

“TOWARDS INTEGRATED DEVELOPMENT POLICY OF NIS,,
Nis, 30 June 2006

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE INTEGRATED LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING PROCESS IN NIS

MAPPING RESOURCES AND POTENTIALITIES IN NIS



SETTLEMENT AND INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES PROGRAMME IN SERBIA
SIRP

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FOREWORD

The conference „Towards integrated local development of Nis“ organised by the City of Nis with the support of the SIRP Programme, UN-HABITAT, the Government of Italy and in collaboration with the Ministry for Capital Investments of the Republic of Serbia, is intended to stimulate participation and open debate of all development actors operating in the territory of Nis around key development themes, representing the commitment of the City towards the development of its territory and its resources, fostering integration and coordination amongst all local stakeholders and local actions.

SIRP Programme is supporting the City of Nis in its efforts towards coordination and integration of local actors and actions, and contributing to the process of planning the integrated local development of its territory. One of the activities foreseen by the Programme is in fact *supporting beneficiary Municipalities/Cities in establishing and strengthening local development networks*¹.

With the present research, SIRP is contributing to the integrated local development planning through the mapping of municipal resources and potentialities structured around five substantial themes, Environment, Economy, Livelihood, Governance and Information and Communication Technologies, aimed to reconstitute a comprehensive picture of the current state of development of the City and value potential sectors for improving the development of the whole area and improve the quality of life in Nis.

The research has been elaborated by a team of national consultants and with the technical assistance of SIRP team; all relevant institutional bodies, governmental and non-governmental organizations, local authority and departments, and other development actors have been involved in the process through consultations and contributing by sharing valuable information which have both informed and enriched the work.

The presentation and dissemination of the present research is aimed to contribute and stimulate debate and confrontation, by sharing knowledge and thus allowing recognition of collective interest in territorial development, improve the usefulness and positive impact of the conference and its outcomes in reinforcing existing networks and partnerships.

This research, as well as other relevant documents, is available on the web site of UN-HABITAT SIRP Programme in Serbia at www.unhabitat.org.yu

¹ ER3.A5, SIRP Settlement and Integration of Refugees Programme in Serbia, Project Implementation Document, 9th March 2005

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METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The research has been developed around five substantial themes relevant to integrated local development: **environment, economy, livelihood, governance and information and communication technologies**, and structured in three main methodological steps:

1. Understanding the territory of Nis with an integrated approach

This step included an analysis of local sectoral strategies and community based development plans; the National strategic and legal framework in support of the sustainable development of Serbia, giving structural directions to the development process at local level; the array of projects and programmes, and their management bodies/institutions/organizations, implemented in the territory of the City of Nis.

The following criteria were selected for the analysis:

- Whether the document/strategy was adopted or not;
- Comprehensive or sectoral approach;
- Intersectoral relationships;
- Relationship with the five substantial themes;
- Operational level of documents and strategies;
- Institutional arrangements.

A questionnaire was prepared based on the organogram of institutional bodies within the City and it was distributed to all relevant stakeholders in the field of planning for local development. The answers have given a more realistic picture of the relations among institutions, strategies and implemented programmes.

The participation and contribution of local stakeholders through further consultations and their availability to share information has been of great value for the completion of the document.

2. Horizontal and vertical reading of the context and its resources

Vertical and horizontal correlations and casual links of all strategic documents from National and local level, as well as projects and programmes, were established in order to identify existing common trends, sectoral integration, overlappings and uncovered sectors/fields of implementation.

3. Diagnosis of potentials for an effective planning process towards development

The identification of resources and potentialities within the territorial structure and the City organization offers valuable guidance in defining possible priority areas of interventions to direct the process of planning for development where, within an overall coordination framework, integrated actions and joint efforts among different stakeholders can be taken in order to improve and boost the overall development of the City.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The document is divided in three main parts:

1. overview of existing documents
2. analysis of the current state of resources
3. concluding remarks

Overview of existing National and Local level documents and strategies is presented through tables synthesizing national and local strategic documents and projects in relations to the five substantive themes, concluding with an integrated matrix depicting the links between documents and relevant institutions in charge of their implementation.

The analysis of the current state of resources is carried out through the identification of relations between strategic documents and institutions supporting or implementing them. Vertical (national – local strategies and policies) and horizontal (local – local sectoral strategies; local strategies – local projects; local – local sectoral projects) correlations and analysis of relations among local institutions, provided the basis for identifying advantages, opportunities and weaknesses of the current situation in the City of Nis.

Concluding remarks are best supported by the a matrix of evaluation and two schemes, representing the uncovered or less covered themes. With no intention to impose any further actions, conclusions state and offer a critical overview of the current situation in the City of Nis, whereas possible fields of actions are left for the local self government to identify and develop, by taking advantage of some of the underlined opportunities and initiating other development actions through a participatory planning process.

This research presents an attempt to show in an unbiased manner existing activities in the field of integrated development in the City of Nis, indicating weaknesses and best practices of integration and coordination at local level, presenting the national strategic and legislative documents as a useful framework to support and direct the planning process for integrated development in the City and its territory, opening some new horizons and possible directions for further implementation of sustainable development.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Following the detailed analysis of national and local strategic documents, as well as the ongoing projects, the final phase of analysis was the elaboration of a matrix of evaluation and a diagram of current and future activities on the territory of City of Niš (table 4 and scheme 2 and 3). In accordance with the methodology, the matrix is supposed to indicate the relation between local documents/strategies and projects, as well as institutions in charge of their implementation, through a cross sectoral leading of five topics (environment, economy, livelihood, governance and TIS).

What was obvious during the analysis and repropose several times during the elaboration of the final document is that the economic aspect of territorial development is present to the highest degree. Most of the local strategic documents and projects are focused on this topic. Here the institutional support is also the strongest one, which indicates the paradigm shared by most local authorities that economic progress is the driving force of improvement of life standards. In Niš these are the Department for Economy, Sustainable Development and Environmental Protection (Project Center), the Regional center for development of SME-s, the Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Micro Development Fund, the National Employment Office in Niš.

Partial balance regarding the sustainable development situation in Niš is the presence, almost as relevant as the one of economic projects/strategies, of environmental projects with important support from local bodies. Economic and environmental projects represent more than half of all projects as well as half of strategic documents. Respectively, the topics of livelihood, governance and ICT are themes with increasingly less attention from the local authorities.

At the same time, the number of local projects compared to the number of local strategies shows that only several local strategic documents exist in Niš (some of them are not related to the whole territory of the City), whereas the number of projects amounts to fifty. Why are we faced with this situation? There is more than one answer to this. The main is the fact that it is easier to obtain resources for elaboration and implementation of the projects on lower level. Another reason refers to the international institutions which most often invest in local projects and programs. The third is insufficient interest of local authorities in the long-term and strategic projects with benefits which cannot be easily perceived compared to the fast, effective and transparent actions comprising smaller scales. Also, projects themselves are of different level and within different territorial frames. Some of them deal with smaller actions and produce less effect on the City as a whole, while some others are complex with clear development characteristics and serve to initiate other development activities.

As to the local strategies, it is easily recognized that there is a lack of their links and mutual interaction with regards to the criteria of sustainable development. Separately elaborated strategies are, in most cases, implemented independently one from the other. What are the relations among those sectoral strategies and level of their mutual use remains an open question. At this point there is no comprehensive strategy for development of Niš. This is the logical result of the current state of institutional organization. It is clear that lack of inter-sectoral relations and weak coordination

between strategy makers and ongoing projects can lead towards a situation like this. Departments of local authorities cooperate between themselves merely to enable smooth operation of the local authority and to meet the legal requirements of investors. Other stakeholders are not involved in any kind of partnership. Obviously, poor cooperation among different institutions in charge of implementation of development projects has resulted in frequent overlappings (similar topics, beneficiaries or space where activities take place), which can lead to overlapping of competences, unnecessary favourisation of certain groups and the confused public. The necessity for exchange of information and use of shared database, better organisation and clear synchronisation becomes very important for future dynamics of city development.

Intersectoral coordination leads to improvement of situation in a certain development area resulting in concrete actions and simple implementation. On the other hand, some other results are not as good as expected given an extremely large number of institutions dealing with development issues. Very good administrative coverage of some development sectors shows an initially good idea of decentralisation of local governance responsibilities, but concurrently requires complete coordination, clear transparency of data and unique data exchange system. What is missing is the synergetic approach to common problems, to application procedure for projects, and even to marketing.

Regarding the relationship towards the national strategies, it can be said that such relation almost doesn't exist. The scheme 2 depicts lack of clear links between these two levels of planning. The lack of use of inputs from national documents can easily be seen. The national documents could contribute to the synchronisation of different governance levels – national, regional, local, but also provide some possibilities for budget lines and applications for certain national projects. Analysis and use of national strategies in different fields, and to the degree suitable for Niš, creates necessary conditions for improvement of interregional cooperation. The position of Niš is significant in terms of possibilities of cross-border cooperation with Bulgaria (common application for agricultural and touristic projects) and also transregional cooperation with Italy. Preparation of common activities like these can provide good framework for future activities through existing European projects and for future actions to be financed from European structural funds when the time comes.

Finally, considering the strategic position and importance of Niš as macro-regional center and important crossroads on the paneuropean corridor X, the analysis of existing documents shows us its exceptional potential for optimal use of its advantages, better organisation and coordination of institutions, analysis of local values and political consensus (development continuity independent of governing structure) for creation of a comprehensive development strategy which should indicate the development orientation of the City in the long run.

Recommendations

When considering the projects in Niš mostly characterized by multitude, diversity, effectiveness, as well as experience in implementation, we may highlight the advantage of the bottom-driven initiative. This is in particular significant when there is no integrated local development strategy and when a large number of initiatives,

through individual activities – projects, affects both formulation of sectoral documents (mainly in the form of a draft), and the local awareness of the necessity of a comprehensive local development framework.

Regardless of the fact that the existing projects incorporate a wide range of development areas, there are still vital but unused resources and economic potentials in the areas of employment, development of small and medium enterprises, tourism, rural development and agriculture, traffic, power supply, services and handicraft, sustainable development and environment protection (gasification, heating, water supply, road network, airport and railway junction, dams, etc), protection and revitalization of cultural and natural heritage, info system development, production of building materials, services, social housing, utility services, but also vocational education and training, social welfare for the most vulnerable social groups, children and youth, crime prevention, health care services. Namely, it is possible to initiate a series of activities, but these need to be characterized by a higher integration degree.

By viewing the documentation available for the purpose of this analysis, it was observed that formulation and implementation of projects involved both public and civil sector, and also business sector though in a lesser degree, such as: administrations, public companies, faculties, non-governmental organizations. For Nis, it is necessary to activate more intensely other institutions in the function of development, as well as to enable networking and establishment of a monitoring body, exchange of information and agreement about their joint action, higher level of management with the support of local development leaders. This primarily means affirmation of all stakeholders in the planning process who may be of relevance to the implementation of strategic plans, development projects and programmes. Regarding operationalization, the issue of institutional organization is of key importance.

Here it is important to highlight an institutional form that would be responsible for introducing and formulating new approaches, promotion of local development, participation of local population and improvement of access to local resources, which would enable preparation and implementation of innovative programmes.

Most of the local documents have not yet been adopted and consequently have no power to make decisions legitimate, which shows that there is a strong need for agreement and consensus in relation to the single development policy of Nis. Various sectors are covered with different local documents, which provides single comprehensive analytical database, and this, together with the national strategy guidelines, enables rather quick professional elaboration of the development strategy. The support to this process should come from participatory approach to planning and significant role of territorial information systems in the local development function in order to enhance decision making and transparency of the process.

Currently the most topical integrated strategic documents on the national level include Poverty Reduction Strategy, Strategy of Serbia for Access to the European Union and Report on Implementation of Millennium Development Goals. Their respective subordinate sectoral strategies are classified by individual areas – starting from development of agriculture, tourism, power supply (here the traffic strategy, covered only in the part related to telecommunications, would be of relevance), as well as employment, boosting foreign investments, development of small and medium

enterprises, local sustainable development, environmental protection, development of an information society, social welfare, protection of the most vulnerable social groups, children etc. The most common general objectives stated in this document are poverty reduction and improvement of economic development through better provision of information for social and investment purposes. However, specific objectives are also important, in particular in the sectoral strategies of Nis.

If we take into account the novelties of the European practice in terms of access to new sources of financing, which are mostly conditioned by integrated approach on the programme level, it is necessary to emphasize that there are many unused opportunities in terms of existence and efficient application of many national documents, that is, integration of sectors, levels, resources, funds. In order to develop innovative approach to local development it is necessary to promote intersectoral cooperation, participation in decision making and promotion of partnership between institutions, economic and social actors in formulating, implementing and managing initiatives.