

2024

Our Programme has been on an epic journey – and, as is usually the case with our life plans, it has encountered quite a lot of challenges. As in the **ancient Chinese curse**, “May you live in interesting times”, we have indeed made it **in interesting times**! Local elections twice, parliamentary elections six times, eight governments, sometimes misunderstanding, sometimes a little unprofessionalism, inflation, pandemic, general quarantine, war in Ukraine and a sharp rise in the prices of labor and construction materials.

But despite all these obstacles, we also found much more understanding, professionalism, cooperation, partnerships and support along the way of the Programme. Indeed, **without the constant support of many colleagues from various organizations**, we would not be able to achieve the results we have today in the **local development, poverty reduction and enhanced inclusion of vulnerable groups**.

🌿 Conference on the final results of Programme “Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups” – Sofia, May 30, 2024



On May 30, 2024, the closing conference of Programme



“Local Development, Poverty Reduction and Enhanced Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups” was held in Sofia. It was not just a conference, it was **the event of the year** that brought together experts, partners and beneficiaries who



implemented marvelous projects for social and economic cohesion in our



country. Oh, and remember that the Programme was implemented in partnership with the **Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS)** and the **Council of Europe (CoE)**, which experience and expertise we often called upon. We were welcomed by the Deputy Ministers of Education and Science Ms. Emilia Lazarova and Ms. Natalia Miteva, the Deputy Minister of Youth and Sports Mr. Petar Mladenov, Ms. Toril Johansen from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Norway, Ms. Elita Cakule from KS and Ms. Margaretha Platon from the CoE. The event was also attended by guests from the Embassy of the Kingdom of Norway, the Financial Mechanism Office, the Embassy of Switzerland in Bulgaria, UNICEF Deputy Representative in Bulgaria, the European Wergeland Center, the Romanian Fund for Social Development, representatives of municipal authorities, non-governmental organizations, as well as beneficiaries and partners of many projects.

🎯 The aim? To present the results of the Programme, which introduced a **systemic approach to local development and social inclusion** and a variety of **integrated measures in education, health and employment**.

🔑 Main Programme areas, in which we work:

- 🌍 **Increased socio-economic development** in disadvantaged municipalities
- 👶 **Improved social inclusion of children and youth**
- 👥 **Empowerment of Roma communities** and their inclusion in social and economic life

☀️ Results and achievements:

The projects supported by the Programme have shown that we are not only efficient, but also of **high quality!** We established four new youth centers that became **the top locations for youth activity** at the local level. Young people, including those from vulnerable groups, feel at home there – there is always something interesting to do!

Some key events and initiatives

- **International Youth Center – Pernik** – opened on April 25, 2024; it provides opportunities for non-formal education and active participation of young people.

<https://www.facebook.com/IYCPernik/>



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- **Youth Center Montana** – opened on May 22, 2024; it focuses on motivating youth to participate in local and national policymaking - let's make them the future leaders!

https://www.facebook.com/youthmnt/?locale=bg_BG

- **Youth Center in Gabrovo** – opened on December 22, 2024 will help young people to develop professionally and personally.

<https://www.facebook.com/YouthCenterGabrovo>

- **International Youth Center – Burgas**; emphasized the accessibility and inclusion of young people from different parts of the region.

<https://www.facebook.com/YICBurgas/>

The Youth Center is a place where young people can get together, take part in various activities and develop their skills. One of the popular ways to have fun and learn at this Center are the quiz games.



International Youth Center – Stara Zagora took on the bold task of hosting the National Conference on “Perspectives for the Development of Youth Policies and the Institutionalization of Youth Centers in Bulgaria”.



Youth participation motivates many organizations, which we gathered in August to share their ideas. Read here [REPORT](#) from the round table "Sustainability of youth centers and development of youth work in Bulgaria".

🔧 Innovation in local employment and support for vulnerable groups:

The Programme supported innovative approaches for economic activity and job creation in 10 pre-selected municipalities in Bulgaria.

Valchi dol, Levski and Dimitrovgrad know how to achieve success!



👨‍👩‍👧 Integrated hubs for children and parents:

We have established **educational and healthcare hubs for children 0-6 years of age**. There, children receive not only education, but also social and health services that help them start their lives on the right track!

The good examples:



- **The hubs in Sofia (Faculty, Slatina and Filipovtsi)** – various events, health campaigns and parent training.



- **The hubs in Han Asparuhovo and Kaloyanovets** – modern environments for the development of children and families.



👤 Development of social and health services in marginalized communities:

We have created **Integrated Social and Health Services Centers** that work actively to reduce discrimination and overcome stereotypes towards Roma.

Some of those:

- **The Center in Plovdiv (Stolipinovo)** – opened on August 27, 2024; it provides complex social and health services.



[Център за социални и здравни услуги на едно гише в кв. Столипиново | Plovdiv | Facebook](#)

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- **The Center in Pernik** – opened on March 29, 2024; it actively supports the local community by providing quality services.



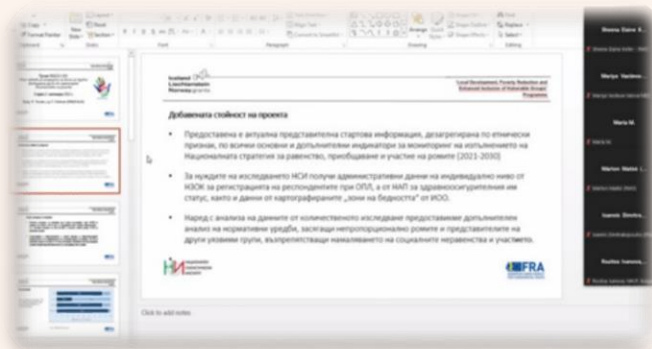
[ХЪБ за социални-здравни услуги – Перник | Facebook](#)

- **Center in Samokov** opened on November 27, 2024, г., provides consultations, training for development of social and life skills, health education.



New initiative to generate data on vulnerable groups:

The project of the National Statistical Institute in partnership with the European Agency for Human Rights (FRA) collected important data on hard-to-reach groups in Bulgaria and published them on the project website:
<https://www.noveleea.bg/>.



Seminar – Veliko Tarnovo, October 23-25, 2024:

We do not just create new practices, we **share experiences**! At the end of October 2024, a workshop for the exchange of good practices was held where we discussed the social aspects of resilience, human rights and youth employment. Trust us, there were great ideas there!



#BGLD2024 #LocalDevelopment #SocialInclusion #YouthCenters #NationalNetworkofYouthCenters
#Integration #EuropeanProjects #Bulgaria

“External European Programmes” Directorate
Ministry of Education and Science

