuously and effectively influence the representatives of the target groups.

- ***On the third place*** are the involved partners from Finland - the six workshops held on the Internet and the exchange of experience in the cities of Helsinki and Vantaa allowed the participants from Lead beneficiary's side to inform Finnish partner's experts about both positive progress and difficulties encountered within the introduction of social innovation in our country. This way, they are a kind of corrective for the quality of project activities during and after its completion.

 ***The nature of the key action*** - adaptation and validation of social innovations based on innovative Finnish models related to social criteria in public procurement. The legislative framework analysis showed that job creation is allowed through the use of employment criteria in public procurement. The Municipality of Botevgrad is a pilot in



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the adaptation of social innovation to overcome the lack of employment among vulnerable groups by assessing offers on the basis of the "best value for money" evaluation in order to award public contract with preliminary announced employment criterion.

Having analyzed the identified needs of the target groups, the present project activities expand the functional scope and the public sector's role as an "employer," which role is currently greatly underestimated. The complexed link "objectives - activities - results" can furtherly meet the necessity for better use of public procurement as an active measure in the labor market so that people from marginalized groups could access it in real time.

The project activities provide an opportunity to exchange experience and indirectly offer information to the municipalities and support them in the successful implementation of public procurement procedures aimed at employment while raising the thresholds of business culture in this area. The results indicate significant compliance with the needs of the Municipality of Botevgrad. The validation of social innovation provides an opportunity for the creation of a new market instrument.

IV. Efficiency and effectiveness of the planned costs in terms of objectives, activities, and results achieved

Linking public procurement and employment is reasonable and justified by the possibility of creating pathways to the open labor market for people who are too far away from it. It is also appropriate insofar as social criteria in public procurement linkage to development policies, the economy, and local government is visible and concrete.

The planned costs under the project "Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement" are responsibility of the Lead beneficiary facing the Botevgrad Municipality. Their adequacy should be assessed in several ways:

- ✚ ***in absolute values*** - the total amount of the project and the budget breakdown by accounting items are in full compliance with the financial requirements and the rules for spending EU funds. The project was approved without budget reductions. The technical and financial reports demonstrated high culture and discipline in processing expenditure operations by the Municipality of Botevgrad, as the only one entitled to implement them;
- ✚ ***according to the internal budget distribution*** - the set amounts on the activities' items follow the current market situation and do not violate the economic rationality and social ethics. Remuneration for labor, expenses for business trips, expenses for tangible assets and equipment, expenses on external services, etc. are performed according to the legal requirements, within the contractual terms and are duly proved with essential and accompanying accounting documents;
- ✚ ***according to the relevance*** - the adaptation of a foreign social innovation and its transformation into a working tool for solving local and national problems for the inclusion of marginalized groups in the labor market has no production significance and can be assessed only indirectly. Although, in most cases, public procurement in our country is seen as something separate from other economic actions taken by public contracting authorities and municipalities, in particular, this project through the partnership element ensures maximum cost-effectiveness for implementing social innovation. In fact, the time for preparation of the documentation was reduced to a minimum due to the use of existing experience and solutions, limiting the costs of validation. Additional efficiency is guaranteed by avoiding the risk of potential mistakes and problems by sharing knowledge and experience, the problems related to the introduction of social innovation in the award of future public contracts can be predicted;
- ✚ ***according to the control*** - according to order № OA-94 / 11.02.2019. of the Mayor of Botevgrad Municipality, a project management team has been appointed,

consisting of Project manager and a Project accountant, who both bear administrative and personal responsibility, incl. financial issues related to the implementation of the project. Efficiency and effectiveness were additionally guaranteed by the condition that Botevgrad Municipality as Lead beneficiary being public institution compulsory controls and audits all financial transactions carried out in compliance with applicable law.

The project costs not only ensure the implementation of the relevant activities and the achievement of the planned results but also in terms of assessing the potential for future benefits, they should also be considered a kind of investment.

V. Conclusion

From the signing of Grant contract №BG05M9OP001-4.003-0046-C01 and the implementation of the project "Adaptation and Implementation of Social Innovations for Employment of Marginalized Groups through Public Procurement", it can be concluded that the Municipality of Botevgrad accumulated several socially beneficial effects. At the beginning there was created a good basis for the entry of social innovations and socially responsible practices in our country, thus solving the problems of the inclusion in the labor market of marginalized local groups. In particular, the validation of the Finnish experience in public procurement with employment criteria for integration and reintegration into the labor market has further increased the capacity of employees involved in the procurement process. Then, by joining the project the mediators (labor, health, educational, social, etc.) who work in the field were better acquainted with the procedures related to public procurement. That is general prerequisite for being able in the future to adequately inform people from marginalized groups about the newly discovered job opportunities based on the social criteria in public procurement.

The elaborated reports and results evaluations also show that the functional chain "objectives - activities - results" under the present project should be considered in many ways. On the one hand, observing the project needs in terms of created opportunities for multiplication,



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and on the other - considering the post-project perspective that can be outlined. The results' usefulness and applicability are determined by the objectivity of the range of needs that can be met and addressed by disseminating and upgrading the knowledge and the skills acquired under the project.

All costs incurred in the future can become investments with a specific market assessment. This could be achieved by presenting the positive results of the project to representatives of various central government institutions, other municipalities in Bulgaria, organizations and experts included in the ROMACT program, which seek to improve the participation of Roma communities at the local level and representatives of all other relevant stakeholders, incl. public institutions, non-governmental organizations, business, and media.

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