

Composting in Bulgaria for Waste Reduction

As a new member of the European Union (EU), Bulgaria – which joined in 2007 – began working to implement several local government programs to come into compliance with EU requirements. Waste management has been among the issues being addressed. In most of the country’s rural villages, residents have been responsible for their own waste disposal, carting waste to dumpsites located on the village outskirts. New legislation by the national government made most of these dumpsites illegal, so local governments were charged with finding new ways to collect and dispose of household waste.

As part of its CityLinks cooperative agreement with USAID, ICMA joined forces with the Bulgarian Foundation for Local Government Reform (FLGR) to address waste management practices in Bulgaria. Analysis by ICMA staff revealed that more than 98 percent of the household waste deposited in village dumpsites was organic, which made composting the obvious solution. ICMA identified a public works expert from the United States to provide technical expertise as well as perform training sessions for the Bulgarian environmental experts.

The ICMA program identified the need for regional landfills and local waste reduction strategies, focusing on three villages for the first year and five villages for each of the next three years. The program provided technical assistance to the selected municipalities and grants to purchase equipment.

The municipalities built composting sites where there had once been dumpsites, purchased household waste containers for inorganic waste, and asked residents to separate the organic waste from their gardens. The program included the publication of pamphlets as well as meetings to emphasize the benefits of composting and how it enriches soils.

The program was a great success, reducing the amount of waste going into the municipalities’ landfills, increasing the efficiency of waste management operations, and providing fertilizer to enrich gardens and farms in the regions. The program was designed to provide training and technical advice that could be distributed through other networks within the country after ICMA involvement ended.

Overall, 19 municipalities introduced a pilot composting program, established one or more composting sites, conducted a public education campaign to inform citizens of the benefits of composting, and generated compost, mostly for use in farming. The Bulgarian Association of Municipal Environmental Experts and the Ministry of the Environment worked with the municipalities throughout the program.



Composting site near a rural Bulgarian village.

ABOUT ICMA

ICMA (International City/County Management Association) is the premier local government leadership and management organization worldwide. Its mission is to create excellence in local governance by developing and advancing the professional management of local government. ICMA has been doing this since 1914 by providing technical and management assistance, training, and information resources to its members and the local government community. ICMA International was created in 1989 to further the ICMA mission worldwide. Since then it has successfully designed, implemented, and evaluated hundreds of international projects, establishing a solid reputation for its practical, hands-on approach to meeting global challenges.

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