**Alliance for Better City Governance**

**Semi-annual Report**

On December 28, 2020 European Union and Vanadzor Municipality signed the Contract NEAR-TS / 2020 / 421-733 for the provision of European Union External Action Services . The implementer is the Municipality of Vanadzor, and the municipalities of Gyumri, Pila Poland are beneficiaries.

The aim of the project is:

Promote sustainable urban management in Vanadzor and Gyumri by improving policies and procedures in urban planning and service delivery, as well as by exchanging experience through partnerships with the Polish (EU) Pila city.

The components of the project are:

1. Improve policies and tools in sustainable urban governance in Vanadzor and Gyumri through development or amendment of documents related to the urban development and service delivery,  synchronizing local urban policies and procedures with national and EU standards. Within this component, a Geographic Information System (GIS) will be installed in Vanadzor and Gyumri to improve urban planning.
2. Support Vanadzor and Gyumri to provide a cleaner environment and urban governance by introducing the practice of using “green transportation”, recycling plastic waste, combining them with public “green” initiatives aimed at acquiring aforementioned goals. Within the framework of this component, in particular will be provided:

* Buses with electric charging system for Vanadzor and Gyumri
* Electronic ticket validation systems and charging infrastructures.
* 2 plastic waste recycling lines with new technologies
* Household general waste and waste sorting bins
* Balers
* Sweeper trucks

Extensive awareness-raising, educational, informative campaigns, 8 community "green" initiatives will be implemented to change the behavior of population and stakeholders aimed at reducing the carbon emissions and improving “placemaking” by using the participatory “spatial planning” method.

1. Enhanced improvement of technical capacities of municipal staff to operate sustainable urban planning, waste management and green transportation facilities through changing experience with Polish Pila commune, TOTs and getting acquainted to European best practice.

Experience exchange and training will include:

* Geographic information system (GIS)
* Electric charging bus management
* Develop policy and legislative amendments in corresponding fields
* Waste management planning
* Operation and management of plastic recycling production line.

The regional conference on "City to city: joint efforts for sustainable urban governance” is a vital part of change experience.

The project is closely cooperating with “Union of Communities of Armenia” and “URBAN Foundation”. The aforementioned implemented capacity building trainings for Vanadzor and Gyumri municipal community service providers are on following topics: “Problem identification, description and formation” and “Latest trends in communication”.

Within the frameworks of the project was formed a Steering Committee as a main decision making body. The Steering Committee consists of the representative of the EU Delegation in Armenia, mayors of Vanadzor, Gyumri and Pila communities, the RA Ministry of Territorial Administration and Infrastructure, the RA Ministry of Environment, the RA Cadastre Committee, the RA Urban Development Committee, the Union of Communities of Armenia, Lori and Shirak council members, as well as CSO representatives.

The first meeting of the Steering Committee took place in May 2021 in the main hall of Vanadzor Municipality.

During the meeting a brief description of the project was presented, and was approved the work plan for the first year of the project, as well as was discussed the schedule of the next Steering Committee meeting. The corresponding protocol of the meeting can be found on the website of Vanadzor Municipality (<https://vanadzor.am/abc_gov/>).

To increase participatory aspect and effectiveness of the project 3 Task Force Groups (hereinafter referred to as TF) have been formed to develop new policies in the respective project fields. The TF groups include representatives from the corresponding ministries, members of community councils, NGO and CSO representatives, specialists and experts. The action of the TF groups is community based. TF proposals will be represented for public discussion.

In accordance with the work plan of the first year of the project, the staff undertook the organization and implementation of information-awareness meetings/campaigns about the project. During May-September, a number of informational meetings were organized in Vanadzor and Gyumri communities with community service providers with NGOs, CSOs, and representatives, community institutions, educational institutions, waste management, transportation and urban planning specialists.

In the first half of the project were obtained necessary materials and and office supplies to provide smooth running office administration.

Concerning project Visibility and Communication were developed Project Visibility and Communication Strategy (VC), VC Plan, VC annual Plan, Project One Pager, Project Logo and the Project Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Alliance-for-Better-City-Governance-105176938369500/?ref=pages_you_manage>), which has been running since April. The project also runs a separate page in Vanadzor Municipality official webpage (<https://vanadzor.am/abc_gov/>). Other VC materials were developed and submitted for approval.

Together with respective professionals was developed the baseline assessment questionnaire.