



knowledge without boundaries

EIFL-PLIP

Improving lives and livelihoods through innovative public library services

Library helps long-term unemployed find work

Lyuben Karavelov Regional Library, Bulgaria

IMPACT CASE STUDY

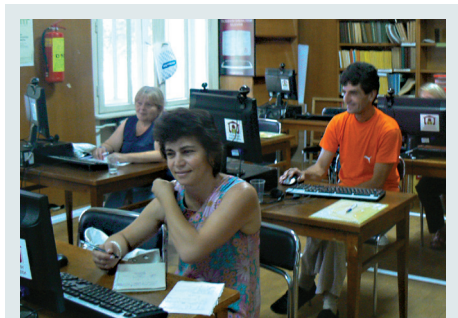
The Knowledge for New Opportunities for Work (KNOW) service -

- Helped 44 long-term unemployed people aged over 40 to find jobs.
- Convinced Ruse municipality to commit to adjusting the library budget to accommodate the KNOW programme.
- Won recognition for library innovation and best practice.
- Established a formal, sustainable partnership with the local Labour Office Directorate.

The global economic crisis has led to long queues at government employment agencies everywhere. By 2010, the Labour Office Directorate in Ruse, Bulgaria's fifth largest city (population 149,000) estimated that unemployment had risen to 10%, and that of this number, a third were aged over 40. Between 2009 and 2011, librarians at Lyuben Karavelov Regional Library in the city recorded a 70% increase in the number of people coming to use the library's computers. Most new users were using the computers to look for jobs, but librarians also observed that older users – people aged over 40 – lacked information and communication technology (ICT) skills. Long-term unemployed people are an at-risk group who struggle with depression and feelings of failure and exclusion. When lack of skills is an additional barrier to employment, these feelings get worse.

The library created the KNOW service to support long-term unemployed people aged over 40 by providing free internet access and ICT training, job-seeking skills, motivation, confidence-building and access to counsellors. The library already had an ICT training centre and computers for public use, but needed to increase capacity. With a grant of US\$15,000 from EIFL-PLIP to cover equipment and some operational costs for one year, the library bought a laptop computer and three desktop computers. They hired trainers, developed courses – and KNOW was ready to start.

“I sent my CV out many times – unfortunately without success. But during the course, the right things happened!” – Ms Albena Klisurska, successful job-seeker.



“I’ll never forget the happiness in my children’s eyes when I came back home with two big chocolates bought with my first salary.” – Ms Makshedil Mustafa, a now employed as a teacher after over a year looking for a job.



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“This training was the reason why I was chosen for a job! Now I am happy. I love my job and my new colleagues. I’m grateful to the library staff!” – Ms Mariana Alexandrova, successful jobseeker.

In less than a year, the library...

- Trained 47 women and 21 men (68 people) who are now more employable, confident and motivated, and who feel less excluded.
- Developed the [KNOW](#) website, which includes practical job-application skills and training materials, and links to other essential support and services for job-seekers.
- Launched a successful media campaign, receiving over 250 mentions in national and local media, raising library’s profile and attracting over 150 applicants for training.
- Built capacity of other librarians to create similar services by showcasing KNOW at events and meetings.

The future

The library has won recognition for contributing to community economic wellbeing. With additional support from the municipality, future plans include expanding and extending training to include the elderly, women and children who are victims of violence, orphaned children and minorities.

The partnership with the Ruse Labour Office Directorate ensures that training for long-term unemployed aged over 40 will continue.

The EIFL-PLIP grant was awarded in November 2011. A year later, the library assessed the impact of the service. Information presented here is based on the library’s impact assessment. For further information, contact Library Director, Ms Teodora Evtimova – director@libruse.bg.

Public libraries – partners in development

2015 – the deadline for achieving the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is just two years away. Reports show that Bulgaria is making good progress in achieving the MDGs, but there are still concerns. Lyuben Karavelov Regional Library’s KNOW service is making a difference –

Goal 1 – Eradicate poverty

Bulgaria’s 2008 MDG report found that there were significant numbers of ‘discouraged people’ – who were willing to work but were not actively searching for jobs because they assumed it would be impossible for them to get hired. The KNOW service directly targets this group, building their skills and confidence, and motivating them to actively search for jobs.

There are 2,722 public libraries in Bulgaria. If they all had ICT and could partner with local labour offices to offer skills and motivation, there is huge potential to reduce unemployment.

“The library changed attitudes of the unemployed to job-hunting, and their self-confidence grew. The trainees have qualities and skills that are valued by employers. Our co-operation with the library has been very useful. We will definitely support further activities!”

– Sonya Kamenovska, Bulgarian Employment Agency.

[EIFL](#) (Electronic Information for Libraries) is an international not-for-profit organization dedicated to enabling access to knowledge through libraries in more than 60 developing and transition countries in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme (EIFL-PLIP) supports libraries to implement community development projects. Learn more at www.eifl.net/plip. EIFL’s Public Library Innovation Programme is supported by a grant from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.