

Burgas, Bulgaria

Project city profile

City description

Burgas is positioned on the Black Sea Coast, at the eastern border of the European Union. It is the fourth largest city and the fastest developing city in Bulgaria, and second in terms of economic potential after the capital city of Sofia. The City is an important industrial, cultural, and administrative center of the southeast region of Bulgaria. It also serves as an important commercial and transportation hub as one of the biggest ports on the Black Sea Coast and has an international airport that handles more than 2.5 million passengers annually.

Burgas is home to many economically important exports including dark and light oil products, chemical fibers, plastic, and other chemicals due to the largest oil refinery in the Balkans being located on the territory of the municipality. The City of Burgas offers favorable conditions for commercial and business activities, in combination with the accessibility of its territory, with the presence of two universities and research centers, which increase application of modern IT solutions and communication technologies.

Burgas is located close to the largest complex of coastal lakes in Bulgaria. The total area of the lakes amounts to 95 km², of which 33 km² which are declared as protected areas. In addition to substantial natural resources such as fish, game, sea salt, and cure mud, which are important to the local economy, the lakes are also known for their exceptional biodiversity. The lakes are situated on Via Pontika, one of the main migratory routes for birds in Europe. More than 43% from the territory of the municipality is part of the ecological network NATURA 2000.

Sustainability profile

Burgas's plans for continued development are grounded in a balanced regional development approach that promotes economic, social, and environmental sustainability. The City's



Facts & Figures

Population (year) / Land area

213,000 (2011) / 254 km²

Municipal budget (year)

330 million BGN (2014)

Mayor and term

Mr. Dimitar Nikolov
October 25 2011 - October 30
2015

Website

www.burgas.bg

Project partner city

Toyama, Japan

ICLEI member since 1994

program for the protection of the environment states that the strategic objective of the Municipality is to improve citizens' health and quality of life by providing a supportive environment, preserving local biodiversity, and ensuring sustainable management of the environment. Burgas's current plan for environmental preservation focuses on the improvement of municipal waste management, restoration and conservation of biodiversity, shore protection and erosion control, and the introduction of a monitoring system for the environment sector.

Burgas Municipality was one of the first Bulgarian Municipalities in 2009 to sign the Covenant of Mayors and developed its Sustain Energz Action Plan (SEAP), undertaking the engagement to reduce CO₂ emissions by 25% until 2020. The City was one of 21 cities which participated in the "EU Cities Adapt" project. In 2014, Burgas joined the Mayors Adapt Initiative and committed themselves to create a more climate-resilient Europe, increase resilience to climate change, increase readiness and ability to react on the impacts of climate change at local the level, and develop integrated approaches to improving coordination.

Public transportation

A big priority for Burgas and its citizens is access to affordable and convenient public transportation. The public transportation network includes 18 bus lines and 1 trolleybus line serving the urban territory as well as 6 intercity bus lines within the municipal area. Although coverage is good, a challenge for Burgas is the overlapping networks which has become too complicated for the City. Burgas also suffers from poor institutional arrangements. Therefore, Burgas's goal is to modernize its public transportation through the renovation of infrastructural components (terminals, stops, lanes, and pedestrian crossings), bus fleet, and optimization of networks and organizational measures. Burgas bases this strategy on Bus Rapid Transit concepts.

Social services for citizens

Burgas places a strong emphasis on social services and employment, which is a cornerstone of its municipal policy. Burgas's main objective is to provide affordable, high quality and efficient services and to ensure social protection and integration of vulnerable groups. Burgas has challenges in providing services for the increasing elderly population. Burgas is looking to increase the quality of care in institutions and housing for the elderly. Part of the social program includes providing medical monitoring and care, including preventative examinations. Burgas supports healthy lifestyles and conducts health lectures and programs for the elderly.

Project Team

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Director/Chief Architect, Spatial Planning Directorate



Renovation of buildings

The National Programme for Energy Efficiency of Residential Buildings started in 2015 covering all 264 municipalities in Bulgaria. The Programme provides a grant of 100% for the introduction of energy efficiency measures and structural strengthening activities in multi-family apartment buildings built by industrial method. In Burgas, inhabitants from 216 buildings (of a total of 400 eligible) declared interest for renovations which would increase energy efficiency and decrease energy costs. Efforts have been put on introducing new approaches for construction of “near-zero” energy efficient buildings and to increase the share of renewable energy sources used in apartments.

Thematic areas and goals

Compact city development

Demographic processes in Burgas are characterized by a continuing decline and aging of the population, people aged 0-14 make up only 14% of the City's population, and 36% of citizens are over the age of 50. In recognition of this demographic shift, Burgas has extensively outlined plans to ensure the social welfare of its citizens.

Goals: Burgas is currently interested in regenerating and repurposing its old industrial zones and unused residential buildings in order to strengthen its city area and stop the process of expansion. Burgas is also interested in improving the service provided by its public transportation network and would like to learn more about the role “smart city” strategies and e-services can play in municipal development.

Low-carbon development

Burgas has undertaken a number of projects for the implementation of energy efficiency measures in public buildings. It is currently implementing a large-scale urban transport project, which include the introduction of new low-emission buses and a Bus Rapid Transit route (BRT).



Participants from Burgas and partner city Toyama enjoy a ride on one of Burgas's state-of-the-art tram.



Burgas's blue bike, part of the bike sharing program in Burgas



Participants from Toyama City enjoying the pedestrian zone in Burgas's city center

In addition to its municipal-level initiatives, Burgas is active in EU low-carbon initiatives. When it joined the Covenant of Mayors in 2009, the City committed to reducing CO₂ emissions by 20% by 2020 and the City reached this reduction goal within two years. In addition to becoming part of the Mayors Adapt initiative in 2014, in 2015 Burgas signed the Green Digital Charter and became the first Southeastern European city to join the European Commission's Eurocities network.

In 2011, Burgas developed and adopted the, "Strategy for Sustainable Energy Development of the Municipality 2011 – 2020." This strategy aims to improve institutional capacity, promote the use of best practices and innovative technologies, and support and encourage green private investment.

The City of Burgas is interested in sharing experience and learning from leaders across the world in their efforts to meet the challenges of climatic change and developing, adopting, and implementing a city-wide holistic resilience strategy.

Goals: With its partner city, Toyama, the cities have decided to focus their exchange themes on improving the quality of life for citizens, especially for the elderly in the face of an aging population, through the provision of public transportation and social services. Building on its recent experience of developing a new transportation network, Toyama and Burgas are interested in finding ways to improve ridership of existing public transportation and to reduce its citizen's dependency on private automobiles. Both cities hope to continue to exchange idea about policies and programs to improve user experience and encourage public transportation usage.

In addition, the City of Burgas has joined ICLEI's EcoMobility Alliance network to work with 18 other cities worldwide to advance urban mobility in cities and learn from their mobility experiences.



The coast of Burgas, taken during the Second Working Meeting in Burgas, Bulgaria, November 2015

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