



## *Ti Izbirash* National Campaign

In the context of 2003 Local Elections in Bulgaria, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) is implementing a program that aims to develop the political organizing skills of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs). As more power is bestowed to local governments through decentralization, CSOs that focus on local concerns would thus be better positioned to foster citizen participation in the local political process. NDI's current program works to increase citizen participation in the political process, to build the political organizing skills of CSOs through training, and assist CSOs implement GOTV campaigns to develop connections between citizens, candidates, and elected officials. These connections can be used after the elections to both bridge the gap between the government and the governed, and to increase citizen participation in the political process.

The program has the following objectives:

- CSOs conduct targeted voter education and GOTV campaigns based on citizens' interests in advance of the local elections.
- CSOs organize citizens to participate in the political process in advance of the local elections

In order to reinforce the GOTV message throughout Bulgaria, NDI is working with its national partners as well as with two national media outlets:

- **Equal Opportunity Network** (women)
- **National Network *Different Together*** (Roma)
- **National Program *Youth in Action***
- **National Network *One Society for All*** (disabled)
- **Liberal Integration Foundation** (Turks)
- **Citizen Activity Network** (labour unions)
- **National Association of Municipalities in the Republic of Bulgaria**
- **Bulgarian Media Coalition**
- Media Partners: "**Horizon**" Program of the Bulgarian National Radio, bTV

The national partners have volunteered to participate in *Ti Izbirash* Campaign and have an equal right in the decision-making process. They determine the presence of the National Campaign on the national level. The national partners took an

active part in developing the national campaign theme, the logo for the GOTV campaign, and the media strategy. They also recommended people who could be invited to participate as experts in the five-member panel responsible for reviewing applications for the Small Grants Program.

On the national level, the *Ti Izbirash* Campaign envisages:

- producing campaign materials (hats and stickers) which will be distributed by the national partners to their affiliates around the country; the campaign materials will also function as visible symbol
- producing a national brochure containing useful information about the authorities of the local government and about the specificity of the voting process;
- launching a TV and radio campaign with 30-second motivational spots which broadcast on bTV and the Horizon Program of the National Radio from September 24<sup>th</sup> till October 24<sup>th</sup>, 2003
- A National Press Conference scheduled for 24<sup>th</sup> September 2003
- Non-partisan activities on Election Day, carried

### ***Why are we participating in *Ti Izbirash* National Campaign?***

*"We are convinced that modern politics on the local level should ensure the participation of people with disabilities and their organizations in the decision-making process when important decisions have to be taken in the field of accessibility, information and education."*

*One Society for All National Network*

*"We believe that through our participation in *Ti Izbirash* National Campaign we will contribute to the formation of an active citizen position among young people and will encourage those people to participate in the local elections."*

*Citizen Activity Network*

out in accordance with the rules and regulations of the Central Electoral Commission

In order to provide CSOs the attention they deserve, NDI employed two regional coordinators to be responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the program in their respective regions. In addition, the regional coordinators serve as a primary point of contact for CSOs, provide assistance on specific program implementation, and conduct site visits.

For more information contact:

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NDI has chosen to use three training sessions in combination with individual consultations as the primary forms of teaching political organization, assessment of citizen concerns, message development, developing campaign schedules, volunteer recruitment, working with the media, etc. The training sessions are also aimed at fostering person-to-person contact between CSOs, volunteers and voters.

Training Session 1:

**Basic Political Organizing Skills**

*Veliko Tarnovo* 7-8 August 2003  
*Plovdiv* 9-10 August 2003

**Trainers:** Jennifer Butz-NDI, Sevdalina Voynova-NDI,

Training Session 2:

**GOTV Techniques; individual consultations;**

*Sofia* 4-5 September 2003  
*Veliko Tarnovo* 6-7 September 2003

**Trainers:** Aaron Azelton-NDI, Sevdalina Voynova-NDI, Dimitar Sotirov-Bulgarian Media Coalition

***Ti Izbirash in the press***

*“At the seminar organized by NDI, which took place on 9-10 August in Plovdiv, we found most useful the work in small groups which had to present their own campaign schedule, oriented towards a specific target group.”*

*Drom DromendarNewspaper*

A total of 60 CSOs took part in the training sessions organized by NDI. Thirty-seven of these organizations submitted their proposals on the

Small Grant Program. All proposals were reviewed and evaluated by each member of a five-member panel. The panel was made up of two representatives from NDI and three from other international organizations operating in Bulgaria.

**Sevdalina Voynova**, NDI

**Annisa Wanat**, NDI

**Malina Stefanova**, Solidarity Center

**Penka Tsvetkova**, Help for Charity in Bulgaria Foundation

**Marieta Tsvetkova**, 3NET

**Twenty-seven** of the proposed projects submitted to the Small Grants Program were approved. The projects were presented by CSOs from all parts of Bulgaria working with various target groups: women, youth, minority groups, disabled, long-term unemployed, members of labour unions and their families, etc. The proposals that gathered at least 100 points out of a maximum of 175 points were approved according to criteria previously designed by NDI.



The following CSOs participate in *Ti Izbirash* Campaign:

**Sofia**

1. *Women's Alliance for Development*: students and mothers-students;
2. *Gender Project for Bulgaria*: Roma voters who live in the town of Pernik
3. *“Balkan Assist”*: first-time voters living in Ilinden Municipality, Sofia
4. *United Nations Association in Bulgaria*: students from Sofia University and students living in Students' Town
5. *PODKREPA Confederation of Labor-Youth Union*: 2 000 young people throughout the country
6. *Society for Development and Spiritual Renaissance*: women of Muslim origin from the town of Gotse Delchev

**Haskovo**

*IKAR Association*: 40% of the age group 18-35 who do not plan to vote in the upcoming local elections

**Kazanlak**

1. *PODKREPA Confederation of Labo*: Podkrepa CL members and their families;
2. *PROXEN Women's Union*: first-time voters living in the municipality of Kazanlak

## **Karlovo**

*“Vassil Levski” Human Rights Center:* people with disabilities living in the town of Karlovo

## **Kjustendil**

*New Way Association:* the Roma population living in the town of Kyustendil

## **Lom**

1. *PODKREPA Confederation of Labor:* workers and administrative staff, unemployed and minority groups in active working age;

2. *Independent life- Roma:* Roma minority, living in Mladenovo and Humata Roma neighborhoods

## **Razgrad**

*NADEZHDA Ladies’ Alliance:* long-term unemployed men and women in living in the town of Razgrad and in the region

## **Sevlievo**

*Informal Group of Young People on the territory of Sevlievo Municipality:* young people aged 18-35;

## **Silistra**

*Future for Silistra Youth Organization:* first-time voters living in the city of Silistra;

## **Sliven**

*Roma Youth Organization:* young Roma people between 16 and 30 years of age

## **Pleven**

1. *BAFE:* first-time voters from three high schools in Pleven;

2. *Community Center LIK:* young people, citizens of all age- and ethnic- groups in 3 specific electoral regions in Pleven with low voter turnout in the recent elections;

## **Varna**

1. *Association of Parents of Children with Cerebral Paralysis and Children with Hereditary and Congenital disabilities:* persons with disabilities, parents and relatives of children with disabilities;

2. *Inter-ethnic Partnership Organization:* ethnic groups, living in the village of Asparuhovo- Varna

## **Dupnitsa**

*PODKREPA Confederation of Labor:* members of Podkrepa CL network on the territory of the region

## **Blagoevgrad**

*PODKREPA Confederation of Labor:* Podkrepa CL members and their families living in the region

## **Vratza**

*PODKREPA Confederation of Labor:* people in active working age on the territory of Vratza district as well as unemployed;

## **Plovdiv**

*National Alliance for Volunteer Action:* young people 18-23 years of age

## **Rakovski**

*Roma Future Association:* young Roma population living in the municipality of Rakovski

We would also like to welcome 17 organizations from the National Network Different Together and the National Program Youth in Action. In the next Newsletter you will get more information on the participation of those organizations in the *Ti Izbirash* Campaign, as well as more details on their projects and the groups that they are targeting.

disabilities in Sweden elaborated on a method that will enable local authorities to develop political action planning in the disability sphere in compliance with Standard Rules. This method is called **Agenda 22** and we believe the information about it will provide some appropriate approaches and ideas for future activities in this sphere in Bulgaria.

## **Useful information from the Participants in *Ti Izbirash* Campaign**

- **The Center for Independent Living-Sofia has two new publications:**

### **1. Voting – A Constitutional Right for All Citizens Every Bulgarian**

*American, first edition*

*Center for Independent Living, Sofia 2003*

This material is a result of the unprecedented cooperation between election authorities, officials, and the community of disabled people aimed at overcoming of current problems. Extremely significant outcome of these efforts is the publication of this manual and the elaboration of an instrument for assessment and analysis of the polling place.

### **2. Agenda 22 – Local Government – Policy Planning in the Sphere of Disabilities, *Guide for the Institutions of Local Government***

*Swedish, revised edition*

*Center for Independent Living, Sofia 2003*

In 1993 the UN General Assembly voted for 22 Standard Rules for Equalization and Equal Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. If we are willing to build a society with equal opportunities for all, due planning and a systematic approach are needed. The Alliance of the organizations of people with

- **The SDC and Balkan Assist Association announce a competition for participation in the fourth batch of the FORUM program.** The Program aims at identifying and selecting organizations that have the goal of solving an existing conflict or contributing to the development of the municipality through facilitating public forums. For more information visit: <http://www.balkanassist.bg>



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