

Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services

The challenge

South-East European countries are currently implementing reforms aimed at easing their accession into the European Union. These countries are facing great challenges due to decentralization, especially in the field of municipal services. Municipalities and public utilities often lack capacities and products necessary for implementing the EUs demanding standards, which require to improve the quality of municipal services. Some countries and municipalities of the region have already a track record of important experiences and success stories in the management of their municipal services. Although experiences are of great interest for actors from other countries of the region, the exchange of experiences is still insufficient. This can be attributed to the fact that the regional cooperation for the improvement of municipal services in compliance with EU accession requirements is not yet sufficiently developed.

In order to meet these challenges, the Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services (ORF MMS) strengthens the capacities of regional networks such as the Network of Associations of Local Authorities in South-East Europe (NALAS) to achieve cooperation between the members within the network as well as with other networks in order to effectively provide the users of municipal services with high quality and efficient services.

Goal

Regional cooperation for the improvement of municipal services in accordance with EU accession requirements is strengthened.

Name	Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Countries	EU Accession countries in South-East Europe
Lead executing agency	Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)
Duration	2006 – 2021
Project value	2006-2016: 15 million Euros (incl. 4 million Euros from Government of Switzerland) 2016-2021: 12.9 million Euros (inc. 5.3 million Euro from State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO)

Our approach

Together with regional networks, municipal associations, public utilities and their associations as well as consumer organisations, ORF MMS creates a basis for an appropriate dissemination of developed instruments through the networks, such as the business planning model for the management of water supply networks. In the field of water supply, waste water and waste management, tools, procedures and processes for improved municipal services will be prepared in such a manner that they can be offered by networks or their members and demanded as products in municipalities (including a developed business model, business plan and marketing strategy) . In addition, ORF MMS strengthens the ability of networks to achieve financial independence through capacity development for fund raising (for example from EU funding programmes) and the organizational capacities of regional networks and their members to facilitate exchange of experience through regional cooperation.

ORF MMS promotes cooperation between national decision makers and the members of the regional networks as well as the cooperation and exchange between these actors from different partner countries. In this way, results, instruments, products and learning experiences for the improvement of municipal services can find their way into national frameworks, for example in the form of



Left to right :

Training on management of non-revenue water;
Measurement and morphological composition of household waste;

directives, regulations, agreements and/or other policy instruments. Regional networks are supported to develop common position papers and to implement concrete measures to improve the legal and institutional framework for the strengthening of organizational and individual capacities.

Furthermore, the project supports capacity building at the local level in SEE in order to facilitate economic starting opportunities and access to employment for vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups. For the purpose of achieving this aim, the sub-project focuses on three levels: capacity building of municipalities for entering into a dialogue with the private sector for the identification and creation of new employment opportunities (capacity building), supporting the participation of vulnerable groups in education and qualification measures and employment promotion measures (education and training) as well as reduction of barriers limiting the access of vulnerable groups to the labour market and job creation through improved legal and institutional framework (employment models).

Results

With support from ORF MMS, the partners have developed instruments, methods, recommendations and comparative regional analyses which are used by municipalities and public utilities for the improvement of municipal services. They can also serve as the basis to improve the legal framework and to initiate relevant processes of change within the partner system. One example is the introduction of an electronic building permit system in Serbia and Albania, which had originally been developed in North Macedonia. National authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro have used recommendations to improve legal framework conditions for the introduction of a municipal solid waste data collection method. Another success story is the establishment of a regional certification model for business friendly municipalities. Moreover, procedures and processes for the improvement of water-related municipal services have been developed and introduced in public utilities and disseminated in individual countries of South-East Europe through networks, such as the management of water supply systems or approaches for the reduction of non-revenue water. Furthermore, there are already first experiences and good practices regarding regional cooperation which are aimed at an improvement in the delivery of municipal services, such as the cooperation between NALAS, the International Association of Water Supply Companies in the Danube River Catchment Area (IAWD), the Standing Working Group for Regional Rural Development (SWG RRD) and con-

sumer organisations (Consumer Organisations Network of the Western Balkans - ConWeB). ORF MMS supported a cooperation culture between these networks and created a common understanding of goals, strategies, concepts and roles in the field of municipal services among these networks.

Open Regional Fund for South-East Europe – Modernisation of Municipal Services has established itself as a relevant cooperation and networking platform for all regional stakeholders interested in improving municipal services in South-East Europe.

Contact: Peter Wolf
Peter.Wolf@giz.de

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Registered offices Bonn and Eschborn, Germany
GIZ Office Sarajevo
Zmaja od Bosne 7-7a
Importanne Centar 03/IV
T +387 33 957 500
F +387 33 957 501
GIZ-BosnienHerzegovina@giz.de
www.giz.de/bosnia-herzegovina

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