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Local Action Plan on Socially Responsible Public Procurement in the Municipality of Dobrich, Bulgaria



DOBRICH
Municipality



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Local Roundtable in Dobrich (Summary)

The [Municipality of Dobrich](#), located at the northeast of Bulgaria, is a partner in the project “Community Resilience through Social Procurement”, referred to as ‘CO-RESP’. The CO-RESP project funded by Single Market Programme (SMP COSME), aims to help the local economy – through the use of ‘Socially Responsible Public Procurement’ (SRPP) – to create new jobs for persons with disabilities and other vulnerable groups by coordinating the exchange of good practices and enhance the inter-regional collaboration between social economy actors and regional/local authorities at the European level.

In this context, and as part of the deliverables of the project, the Municipality of Dobrich as the local authority – with the support of the partnership – organised a Local Roundtable in Dobrich, Bulgaria to bring together relevant local or regional stakeholders (local or regional social economy organisations, enterprises, local or regional public authorities, experts, etc.). The objectives of these Roundtables are:

- Sharing and discussing examples of good practices gathered during the Social Economy Mission (WP2);
- Gathering feedback from local and regional stakeholders and experts on the needs and plans on how to use the lessons learnt of socially responsible public procurement at local level.

The Municipality of Dobrich held the Roundtable on October 5th, 2023. It was attended by representatives of the social enterprise “The Wonderful Garden”, National alliance for Social Responsibility – NASO, which is also a partner in the project, experts from the Directorate “Economic Development, European Funds and Public Procurement” of the Municipality, directors of social services for children and persons with disabilities, representatives of territorial organisations of people with disabilities.

A presentation about the CO-RESP project was made by Snejana Vankova, an expert from the Municipality. She also participated in the visit of the social service and enterprise “Chance B” in Gleisdorf, Austria, which was part of the Social Economy Mission (WP2)’s “Social Economy Conference - Public Procurement with Added Value”. During the event and the study visit, the participants received information on examples of the use of public procurement to create job for persons with disabilities, as well as the state of play of SRPP in the EU – with emphasis on Spain, Germany, France, Bulgaria, and Austria. The conference also provided an opportunity for networking with stakeholders from across Europe representing local authorities, social economy organisations and disabled people’s organisations (DPOs). In addition to the practices showcased in the

conference, participants in the Roundtable in Dobrich were introduced to the overall work carried out throughout the CO-RESP project, such as the Report and the Declaration, that provide specific recommendations to public authorities on how to improve the use of SRPP to create jobs for persons with disabilities.

Representative of the Municipality shared the experience of the Municipality of Dobrich in the field of active social policy and how it has expanded to provide financial, logistical, and methodological support to social economy organisations, which ultimately is producing positive results. As an example, the Municipality has licensed “The Wonderful Garden” the use of public land for social enterprises where persons with difficulties are hired, trained, supported, and engaged in social life that facilitates their full inclusion in society. All proceeds are used for reinvestment to maintain and expand its scope. Resulting in sustainable and environmentally friendly products, produced by persons with disabilities while assisted to overcome isolation and improve their skills and abilities.

Furthermore, one of the founders of the social enterprise “The Wonderful Garden” shared valuable experiences at the round table, presenting his perspective on the current legislation in Bulgaria and the relevance of public procurement for boosting employment opportunities for persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups.

The Deputy Mayor of Dobrich Municipality in the Economic Development, Mr. Pavel Pavlov, European Funds and Public Procurement portfolio presented to the participants in the Roundtable the opportunities and challenges of the Bulgarian legislation regarding SRPP.

The Municipality of Dobrich, as representatives of the executive local authority in the Republic of Bulgaria, follows the principles of the Bulgarian Public Procurement Act. More often, resorting to the Article 12 on Reserved Public Procurement, in under which social economy organisations aiming at the social and professional integration of people with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups are prioritised for the production of goods and services defined by the European Union’s Common Procurement Vocabulary. The practice has resulted in a fruitful partnership of the local government with the social economy organisations. Showing the importance of public-private cooperation for local development, social inclusion and innovation.

Feedback from participants mainly reflected on the relevance of the CO-RESP project to support local development and social inclusion, as well as to deepen joint efforts at local level to improve opportunities and working conditions for people with disabilities. On the other hand, the discussion also emphasised the need to further improve and rescale the skills and competences of contracting authorities to effectively implement the SRPP principles.

The purpose of using social procurement is to promote and facilitate social inclusion, by integrating persons with disabilities on the labour market. In this way, adopting and fully implementing the European Pillars of Social Justice and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.



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Product of the experience of the CO-RESP project, both from the comprehensive overview of the state of Socially Responsible Public Procurement in the Report, as well as the recommendations in the Declaration and the evaluation of different practices across Europe. In addition to the Local Roundtable and the feedback from the participants. The Municipality of Dobrich has been able to reflect on its role, its capacity, the progress achieved, the challenges and opportunities for the future of socially responsible public procurement in Dobrich and ultimately to generate more employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups and promote their inclusion in all areas of society.

In order to support and promote the use of socially responsible public procurement for the employment of persons with disabilities, the Municipality identified the following steps:

- Creating and supporting the creation of job opportunities for persons with disabilities and other disadvantaged groups, by promoting and stimulating the creation of jobs in the local economy through the use of public procurement.
- Dobrich Municipality to award public contracts following the principles of socially responsible public procurement, using tendering procedures that favour social aspects and prioritise opportunities for decent work, social and professional inclusion, as well as better working conditions for persons with disabilities and disadvantaged people.
- Improve the management of policies related to the implementation of the Public Procurement Act in the Municipality of Dobrich aimed at social and environmental sustainability and efficient use of resources. In this sense, Municipality will further develop its administrative capacity, training and disseminating information, ensuring the effective application of public procurement rules through the appropriate mechanisms, in accordance with the Directive 2014/24/EU and relevant Bulgarian legislation. This also includes improving and up-skilling of the capabilities and competences of public servants developing, administrating, and awarding public contracts by regularly providing training on SRPP and recent trends and practices.
- Setting-up a task force within the Department of Economic Development, European Funds and Public Procurement of the Municipality of Dobrich, to debate and develop a strategic plan that allows carefully evaluating the integration of social criteria in public contracts and/or in the conditions of their performance, other than reserved markets.
- Strengthening communication and expanding cooperation with the social economy, entrepreneurs, businesses, and other stakeholders to foster and promote job opportunities for persons with disabilities, by providing incentives according to the Directive 2014/24/ EU.

- Strengthening communication and expanding cooperation with the disabled person's organisations, by actively listening to the needs of persons with disabilities and integrating them.
- Creating and ensuring life-long learning opportunities for persons with disabilities to improve their skills and capabilities, by promoting and supporting equal access to education and training.
- Ensuring, enabling, and promoting inclusion of persons with disabilities by organising joint initiatives of the Municipality of Dobrich and the Labour Office Directorate, as well as DPOs, to promote employment opportunities and inclusion of persons with disabilities, in line with the international conventions, European Pillars of Social Rights and the Disability Strategy.
- Organising joint initiatives of the Municipality of Dobrich, the Labour Bureau Directorate and the local organisations for persons with disabilities, with the aim of raising awareness and incentivising the integration of persons with disabilities in the open labour market.
- Promoting and leading the inter-regional debate on SRPP, by organising informational meetings and consultations with local and regional authorities and stakeholders of people with disabilities, with the aim of raising awareness and circulating practices and expertise on socially responsible public procurement and its impact on the integration of disadvantaged groups on the labour market.
- Promoting, supporting and participating in cross-European projects and conferences on SRPP and employment of persons with disabilities to further gather information on recent trends and promising practices.