



MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

January 2010

This newsletter provides summarized information on the activities of the Program Management Unit under the Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria Program in January 2010.

OVERVIEW AND PLANNING

The New Year 2010 for the Program Management Unit of Glob@l Libraries – Bulgaria started with an overview of the tasks accomplished up to the present and with a plan of the work for this year.

On 7 January 2010 we sent a final report on the planning phase of the program (April 2008 – October 2009) to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The report summary is available in English language at <http://glbulgaria.bg/en/page.php?c=52&d=92>.

On 14 January we presented an updated work plan for 2010 to the Program Working Group (Expert Level)¹. We also discussed the plan with the 28 District Coordinators² under the program in the beginning of February. The plan is published on the program portal: <http://glbulgaria.bg/en/page.php?c=43&d=126>.

The Program Management Unit (PMU) started the year in its full strength of 20 people hired under the planning phase in August 2009.

MEMORANDA OF UNDERSTANDING

After the official announcement of the target libraries list for the 2009 Phase, the signing of quadruple memoranda of understanding between libraries/chitalishte, municipalities, the Ministry of Culture and UNDP started.

By the end of January 446 libraries out of a total of 455 target ones for the 2009 Phase had signed memoranda with the municipality mayors. In many places ceremonies were also held and the signings were covered by the local media. The coordinators in the PMU - Daniel

¹ The Working Group (Expert Level), also known as WG, consists of representatives of the Ministry of Culture, the United Nations Development Programme, the Bulgarian Library and Information Association, the Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications and the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria. WG acts as the Expert Level of the Program Board, the members of which are representatives of the management of the aforementioned organizations.

² The program has 28 District Coordinators – one for each administrative district of Bulgaria.

Dakovsky, Krasimira Kaneva and Nikolay Markov, maintained a “hot link” with the municipalities, the chitalishte and the 28 District Coordinators.

The signing of the memoranda of understanding by the Ministry of Culture and UNDP lies ahead.

On 18 February in Plovdiv, during the General Assembly of the National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria (NAMRB), the signed memoranda will be handed to mayors.

VISITS TO LIBRARIES

In January 2010 the PMU coordinators visited 70 libraries in various districts in order to specify exactly what ICT equipment is needed for each target library in the 2009 Phase. At the same time, the coordinators verified the progress of repairs, cabling and the other preparations in libraries.

ICT EQUIPMENT

After numerous discussions and field visits, the PMU coordinators, the 28 District Coordinators and the representatives of target libraries reached agreement on the number and type of ICT equipment under the Foundation grant. In 126 of the 455 target libraries the previously announced numbers were changed in accordance with the conditions in the corresponding settlements (size of rooms, opportunities for heating, etc.).

On 5 February the Working Group (Expert Level) reached agreement on the so-called “ICT packages” for the target libraries. Approval of the list by the Program Board is expected in the end of February.

TRAINING

During the entire month Eli Popova and Diana Andreeva, PMU training specialists, and the 15 key trainers who were selected in December 2009 worked on the training aids for trainers and trainees.

An advertisement was published on 7 January for selection of trainers under four thematic areas: 1. Information and Communication Technologies; 2. Library Management; 3. Library Services; 4. Soft Skills.

550 applications were submitted until the deadline of 7 February. The most suitable experts will be invited to interviews in Sofia. The trainers for the pilot phase (2010) will be selected until the end of March.

A work meeting of the key trainers in the 4 thematic areas with representatives of the PMU, Ministry of Culture and UNDP was held on 11 and 12 January in Velingrad. Key trainers in each area demonstrated an elaborated topic each – a lesson, an exercise and methodology. Agreement was reached on the types of training aids: trainer’s handbook, trainee’s notebook, dictionary of terms, test assignments.

In regard to the principles and approaches to the forthcoming training of trainers for the pilot phase, attendees of the meeting exchanged experience and ideas on the methodology of training adults and their learning styles. By 6 February the key trainers are expected to submit to the PMU samples of all types of training aids. After agreement between the PMU and the program partners is reached, the aids will be presented in a unified format.

ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

How do we communicate with municipal authorities and chitalishte boards? How do we attract people to the library after we install the computers? How do we gain supporters? We can find the answers to these questions in the Communication and Advocacy Plan for 2010 prepared by Natalia Georgieva, PR specialist, Stanimir Kiskinov, advocacy and fundraising specialist, and Silvina Furnadzhieva, portal associate. The plan was approved by the Working Group (Expert Level) on 22 January and it was presented to the District Coordinators in the beginning of February.

The web portal (<http://www.gbulgaria.bg>) is overflowing with information. The opportunity for access to the so-called service part of the portal for members of the Working Group (Expert Level) and the District Coordinators was renewed in January 2010. In this category we publish protocols from meetings of the Working Group (Expert Level) and the Program Board, as well as other kinds of operative information.

In January the PMU prepared the first meeting with the District Coordinators for the year which was held from 2 to 4 February in Velingrad. You will find out more about the meeting in our next issue.

APPLICATION FOR PARTICIPATION IN PROGRAM OF THE MORTENSON CENTER

The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation announced its latest competition to aid the information access of citizens. The contest is held by the team of the Mortenson Center for International Library Programs in the state of Illinois, USA. Participants in the Leaders and Innovators Training Program will undergo three-week training in the USA and will visit a third country for exchange of experience. The contest is open for participation for countries covered by programs of the Global Libraries initiative: Bulgaria, Romania, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Mexico, Chile, Botswana and Vietnam. The two selected countries will send 12 to 15 library leaders to the Mortenson Center.

On 29 January the Bulgarian team submitted its application for training of Bulgarian librarians. In a telephone interview with the Mortenson Center team Stanimir Kiskinov, advocacy and fundraising specialist and Anna Popova, library services manager, provided additional information on the vision of public libraries development in Bulgaria, the work arrangements under the program, and interaction with the partners. The result of the selection process will be announced in the end of March 2010.

PROCUREMENT OF ICT EQUIPMENT

15 January was the deadline for participation in the pre-qualification phase of the procurement procedure for delivery, installation and support of ICT equipment. Eight companies submitted applications. Representatives of the PMU, Ministry of Culture and UNDP are working on the appraisal of the documentation. The selected companies will be invited to submit offers for delivery and support of ICT equipment to 900 target libraries all over Bulgaria.

On 22 January 2010 the Working Group (Expert Level) reviewed the options of long-term ICT support in target libraries (network and Internet infrastructure, software and hardware). The advantages and disadvantages of a centralized network support system were analyzed, as well as those of the de-centralized option which is accepted for now. The possible scenarios are still under discussion, so that a sustainable model for problem-free ICT and Internet access for citizens in different settlements.

PHASE 2010 FOR INCLUSION OF TARGET LIBRARIES

The target libraries selection campaign under the 2010 Phase will start in the end of February with a presumed end date of 12 April. Therefore, the discussion of the application documents package, incl. a questionnaire and methodology for selection of target libraries, started on 4 January. Some changes were introduced as opposed to 2009, for example, the strategic considerations for selection and the wording of the mandatory requirements for participation in the program. The PMU discussed the draft with the District Coordinators and presented their suggestions to the Working Group (Expert Level) on 5 February. The final application procedure for the 2010 Phase will be voted by the Program Board in the end of February, and immediately after that we will announce the START! The information will be disseminated through information packages addressed to libraries and announcements in local media.

In February we expect to accomplish the following:

- The Program Board should review and approve: methodology and procedure for selection of target libraries for the 2010 Phase and ICT packages for target libraries in the 2009 Phase.
- Clarify the implementation of the pilot phase of the program training component.
- Print out new advertising materials for the program (brochures, a poster, etc.).
- Send an Annual Report on the implementation phase to the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (for the period June – December 2009).
- Have the memoranda of understanding signed by the Ministry of Culture and UNDP and hand them to the mayors on 18 February during the General Assembly of NAMRB in Plovdiv.
- Start the application process for Regional IT Specialists (for verification of the readiness of target libraries to accept ICT equipment for the 2009 and 2010 Phases).
- Advance with the selection procedure of an ICT equipment vendor for target libraries.
- Start the target libraries applications campaign under the 2010 Phase.
- Elaborate program reporting system and formats in regard to the Impact Planning and Assessment Framework (which is currently being reviewed by the Foundation).
- Advance with the discussions regarding the alternatives for long-term Internet connectivity and ICT support of the target libraries.