

ATTRACTING FUNDING FOR LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

THE CASE OF BILOVODSK COMMUNITY IN LUHANSK OBLAST



COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



"Thanks to the project management skills acquired in DESPRO's online Community of Practice for Sustainable Development, our community has raised UAH 50 million for 60 development projects over the past two years," says Olena Shylobryd, head of the Economic Development and Trade Department of the Executive Committee at Bilovodsk Village Amalgamated Territorial Community (ATC), Luhansk oblast.



"When I first came across DESPRO's online course on Project Management, I wasn't convinced at all that I really needed that kind of training. At the time, I had been working for the local authorities for 12 years, and I thought that I was capable of managing everything. Nevertheless, I enrolled in the Project Management course and began to study hard. It turned out that in fact there was a jumbled mess in my head, and thanks to the training I managed to structure everything".

Many local self-government employees lack the knowledge and experience necessary to develop and implement community development projects. Poorly designed projects prevent communities from obtaining financial resources from state funds and international technical assistance projects.

To solve this problem, in 2012 the Swiss-Ukrainian Decentralization Support Project in Ukraine DESPRO launched the online Community of Practice <https://udl.despro.org.ua>. One of the services offered by the Community of Practice is a training in Project Management for representatives of local



authorities, and sharing of experience in management by projects. Over time, the subject of the training was extended to other online courses on topical issues of local development; and today the Community of Practice brings together almost 10,000 participants. Most of them work for local authorities, while the rest are widely represented by entrepreneurs, university faculty staff, students, school teachers, employees of communal enterprises, and NGOs.

CoP PARTICIPANTS



46 %

representatives of local
self-government



19 %

civil society
organizations



11 %

representatives of
executive authorities



24 %

educators, entrepreneurs,
mass media

Today, the Community of Practice for Sustainable Development brings together almost 10,000 participants from all over Ukraine

“The key task of our structural unit is to attract grant funds and investments in our community. For my part, I wanted to know what project management is and how to plan and implement high-quality projects with the support of both donors and government agencies. Even then, I saw that there were many resources around that could be directed to the development of our ATC. The DESPRO courses seem to have given me the key to the treasury from which these almost unlimited resources could be drawn. As a result of the training, we, three graduates of the courses – employees of the executive committee of the community – have become a powerful core, in fact, the engine of development of our entire community. Our ATC has received substantial international and state budget investments, various useful contacts, and has already significantly improved its own infrastructure.

Olena Shylobryd is convinced that the participation of her team in the online courses provided by the DESPRO's Community of Practice has given impetus to the growth of the whole region

“We have raised about UAH 50 million for 60 development projects. For comparison, in 2019 our own revenues to the budget of our community from paying taxes and fees amounted to UAH 96 million.

As donors do not always allow authorities to participate in competitions, we conducted trainings for local NGOs and initiative groups based on the



materials of the Project Management course, which also stimulated their development.

There are a lot of internally displaced persons in our community, since Bilovodsk is only 50 km from the demarcation line. According to registration documents, we have 37,000 internally displaced residents, i.e. 1.5 times more than the community population. There are many public activists among them; and they, with our help, are also involved in project development.

The success of our community in the implementation of development projects caused a stir in the region, and this is no exaggeration. At first, neighbouring communities did not believe that we accomplished this. Then they began to cautiously ask how we managed to implement so many projects and attract so many resources. Subsequently, they asked to share experiences. We are always willing to share our knowledge and skills with everyone interested.”

DESPRO's Community of Practice for Sustainable Development is a well-known online platform for interaction, knowledge exchange, dissemination of best practices, generation of new ideas, development projects, and for horizontal communication. Registration is free and open to all. In addition, the Community is a platform for promoting the reform of the administrative-territorial structure, publishing and providing access to information in the context of rapid changes.

The online course on Project Management is the most popular of the trainings offered by the Community of Practice. Since 2012, 9 all-Ukrainian and 6 regional Project Management e-courses have taken place. Each course participant has a unique opportunity to polish his/her prepared project proposal by submitting it for peer review, learning from other people's experience and giving recommendations to other participants on their proposed approaches to solving community problems. The course syllabus is constantly updated. Since the very start of the e-course, more than 3,000 participants have successfully completed the training programme so far, over 1,000 project concepts were developed and went through peer review.

Benefits of the Community of Practice:

- possibility to study according to one's own schedule
- access to information and managerial resources
- establishing professional contacts with change-oriented and motivated peers from all over Ukraine
- study of best practices and expertise (peer review) of development projects
- involvement in the elaboration of joint development projects proposals.

The Swiss-Ukrainian Decentralization Support Project DESPRO is an international assistance project working in the reform of local self-governance (or “decentralization”) in Ukraine. DESPRO is funded by the Swiss Confederation via the Swiss Cooperation Office and implemented by Skat, and has been active since 2007.

<http://despro.org.ua>, <https://udl.despro.org.ua>

