

**STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF NAMRB AND THE BULGARIAN LOCAL
AUTHORITIES THROUGH THE NORWEGIAN FINANCIAL MECHANISM 2009-2014**

UNDER PROGRAM BG 11

“CAPACITY BUILDING AND INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION”

Within the framework of project “Strengthening the Capacity of NAMRB and the Bulgarian Municipalities through Cooperation with the Local Authorities in Norway”, the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMBR) has received a grant amounting to over than BGN 2 million. The main project objective is related to the strengthening of the institutional capacity and the development of the human resources of the Bulgarian local authorities and of the Association through cooperation and transfer of knowledge, experience and good practices with the partner under the project – the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS). The Norwegian Association is one of the organizations of local authorities in Europe with the richest experience and history, as well as with multiple examples for good practices in the field of cooperation with the central government, efficient and transparent local finance management, intermunicipal cooperation for provision of public services and active participation of the citizens in the taking of decisions at the local level.

The main activities under the project include international trainings, forums, conducting of working group meetings on the territory of the country involving experts from the municipalities, as well as construction and refurbishment of the NAMRB Training Center for Local Authorities.

Since the beginning of the project, three training workshops have been carried out in Norway, organized by the project partner – the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, in which more than 50 representatives of the municipalities – mayors, deputy mayors, secretaries and experts have participated.

The first study tour focused on the exchange of experience related to lobbying, provision of services to the members and operation of the regional offices of the partner. The participants became familiarized with the Norwegian practices for conducting dialogue and negotiations with the central government, mainly in the part concerning the negotiations on the budget of the local authorities also in their capacity as employers, as well as with effective mechanisms for protecting the interests of the municipalities through exchange of ideas, knowledge and know-how. Within the framework of the three working days, the Bulgarian representatives paid a visit to the Norwegian Parliament and the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.



The second study tour was targeted towards the financial and tax experts in the Bulgarian municipalities. The main objective of the training was the familiarization of the Bulgarian representatives with the local government system in Norway, the activity of the

Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities, the practices for financial planning and management, and with the accountability system KOSTRA, implemented by all administrative bodies in Norway.



20 representatives from 18 municipalities took part in the third study tour, focused on intermunicipal cooperation. They became familiarized on the spot with the existing legislation in Norway, as well as with the rich and diverse experience of the Norwegian municipalities related to establishment and management of intermunicipal cooperation. The participants had the opportunity to visit Askim Municipality, which is implementing different forms of intermunicipal cooperation through the creation of joint companies and informal partnerships with neighboring municipalities. The representatives of the Bulgarian municipalities were impressed by the big number of intermunicipal companies, created by the Norwegian municipalities to provide a large part of the public services within their scope of responsibility – i.e. collection, disposal and rendering harmless of the waste, water treatment, fire alert, health care, taking care of the people with disabilities, requalification training of adults, audits of municipal accounts, archiving, software and hardware maintenance are provided by several municipalities together through their intermunicipal companies or joint stock companies (public limited companies).



The forum on lobbying “NAMRB – the Voice of the Bulgarian Municipalities” was held in April 2014 and provoked high interest. More than 100 representatives of the municipalities, experts involved in different forms of the dialogue with the central government, as well as representatives of the National Assembly and of the Norwegian Association, took part in it.



An important part of the project is also the refurbishment and the improvement of the activity of the NAMRB Training Center for Local Authorities. It is located in the central part of Bulgaria, Gergini village, Gabrovo Municipality and offers very good conditions for

conducting trainings, seminars, working meetings, discussion forums and other initiatives.

During the period 2013-2014, a fully new building unit was constructed. It includes a 4-storey amenity building, consisting of: hotel part, training hall, two warm connections to the existing neighboring building units ("A" and "B"). The finishing activities and the provision of accessibility were financed under the project.

