

Glob@I Libraries – Bulgaria

Annual Progress Report on the Implementation Phase (June – December 2009) - Summary

Donor:	Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)
Lead institution:	Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Bulgaria
Implementing agency:	United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)
Other partners:	Ministry of Transport, Information Technology and Communications Bulgarian Library and Information Association National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria

Strategic Goal: “To provide easy and equitable access to information, knowledge, communications and electronic services in public libraries via free use of the Internet and other information and communication technologies, so as to enable Bulgarian citizens integrate in the global information society, improve their quality of life and enhance civil society development.”

Implemented Activities by Objective

Objective 1. Efficient and effective program management and development

The Country Grant Agreement and Implementation Phase Project Document were signed in May 2009, and the Minister of Culture announced the official start of the implementation phase of “Glob@I Libraries - Bulgaria” from 1 June 2009. The 34 district and regional meetings organized by the PMU in May-June 2009 to announce the start of target libraries selection (Stage 2009) were also used to announce the launch of program implementation.

The Program Management Unit (PMU) was expanded from 6 people (planning phase) to 20 people for the country grant implementation period. The incumbents of all newly filled positions were hired based on a competitive process initiated in March 2009, and 5 people from the planning phase (hired competitively in 2008) remained in position. The expanded PMU started work in August 2009, and additional office space was rented and equipped.

In consultation with the district libraries, the PMU identified 28 district library staff to act as District Coordinators (DCs) for the country grant phase. The majority of the incumbents had acted as such during the planning phase as well, with three exceptions in the administrative districts of Blagoevgrad, Gabrovo and Vratza.

Two DC instruction meetings were held within the implementation phase in 2009:

- 1) 10-11 September 2009 in Sofia: the DCs were introduced to their obligations and instructed about the planned activities for the period till end May 2010;
- 2) 1-2 December 2009 in Sofia: the 28 DCs were introduced to the procedure of signing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for inclusion of target libraries in the program and acquainted with their obligations under this process.

The Country Grant Proposal envisages having one specialist for each administrative district of the country, to provide IT support to target libraries. The IT support assignment was announced on the program website in September 2009, with view of hiring 28 specialists in November 2009. At that time, it was expected to have an approved list of target libraries under Stage 2009 by end September 2009, and to initiate installation of the ICT equipment in January 2010. However, various alternatives to the afore-mentioned approach have been under consideration since September 2009. This is why the PMU did not proceed with hiring the IT support specialists within 2009.

The campaign for collection of library applications under Stage 2009¹ of the program took place in June-July 2009, with 24 July 2009 as deadline for submission of the applications. Applications of 840 libraries from 245 of Bulgaria's 264 municipalities were submitted. As a result of the joint work of the PMU, 28 DCs and program partners, a draft list of 455 target libraries and 63 reserves for Stage 2009 was elaborated in September 2009. The corresponding procedure, methodology and application forms are available on the GL-Bulgaria portal: www.glbulgaria.bg.

The preparation of the draft list of target libraries for Stage 2009 (planned to be completed by end September 2009 in the original milestones) took one month more than initially planned. A draft list of target libraries was developed and consulted with the Working Group (Project Board – expert level) in September 2009, while approval of the libraries list for Stage 2009 by the Program Board was granted on 14 October 2009. A press conference to announce the results was held at the Ministry of Culture on 5 November 2009, and was covered very well by the regional media countrywide.

Signature of the four-partite agreements (Memoranda for Understanding – MOUs) for partnership under the program under Stage 2009 was initiated in December 2009 by the PMU. The MOU draft had previously been consulted extensively with lawyers and the program partners. On 3 - 4 December 2009 letters signed jointly by the Ministry of Culture and the National Association of Municipalities were dispatched to 234 mayors of municipalities hosting target libraries containing information on the MOU signing process and the MOU originals to be signed. It is envisaged to complete the signature of MOUs under Stage 2009 of the program by end February 2010². In three cases (chitalishte libraries in the Municipalities of Antonovo, Biala, Plovdiv), the MOUs will be tri-partite³, not four-partite, as the host municipalities have refrained from applying to the program.

¹ The Country Grant proposal envisages 3 stages of inclusion of target libraries in the program: Stage 2009, Stage 2010 and Stage 2011.

² As of 15 February 2010, there are only two cases of four-partite MOUs not signed: 2 libraries in Purvomay Municipality.

³ Tri-partite Memoranda of Understanding (library/chitalishte, Ministry of Culture ad UNDP) are envisaged for applicant libraries that do not rely on municipal support for ensuring the required short-term to long-term local commitments under the program.

The program's Impact Planning and Assessment Framework (IPAF) was restructured to achieve greater coherence along the logical thread *objective-impact-outcomes-outputs-activities*. The original 13 outcomes were merged and reduced to 7. The original 15 outputs were merged and reduced to 10. The proposed IPAF revision from December 2009 includes all (but two) of the metrics required by the Foundation, as well as country specific indicators from the following areas: education, culture and leisure, communication, and e-government. The resulting total number of IPAF (outcome and output) indicators is 31. The revised version of the IPAF was sent to the BMGF representatives for comments in the beginning of December 2009.

The Country Grant Proposal envisages to conduct a needs assessment iteration in 2010, for libraries joining the program in the planned second (2010) and third (2011) stage of incorporation of target libraries. At this moment (8 months after the start of country grant implementation), it is believed that such iteration – as a separate study - will not be needed with regard to libraries applying for inclusion under Stages 2010 and 2011 of the program, as the application process (including application procedure, application forms and methodology for selection) provides the PMU with sufficient data. Moreover, the planned IPAF⁴ baseline (2010), mid-term (2011) and final (2013) assessments will be designed in a way that enables achievement of two aims that were originally associated with needs assessment iteration: (1) analyze the current status of Bulgaria's public libraries and (2) long-term strategic planning.

The idea to skip needs assessment iteration per se in 2010 is work-in-progress. Discussions in this regard between the PMU and the BMGF Program Officer are forthcoming in the period March-September 2010. It is expected that these discussions will be informed by the ongoing since February 2010 preparation of the IPAF baseline study, for which it has been agreed with the Foundation that a more strategic approach shall be adopted, to allow for higher flexibility and relevance in formulating the program's outcomes and impacts in the future, and in collecting the corresponding data.

The implemented communication activities in the period June-December 2009 are:

- Counselling for the District Coordinators regarding the dissemination of information on the program by the PMU's PR Specialist, from September 2009, when the DCs were instructed how to communicate with the regional/local media and communities.
- A press-conference to announce the list of proposed libraries for inclusion under Stage 2009 of the program, held on 5 November 2009 at the Ministry of Culture with the participation of Mrs. Lene Jespersen, UNDP Resident Representative a.i. and Mr. Daniel Kalchev, National Program Director. A press release was published on the program portal and sent to the national media. The event found a response in 14 national and 16 regional information agencies, the Bulgarian National Radio, 4 regional radio stations, and 3 national TV stations. There was an interview with the Program Manager on PRO:BG, a TV channel with national coverage. In the print media, the event was referred by 4 national and 105 regional newspapers.

⁴ A revision of the Impact Planning and Assessment Framework (IPAF) for GL-Bulgaria was proposed in December 2009, and feedback from the Foundation was received in February 2010, agreeing that Bulgaria's IPAF baseline study (forthcoming in 2010) would be designed in a way that enables subsequent more strategic and/or focused approach to the IPAF process in the country.

- The libraries proposed for inclusion under Stage 2009 of the program received a congratulatory letter in December 2009 and program-related Christmas materials (diaries, calendars, pens, T-shirts, USB memory sticks, cotton bags).
- Two design consultants were selected by the PMU to present proposals on the visual layout of promotional materials to be used by the program in 2010 (brochures, posters, etc.); both proposals were accepted.

For the period June – December 2009, the number of visits on the web-site is 27,861. The amount of absolute unique visitors is 13,561. The GL-Bulgaria portal has been fully operational since October 2009, with a daily upload of relevant information and strive for mirror Bulgarian/English contents. The Working Group members expressed in early February 2010 their satisfaction with the portal performance.

Objective 2. Stimulation of community development - *forthcoming in Oct.-Dec. 2010*

Objective 3. Enhancement of the quality of human capital

Based on the agreed Competency Index for the Bulgarian Public Librarian, in December 2009 15 key trainers started elaborating the materials to be used under the four thematic areas of the training program that will evolve from 2010 (pilot phase) to 2013. The training materials (including also training methodology) for the four thematic areas shall be elaborated by March 2010.

Objective 4. Accelerated integration into the information society

In October 2009 – after approving the draft target libraries list for Stage 2009 - the PMU started preparing the documentation package for procuring ICT equipment for the program's target libraries. Originally, it was foreseen to purchase the ICT equipment in three separate batches, following the three stages of incorporation of target libraries into the program (2009, 2010, and 2011). Over the period August-October 2009, it was decided that it would be more efficient to purchase the ICT equipment through a single integrated procurement process, taking into account the aim to ensure an optimal IT support at target libraries within the program's budget parameters.

An internationally advertised pre-qualification of potential contractors for delivery, installation and support of ICT equipment was initiated on 9 December 2009, with a deadline for submission of applications by 15 January 2010. In parallel, a review of the needs of the 455 target libraries from Stage 2009 was initiated to fine-tune the previously drawn draft technical specifications.

In August 2009, a training session on the software donation process as per the TechSoup rules was conducted for the newly hired staff members of Glob@I Libraries - Bulgaria. The team was provided with software order templates, training materials and process guidelines. The order for phase one of the software donation (Stage 2009 target libraries) will be issued in April 2010.