Main goal: The basic goal was set in relation to the participation of Etropole in the European Sustainable Development Campaign when in the year 2000 local authorities signed the Aalborg Charter and adopted the principles of Local Agenda 21 as their vision. A priority objective is the development of sustainable society through active participation of the local community, which in long-term plan should work for achieving global sustainability, i.e. "Think globally, act locally". LA 21 is a proper basis for policy of the local community as it comprises the social sphere, economy, environment, culture, the elaboration of local plans and long-term development strategies through community debates, the introduction of innovation technologies for safe living conditions in the town, a complex approach to all mankind welfare and health. The subject of our activities is the development of a long-term cultural, economic, social and environmental health of the society, whose needs are to be satisfied without threatening the existence of the future generations. As prerogatives of the LA21 we include the achievement of sustainable development to guarantee steady growth of the quality of life through achieving harmony between the individuals, the society and the nature. We realized on time the challenges of the environment, which we face and which have already been incorporated in the program documents of the Strategy for sustainable development of the EU.

In the 21st century, we, the people could not still realize our responsibility and guilt before Gea - the
planet that is our common home in the endless Universe. A potential necessity exists for raising the awareness and the perceptiveness of the people and their role in the development and the protection of the environment, starting with the little children. Education and information could play a key role in acquiring environment-friendly and ethical norms, values and attitudes, activities and style of living, which provide for sustainable development and nature protection. There is a Chinese saying: "If you think for the next day - take food. If you think for the next year - plant a tree. If you think for the next 100 years - teach your children to love and protect the nature." The objective of our project is to create a mechanism for environment-minded education of the young people through a partnership initiative, as we - parents and teachers realize the significance of the relation with the earth that have to be in good state for the lives of the future generations. The reasons for the global problems that we face, are the natural deficits of the development, which are generated as a consequence of the decreasing abilities of the nature to renew its resources. The sustainable development of the planet is related to our values, the personal style of living, the possibility to estimate the environment capacity and to work for its balance. As the Red Indian leader Seattle said "One does not spin the web of one's life - he is just a thread of it. Whatever he does within the web, he does it for himself."

Narrative

Situation before the initiative began

In this context we are ready also to take the responsibility. Because to do nothing could cost more than to do something quite early. As the program for sustainable development is quite comprehensive, it is our objective to popularize it among the population, so that local people could understand that LA 21 is a way of life. An important part of our plan is techniques to be developed for encouraging all key players of the society to express their vision of the community they wish to live in, and to develop an integrated action plan. The local government of Etropole uses the process of LA 21 for harmonizing and implementing a strategy for local sustainable development through partnership and in conformity with the obligatory environmental requirements. We understand that the present global problems require most of all local action and that we have to get the maximum result with limited resources. We know that the democratic local authority is a key factor of LA21 and that it has to strive for involving the whole community in the processes of sustainable development. The activities of the Council for sustainable development facilitated the outlining of the priorities we have to work on and initiated the development of a long-term action plan. The plan will be the grounds on which local government will develop and pursue efficient policy on management, mobilization and preserving local resources and protecting the environment, and at the same time contributing to the achievement of global sustainability of the Earth. Our municipality did not hesitate to start working for sustainability, involving the local community as participant and corrective through solidarity (wide public participation in the decision-making process); public awareness (information and concern); models of replication (applying best practices of sustainability). We continue finding solutions of social, environmental and economic problems through sustainable development and local efforts.

For a two-year period the local authority of Etropole in partnership with all sectors of the local community has achieved the following results:
- Realized its key role in the LA21 process;
- Drew partners from all sectors for active work;
- Outlined the sustainable development priorities of the local community in conformity with the principles of LA21;
- Catalyzed partnership for sustainable development of the Balkans and Europe;
- Started developing management methods and techniques for successful implementation of LA21;
- Integrated the sustainability in the local policy;
- Increased the public awareness through eco-parliaments, media campaigns, etc.;
- Held public consultations for involving citizens in LA21;
- Initiated the development of a local action plan;
- Trained the municipal staff on subjects of sustainable development;
- Introduced the subject in schools and kindergartens;
- Introduced a pilot model of sustainable use of local natural and historical resources through
employment in tourism;
- Enhanced the political will for long-term sustainable development;
- Developed practical know-how;
- Improved the town safety;
- Adopted the principles of the European Social Charter for Human Rights and Democracy;
- Improved the urban design (town parks, places for children, recreation areas, etc.);
- Initiated anti-poverty actions through alternative employment opportunities.
- Implemented initiatives on environment protection and sustainable development.

1. Problems related to the geographical position of the town.
   - Etropole is a small town situated near the capital of Bulgaria, but communications are hindered because of the bad road infrastructure.

2. Problems related to the lack of Internet communication in the town.
   - There is no local server because of the lack of financial resources and that hinders the Internet access.

3. Problems related to the lack of trust of the local community:
   - As a small town we have to face the slow development of the democratic processes because of the conservative thinking resulting in hindered innovations. This makes the adaptation to the new dynamics of the processes of globalization, European integration and sustainable development rather difficult. The process of attracting the local community to the idea of sustainable development still continues and the most difficult target groups are the elderly and non-educated people.

4. Problems related to the social-economic environment of the countries in transition:
   - It is difficult to convince people in the significance of the environmental problems, the urban sustainability, the global changes and the risks for the future generations when they have to face the daily problems of unemployment, insufficient money for living, stress etc. However, it is important for those groups to realize that LA21 is the right way to improve the quality of life, the development of democratization and the respect of human rights.

5. Problems related to the lack of funds:
   - Municipal budgets still do not have funds for developing and implementing LA21 and that makes the pursuing of sustainable policy very difficult.

Potential for replicability

The practice of our municipality in developing, applying and accounting the results of LA21 is of model character and is applicable for small, as well as for medium and big-size municipalities. Our achievements have already been multiplied in three Bulgarian towns: Dryanovo (of similar size and population), Vidin (a regional center), and Botevgrad.

We rendered those local authorities methodical assistance to start their participation in the European Sustainable Cities Campaign, to build local partnerships, to adopt action plans and to sign the official documents the Aalborg Charter. We provided them with our primary action plan for LA21, and replicated the good practice of working with the media, informing the population on the issues of sustainable development. We used the experience of other Bulgarian and foreign cities such as Bourgas, Veliko Tarnovo, Seattle, etc.

We realize that as more cities work on sustainable local development, as larger is the chance for sustainable states and continents. Our project could be replicated mostly in municipalities of similar character as ours in terms of economic-social development and identical problems. Full replication could be made of the school education innovations as the effect of them could be observed immediately and estimated regularly.

Although different in their specifics, the priority fields of development of each town are directed to similar spheres: environment protection, better living conditions, economic and social development, etc. We consider that it will be a good starting basis for all towns to establish a Town council for sustainable development involving all key players on partnership basis.

A good practice could be multiplied in a best way when it is exchanged through a network and our
idea is to build a network of sustainable cities and towns in Bulgaria. The participation in such a structure will be prestigious and will stimulate the other towns to benefit from the results achieved and experienced gained by us â€“ how to overcome the difficulties, to attract the community and supporters, to organize media campaigns, to achieve permanent results, etc.

Verifiable indicators

As the project is still being implemented, the overall results could not be measured, but below are some concrete ones:

1. Indicator "Local community awareness".
   - Media campaigns;
   - One publication per month issued in the local newspapers on sustainable development;
   - One topical emission per month by the local television;
   - Two topical emissions per month by the local radio.
   In cases of targeted campaigns the intensiveness of information provision is doubled and enriched by video spots, contests, etc. On environment issues citizens are informed regularly by the media and through consultations by municipal experts.

2. Indicator "Education for sustainable development".
   - It has been applied for two years now in all four kindergartens in the town.
   - Work with children between 7 and 18 years of age (over 2000 students) through various out-of classes forms and in the Environmental Center established by a volunteer of the Peace Corps.
   - For the first time this year, sustainable development has been introduced as a subject in elementary, primary and secondary schools. Students will use books that have won the World Award for global education in 2000 of the Council of Europe and the Committee on international cooperation and sustainable development of the Netherlands.
   - Traditional feasts related to the mountain protection (over 5000 participants).

3. Indicator: economy and quality of life:
   - A successful model was elaborated for sustainable use of the local natural resources for the development of sustainable tourism and new job openings. Our present objective is to provide conditions for tourism for handicapped.
   Two playing grounds for children, 2 health paths and 3 eco-roads were built and that indicates the enhanced healthcare for people.

The goal of this initiative is to create conditions for introducing the child to the nature and to provide environmental parameters in the relations with the nature. The priority objective of the project is affirming the environmental education as a positive attitude towards the Earth and as an environment-friendly behavior and culture. That is why we started with the little children by the introduction of environment-minded education in the kindergartens comprising several components â€“ informational, moral, aesthetic and practical.

Moreover, the environment-minded education in the kindergartens aims to educate children for discovering the world. Another part of our initiative is introducing the environment-minded education in the primary and secondary schools in the town. Its basis objective is emotional and informational commitment of children with the environmental problems and their responsibility before the nature and the future of the mankind. An important component of the project is the planned and already established cooperation with children and youths from Etropole and its twin towns from Russia, Greece and Serbia.

For the three years of operation the Center for environment-minded education has the following achievements:
   - environment-minded education and programs were introduced in the kindergartens and schools of Etropole;
   - little citizens were motivated for participation in concrete practical environment protection activities;
   - a number of joint activities were implemented with the participation of children, youths, media,
NGOs, the local government, parents, etc.; environment-minded consciousness was raised, as a stage of forming environment-minded culture; moral and environment-minded values and ideas were created in the minds of the little citizens; the following initiatives were implemented:
1. Environmental campaign "Future without garbage"
2. Environmental campaign "Etropole – for a cleaner and lovelier town", accompanied by activities for town cleaning, educational and promotional campaigns, competitions, etc. (see enclosed).
3. A Scouts movement was launched, which helps the kids communicate with the nature, know it closely, protect and enrich it.
4. Several exhibitions were organized in the kindergartens for children aged between 3 and 7, displaying arts made from natural materials and wastes. Children take care of yard sites planted with flowers, herbs and trees. They participate in theater plays, actively support the implementation of the First national eco-feast in Etropole "Songs for the forest, the mountain and the clean nature", etc.
5. A local secondary school participated in a national conference with a scientific report "Promoting the interest to physics by using its relations with the ecology".
6. A competition was made among the students of the secondary schools devoted to "Life without radiation". A film was made and the initiative was publicized by the media and the specialized editions (see enclosed).
7. Students participated and were awarded by the Union of Physicians in Bulgaria and "Eureka" Foundation for the reports made at the 29th National conference. The themes of the reports were: "The energy â€“ dreams and reality", "The ultrasound works" and "The reactive movement â€“ a way for moving in the Space" (see enclosed).
8. A competition was held between the local schools "After the steps of the progress" â€“ children presented reports connected with the physics and the environment, e.g. the Nuclear energy, Alternative energy sources, etc.
9. For the First national eco-feast "Songs for the forest, the mountain and the clean nature" in 2001 and for developing a healthcare tourism, boy-scouts and young volunteers made 5 eco-paths in the mountain and restored 7 historical monuments in the region, as well as 8 recreation places in the forest.
10. Cross border cooperation was established with three foreign twin towns and children have already implemented joint initiatives for environment protection.

Problems at implementation

The main difficulties and barriers that we met for the implementation of the project were related to the lack of sufficient funds.
The reported project is a kind of summary of the overall partnership activity on environment protection and environment-minded education in our town. Each local school implements its own micro-project and the efforts are united by national, regional and local initiatives. It should be stressed that all educational institutions integrate and coordinate the individual methodical programs and materials. Each school, NGO, media and other partner allocate quite limited financial resources for funding their activities, and for the implementation of more significant environmental actions we rely on the support and sponsorship of local businesses. Nevertheless, funds are still limited. The material assets and equipment for extra-classes education need to be upgraded. The purchase of scientific literature is also very difficult, as well as paying for Internet access, participation in competitions, etc. Regretfully, due to the lack of modern equipment, the children could not observe the solar eclipse. If sufficient financial funds were at our disposal, we could achieve better results with the intellectual potential and desire, and the environment-related processes would have been developing faster.

We have not encountered any other serious problems or barriers.

The innovative aspect of our project is the commitment of all spheres with the nature and environment protection under the environment-minded education and the practical activities of the children.

An example is the bounding of the modern physics and phenomena with the environmental issues.
Another example is the methodical approach for working with the little children between 3 and 7 years of age, which was developed by the teachers in the kindergartens and integrated in the primary schools. We realize that it is of crucial significance to start working with the children from the kindergartens and then to proceed with the primary and secondary schools. So far, this kind of education started as late as fourth grade in school through teaching biology.

An innovation is also the established partnership between the Environmental center, the schools, the local government, NGOs and media, which is a pilot initiative for a small municipality.

Innovative is the initiative "children teach children": "Let me tell you about the world" and "From Bulgaria ë€€ for you", when bigger students teach first-grade students on environmental matters.

Potential for replicability

The project could be replicated in any town within the country or abroad, if only there is the desire to work with the children, the necessary material assets and environmental specialists. Several Bulgarian towns (Vidin, Dyranyovo, Yambol) also applied our good practice by little adjustments. That is why we shall collect sufficient information on our activities, shall develop a web-site, a handbook and literature references that could be easily used by other towns. Replication could be made if only there is an interest by other towns willing to join the Sustainable Development Campaign. We are ready to commit ourselves with providing the support and assistance, if necessary.

Verifiable indicators

The indicators for verification could be qualitative or quantitative:
- Number of schools engaged for the 3 years of the implementation of the project: all local schools within the territory of the town ë€€ 4. Several village schools will also join the initiative, although it will be more difficult and will need more time and funds. The children there belong to the minority groups and so far have not been a target group for the environment-minded education. Our expectations, however, are optimistic for the achievement of sustainable results. Total number of children ë€€ 2000.
- Number of kindergartens involved ë€€ all 4 kindergartens in Etropole (500 children).
- Number of initiatives implemented ë€€ over 80.
- Number of media engaged ë€€ all local and regional ë€€ 6.
- Number of local government officials engaged ë€€ 70% of the councilors and the administration.
- Drawn funds ë€€ over 100 000 EURO.
- Number of awards won through participation in national and international competitions for children and youths ë€€ over 100.
- Number of towns willing to multiply our good practice ë€€ 4 Bulgarian towns, one twin town form Greece and one from Russia.
- Percentage of recently developed urban area ë€€ parks, alleys, gardens ë€€ 60%.
- Raised interest in the problems of environment protection among the little citizens ë€€ from 40% in 1999 to 85% in 2001.

The project, which have already been implemented for three years, will be prolonged by new initiatives and activities. Most important is the results of the environment-minded education to be sustainable, to develop and strengthen the relations between Etropole and its partners from the Balkan region and Europe.

Our desire for the future is through the IT development all barriers of the communication to be overcome, which will facilitate the joint actions for environment protection, healthcare and assuring the future of the planet.

The little citizens are now becoming citizens of the world who care for the Earthâ€™s life, and they desire to convince the adults and the politicians to reasonably use nature, because it could exist without
us, but we could not exist without it.

We intend to continue our participation in the national scientific conferences through submitting new reports, increasing the public awareness of the environmental problems of the town through sending messages from the children to their parents.

We shall organize a series of eco-days, competitions and games for the schools and kindergartens in the town, and a part of it will be implemented jointly with the twin towns of Etropole. Students plan to publish an "eco-bulletin" to inform the citizens on what the urban environment is through their eyes and what the most disturbing developments of the town are. We plan to focus the efforts of the bigger students to more practical knowledge, as they have already acquired the environmental values and behavior, e.g. organizing a market exhibition "Food and health", etc.

11. Project budget â€“ this project is independent from the point of view of participation by volunteers in different initiatives and activities. And the project is depend from the point of view of finances in connection with stability of already achieved results we try to find a way of self - sufficiency, which to be orientated towards the participants in the project, that is to say we set of our own our resources in order to continue our activities.

13. Self â€“ sufficiency â€“ we devise a plan how to do it in future. There is no opportunity to give back project finances, because it concerns to work for the community. In our prospects is publication of bulletin and school appliances, whit which we would finances a part of our activities.

16. Project team and skill. The project team involve specialists from municipal administration, with different qualifications, including experts in ecology, specialists in stability development, coordinators Local agenda 21, teachers, economists, journalists, volunteers â€“ students, citizens, etc. In the council for stable development works as volunteer 45 persons, in the ecological center â€“ most of 20 teachers. All of them works as volunteers, because there is no finances. The project is open for any one, who which take to part in it.

17. The invitations in our projects are the initiate ecological education for children from Nursery schools (age 3 - 5) and then its continuations in elementary, primary and secondary schools. The new idea is taking out the children among the nature. News ideas are the competitions with ecological themes and emulations between local schools and schools from fraterprize towns, organized by medias. The practical studies for knowledge of nature and making up mind for ecological problems lead to sense of responsibility and satisfaction in children. They, as small citizen have already care for future of the planet.

18. Our project has ambition to embrace the whole municipal population, as each group count in its work. Our senders are mostly civil organizations, the unemployed, minority group and students. We strive to attract for our work leaders of local enterprises and firm owners, which to lend a helping hand to our activities.

22. Our project has future ambition to extend owns activities as elaborate local plan for stable municipaly development for 15 years term with accent in ecological tourism, stable agriculture, mace up conditions for production of ecological pure local milk and meat products and their confirm in European markets, ensure places of work and mace better life standard for people, stand by human rights, democratic and local self government. We wish a good future for Europe and the Balkans, as all cities follow our example and take the road of stable development. Our dream is the children to get security fir life in good ecological planet conditions, good social environment and collaboration between nations in the context of open society. In conjunction with our neighboring towns we wish to realizable joint initiatives in the sphere of ecology, social politics and democracy.

24. Our recommendation is every town to include in the company for stability development and to take part to principles of local agenda 21 for guidebook, to striving for rational using the local resources and to create stable economics with care for surroundings. Let strive for ecological productions, ensure peopleâ€™s health and spare the nature resources. There are a lot of pitfalls on this difficult way some of the problems which we meet with are described above. If any towns is in the beginning of its project, let ask us for help and advice. The worst experience is to stand idle, it costs most than to do something, even if you made a mistake.

25. We provided help to three towns in Bulgaria, to begin similar projects. This towns are Drianovo, Vidin and Botevgrad. We work very successfully with Drianovo, because they have more ambitions
than the other. We have huge desire to share our experience with other towns, which are interested in our project. I am the person who can give you information for the project. My e-mail is: mariamar@abv.bg Maria Marinova.

26. Media coverage. In conjunction with us work some medias. They work with us from the very beginning and they help us a lot. They are: local cable TV, local radio, newspaper "Etropole 21 century", "Etropoleian review" and "The town today". The jury will be able to meet them and how they help us in exhibition.

27. We have possibility to prepare a visual presentation of our project through video films, posters, etc.

The present project will continue for three years more and the immediate forthcoming activities are:
- Completing the collection and processing of information about the urban indicator of the project "Global Urban Observatory".
They will be used for the final prioritization of the problems of our municipality for 1995-2000.
- A local development plan will be elaborated for a period of 15 years, on the basis of the results from the Council's activities so far and of a wide public discussion.
- Cross-border cooperation will be strengthened with twinned towns from Russia and Greece, and investments will be drawn for new job openings through environment protection activities.
- The construction of a drinkable water treatment plant will be completed and of a waste water treatment one will start.
- A modern solid household waste depot will be constructed for the towns of Etropole, Pravetz and Botevgrad.
- A project was elaborated for the town gasification and its implementation will start soon.

Sources of financing. The project is financing 25% from local business background: firms, companies, private persons, 30% from municipal budget, 20% from schools, 25% from foundations. Other sources of financing from above are recall only in case of individual initiative and public companies.


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Innovative components in our projects are: including the whole local community, key structures and the parties concerned in work at council for stable development as partners, works for prosperity of their own municipality. Other innovative components is implementing social consult among local community about problems in privatization and their resolve, after that we organize public discussion on a large scale.

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**Key Dates**

- 01. 08. 1998 year: Information public campaign;
- 20. 11. 1999 year: Education for development stability and ecology for kinder and youth;
- 08. 05. 2000 year: Local Agenda 21 campaign ratification Oolborg hart;
- 20. 12. 2001 year: Sectoral award information and education in City Towards European Union Compliance Award;
- 12. 03. 2002 year: Ambassador Project Stockholm Partnerships.

15. Provide no more than five dates and describe in no more than five or six words, their significance.

**Contact**

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**Type of Organization:** Local Authority

**Partners**

Council for sustainable development
# Financial Profile

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Email questions or problems to [help@bestpractices.org](mailto:help@bestpractices.org).

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