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# USAID/MACEDONIA JUDICIAL STRENGTHENING PROJECT (JSP)

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## **I. PROGRAM-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND TASKS**

### **I. RESULT 1: STRENGTHENING ADVOCACY AND CITIZEN PARTICIPATION IN JUDICIAL SECTOR REFORM**

#### **I.1. Requirement 1.1 - A Short, Focused Assessment, Baseline Survey, and Resulting Action Plan on Judicial-Sector Professional Associations and Civil Society Organizations, and the Role They Can Play in Strengthening the Rule-of-Law in Macedonia**

The Judicial Strengthening Project (JSP), through a selected sub-contractor, previously completed the short, focused initial assessment of the organizational needs of 11 professional organizations and CSOs. JSP selected three organizations for Phase II of the assessment: The Macedonian Judges Association (MJA), the Macedonian Young Lawyers Association (MYLA) and the Court Administration Association (CAA).

#### **I.2 Requirement 1.2 - Per the Findings of Requirement 1.1, Improved Capacity of At Least Two Judicial Sector Professional Associations**

JSP proceeded with the implementation of Phase III, which started in October 2012 and will run through October 2013 at the latest. Phase III activities include a series of training workshops to enhance the capacity of the selected organizations. JSP is overseeing the presentation of these workshops.

Participant reports have been very positive overall; the trainers and facilitators have received high marks and the content has been described as appropriate and rich in substance.

MJA participation has been low and its members have displayed a lack of enthusiasm. JSP staff met with the president of the MJA, Judge Nikolco Nikolovski to discuss the association's future participation in this program, among other things. Judge Nikolovski opined that the training sessions should focus more on substantive topics related to judges' adjudicative work rather than on strengthening the capacity of the MJA. He stressed that judges have busy schedules so it difficult to ensure their participation in trainings. At the end of the meeting, it was agreed that MJA will only participate in two of the training sessions, Stress Management and Effective Media and Public Relations. One session will be held during the second half of March and the other during the second half of April.

It is unfortunate that the MJA forfeited the opportunity to continue receiving targeted training as previously agreed. It is missing a good opportunity to become stronger and more relevant to its members.

Alternatively, JSP has reached out to the eight LPAs/CSOs that are not among the original targeted group and has offered them at least three seats each at the remaining training sessions, provided that the selected participants make a good faith commitment to attend specific sessions.

On February 21, JSP met with representatives of Embra to emphasize the importance of identifying vacant seats as early as possible so JSP staff so can fill them with participants from other LPAs. On February 27, JSP staff met with Embra, MYLA and CAA representatives to schedule future training sessions and coordinate the next training workshop cycle.

## 1.2.1 Macedonian Judges Association

### **Capacity Building and Sustainability Trainings and Workshops**

MJA is one of the organizations targeted for capacity and sustainability training with Embra. As a result of the revised training program outlined in section 1.2 above, the last two workshops for MJA will be as follows:

Activity/Deliverable	Activity Description	Start Date	Finish Date	Trainers
Media and Public Relations Strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Preparation of the trainings and workshop materials</li><li>• Implementation of the trainings and workshop</li><li>• Evaluation of the trainings and workshop</li></ul>	Mid-March	Late March Date TBD	Sinisha Pekevski
Stress Management		Mid- April	Late April Date TBD	Blagica Rizovska Tulov

At a meeting on February 4, Judge Nikolco Nikolovski and Director Arnaudovska of the Academy discussed with JSP the revision of the Judicial Code of Ethics, which is widely considered outdated and too ambiguous to enforce.

Judge Nikolovski opened the meeting with a discussion of the dilemmas and open issues regarding the preparation of the Code, particularly the inclusion of conflict of interest provisions and the possible implications for the existing Code's conflict with the Law on the Judicial Council and the Law on the Prevention of Corruption.

Judge Aneta Arnaudovska presented the latest findings of the Groupe d'Etats Contre La Corruption, EC<sup>1</sup> (GRECO). She strongly recommended that the project consider incorporating parts of the recommendations published on the GRECO website into the Macedonian Code. The role of the Judicial Council (JC) in preparing the Code was also discussed. It was concluded that the JC must endorse the revised Code and must participate in all future phases of its preparation. The chief of party (COP) offered the project's assistance for this endeavor, which was gladly accepted by both Judge Nikolovski and Judge Arnaudovska, especially in sharing experiences and expertise.

## 1.2.2 Court Administration Association

### **Support for a CAA Publication and Intern to Support CAA**

The initial and follow-up assessment of CAA, which was conducted by the Center for Institutional Development (CIR), clearly identified problems in the functioning of this young professional organization caused by a lack of both professional personnel and a functioning administrative office. The project funded the hiring of an office assistant to support the work of the CAA's president and facilitate clear communications with branch offices and other members. The assistant, who started work on January 15, has been assisting the CAA in developing a JSP-supported association publication for distribution to members. The draft of the publication is expected on March 1. JSP will translate the draft into English and Albanian and it will be published and distributed with JSP support in March.

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<sup>1</sup> States Against Corruption European Commission

The office assistant/volunteer has attended the capacity-building training sessions and workshops given by Embra, which will further strengthen the association's capacity and support its daily work. The project will provide the office assistant volunteer with a small stipend for daily expenses.

On February 22, JSP sent a letter to the president of the CAA outlining the terms of their cooperation in order to clarify expectations on both sides. The CAA acknowledged receipt of the letter on Feb 27.

### **Capacity Building and Sustainability Trainings and Workshops**

CAA received the following training on capacity and sustainability from Embra during the reporting period:

<b>Activity/Deliverable</b>	<b>Activity Description</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Finish Date</b>	<b>Trainers</b>
Provision of Effective and Efficient Services (2 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparation of the trainings and workshop materials</li> </ul>	Jan. 31, 2013	Feb. 1, 2013	Saso Trajkoski
Effective Media and Public Relations (3 days) (2 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Implementation of the trainings and workshop</li> </ul>	Feb. 11, 2012	Feb. 12, 2012	Sinisha Pekevski
Organizational and Management Skills (2 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Evaluation of the trainings and workshop</li> </ul>	Feb. 19, 2013	Feb. 20, 2013	Blagica Rizoška Tulov

### **1.2.3 Macedonian Young Lawyers Association**

MYLA is a LPA that provides continuing legal education for young lawyers and works to promote and improve the legal profession in Macedonia. MYLA promotes access to public information and supports the establishment of a free legal aid system.

### **Capacity Building and Sustainability Trainings and Workshops**

MYLA received the following training on capacity and sustainability from Embra in February:

<b>Activity/Deliverable</b>	<b>Activity Description</b>	<b>Start Date</b>	<b>Finish Date</b>	<b>Trainers</b>
Provision of Effective and Efficient Services (2 days)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Preparation of the trainings and workshop materials</li> <li>▪ Implementation of the trainings and workshop</li> <li>▪ Evaluation of the training</li> </ul>	Feb. 5, 2013	Feb. 6, 2012	Saso Trajkoski

JSP has been collaborating with MYLA in the preparation, publication and distribution of a brochure designed to strengthen the association and bolster the participation of its existing members. MYLA will distribute the brochure to students at four law schools in Skopje and Tetovo with a formal presentation and a question and answer session.

In February, MYLA had the brochure translated into Albanian for the Tetovo distribution and JSP had it printed. The Albanian version of the brochure is now ready for distribution.

MYLA also completed another brochure describing its accomplishments, for distribution to a wider audience of young attorneys. This brochure is currently being translated into Albanian and will be printed and ready for distribution in March.

### **1.3 Off-shore Study Tour for LPAs & CSOs**

Planning continued for a study tour to Estonia and Sweden from April 8-19, 2013. JSP began the process of selecting seven to eight participants from the membership of the LPAs and CSOs at a meeting with MYLA and CAA on February 27. Study tour participants will learn how LPAs and CSOs function and support the judiciary, and how to organize targeted advocacy campaigns, draft laws, and lobby for their enactment.

PHM International (PHM) was selected as the successful bidder following best and final offer negotiations and discussions on the relative benefits versus costs of each of the proposal options, as well as on travel options. On February 13, JSP sent PHM a written statement of issues to be addressed, to which PHM responded on February 25. A Scope of Work was agreed, and at the time of this writing final contract negotiations were underway. The contract will be signed during the week of March 4. It was agreed that the JSP office will make the travel arrangements.

### **1.4 Coordination Meeting**

#### ***President of the Judicial Council***

The COP and the Deputy Chief of Party (DCOP), Nena Ivanovska, communicated regularly with the president of the JC in February to coordinate the efforts of the project with JC activities and to offer support for the various disciplines within the judicial branch.

#### ***President of the Supreme Court***

On February 6, the COP, DCOP, COR, and JSP Court Administration Coordinator held their first meeting with the newly-elected chief justice and president of the Supreme Court, Judge Lidija Nedelkova. The conversation primarily focused on the pros and cons of electronically recording court hearings. Other topics included source codes, harmonization of court decisions, productivity of the Supreme Court and EduSoft's extended warranty and maintenance. JSP agreed to supply Chief Justice Nedelkova with the details of the contractual obligations on warranty and maintenance that were submitted to the chief justice on February 20, 2013.

#### ***Chamber of Enforcement Agents***

The Chamber of Enforcement Agents, one of the LPAs receiving project support, held its annual assembly and a two-day training workshop from February 1. The DCOP, who has supported the organization from its inception and through two previous projects, was invited to participate and discuss coordinated efforts, future trainings and the potential for future cooperation.

### ***General Secretary of the Supreme Court and President of the CSC***

On February 6, the COP, DCOP, COR, and court administration coordinator met with Sonja Gruevska, general secretary of the Supreme Court and president of the CSC. Discussions centered on future cooperation with the CSC and CAA, including the printing and publication of the project-supported manuals on hiring and disciplining court employees. The group also discussed the possibility of supporting the Supreme Court in processing cases, as well as the upcoming completion of staffing guidelines and the selection of a working group.

### ***Norwegian Center for Mediation***

Members of the Restorative Justice Project, sponsored by the Norwegian Center for Mediation, requested a meeting with JSP to identify possible areas of cooperation or overlap in efforts. The project, which is sponsored by the Norwegian Embassy in Macedonia, aims to foster mediation and diversion in the juvenile justice area.

### ***American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative***

Representatives of the American Bar Association Rule of Law Initiative (ABA ROLI) requested a meeting with the new in-country director, Elizabeth Givens. They will be working mainly with defense attorneys to prepare the new Criminal Procedure Law, which is scheduled to take effect in December of 2013. Possible areas of mutual cooperation and information exchange were discussed.

## **2. RESULT 2: MORE INDEPENDENT, EFFICIENT, AND CONSISTENT APPLICATION OF JUDICIAL POLICIES AND PRACTICES**

### **2.1 Requirement 2.1 - Legal Framework and Judicial Branch Policies Strengthen Independence, Effectiveness, and Accountability of the Judicial System**

#### **2.1.1 Review and Advocacy of Laws by the Judiciary**

##### ***Macedonian Judges Association and Other NGO Roundtables***

Under the work plan, JSP was to continue holding a series of discussion groups in cooperation with MJA. The president of MJA, Supreme Court Judge Nikolovski, requested that these events be postponed due to pressing issues at the Supreme Court, so the project engaged four other LPAs: MYLA, MLA, All For Fair Trials, and the Public Prosecutors Association. On March 22, the four groups of lawyers will participate in a roundtable entitled "Trial Practice and Court Efficiency" to discuss suggestions from the bar on how to improve the efficiency of the courts, judges and lawyers. Participants will review major laws that affect the judiciary and lawyers to identify any gaps or other shortcomings in the framework. In February a letter of invitation was sent to each organization. JSP selected two prominent members of the bar as panel members: Ms. Meri Mladenovska-Gjorgjievska, a private practitioner and a former minister of justice, for civil matters and Dr. Boban Misoski, a professor at SS. Cyril and Methodius Faculty of Law, for criminal matters. Forty participants are expected to attend the roundtable.

##### ***Judicial Branch Forum***

The first Judicial Branch Forum took place on November 6, 2012. The participants consisted of the top policy makers and decision makers of the judiciary. The discussion focused on the achievements of judicial reform to date and the needs of the judiciary going forward, with special emphasis on the performance and failures of current laws. The group concluded that the Judicial Branch Forum should continue to meet on a quarterly basis.

Accordingly the project has scheduled this event for March 15 and drafted a letter of invitation soliciting topics for discussion. The main topics have been selected and the proponents will

advocate for their positions during the discussion. On February 27, the proposed agenda was sent to the president of the JC for review and comments.

### ***Harmonization of Decisions of Appellate Regions***

The project has agreed to support a leadership team for the harmonization of court decisions. The group, which comprises the four appellate region president judges (PJs) and heads of departments, will meet on a quarterly basis to discuss and harmonize important decisions. The initiative is led by the Academy, which requested the project's support. It is in the early stages of planning, with the first meeting tentatively planned for late March.

## **2.2 Requirement 2.2 - Administration and Management Rules, Policies and Procedures, Systems and Practices to Support a Modern Court System**

### ***Court Service Council and Court Administrators***

- The manual for hiring employees has been completed with project support. JSP has agreed to support the printing of the publication, which will be sent to the library in each court. Electronic versions will also be made available. JSP completed in-house printing on February 28.
- Disciplinary procedural guidelines have been approved by the CSC and the Court Administrators. CSC President Ms. Gruevska has requested that the publication be sent to the PJs for review, as they are responsible for conducting disciplinary procedures in courts that do not have a court administrator. Upon final approval, the document will be distributed to the appropriate recipients.

### ***Development of Needs-based Budgets***

The project has been asked by the Administrative Office (AO) to sponsor a roundtable for all court presidents, administrators and accountants, Criteria & Methodology for Needs-Based Budget Preparation. At a meeting in Veles on February 26, JSP began planning for an event in mid-April ahead of court budget preparations for the upcoming year.

### ***Support for Court Accountants: Guidelines for Unified Accounting Practices***

At the request of the head of the AO, JSP supported a workshop on the standardization of accounting forms and payment procedures. While inspecting the courts, the internal auditors from the Judicial Council had pointed out that each court uses different payment forms and procedures and said they should be brought in line with the requirements of the Law on Accounting for National Budget Users.

The workshop, entitled "Preparation of Unified Payment Procedures and Guidelines upon Judges' Order and other Accounting Documents," was held on February 4-5 in Veles. The objective was to prepare standardized forms to be used by the judges and court accountants in all courts in Macedonia. There were 18 participants in attendance, including 6 judges, 6 court accountants, 3 court administrators, the Head of the AO of the Court Budget Council (CBC), and 2 internal auditors of the Judicial Council.

The standardized forms developed by the group include payment orders for expert witnesses, *ex-officio* attorneys, jury judges, overtime duty, payments from court deposits, and on-sight inspections of crime scenes. The AO sent the payment forms developed at the workshop to all courts for feedback; at the time of writing, comments had been received only from the BC Bitola. The next step is adoption of the forms at a session of the CBC.

After approval, the guidelines will be officially presented to the State Audit Bureau. This is expect to take place in March 2013. The AO of CBC requested project support for publishing

the guidelines, presenting them to the state auditors, and distributing them to all courts and other relevant judicial institutions. JSP has agreed to this request.

## **2.2.1 Support for Public Information and Education Activities**

### ***Student Visits to Courts and Informational Publication for Students***

In support of improved transparency, understanding and information about the judicial branch, JSP began a program to sponsor student visits to a number of courts in Macedonia, including the Bitola Basic and Appellate Courts, the Shtip Basic and Appellate Courts, the Skopje II Basic Court and the Tetovo Basic Court.

JSP has teamed up with ELSA, which produced an informational brochure on juvenile justice for high school students describing the judicial branch and the structure, functions and jurisdiction of the courts in Macedonia. ELSA is currently working on a second publication on the subject of juvenile justice, which JSP has agreed to print and distribute in conjunction with other student court visits. JSP arranged to have ELSA students meet on February 11 with Judge Lazar Nanev, a basic court judge with extensive experience in juvenile justice issues. The brochure will be delivered to JSP during the week of March 4 for review, editing, publication, and printing.

When JSP has completed printing the second brochure, it will be distributed to the students visiting the courts and other citizens. Two court visits have taken place and three more are planned for this contract year.

### ***Year-End Report of Appellate Regions***

In January plans were made to support a year-end publication for each appellate region. In 2011, the Shtip Appellate Court had provided a very popular and informative publication that included pictures of the president judges in the region, and case flow information including the number of pending cases at year's end - a significant step in advancing transparency. JSP encouraged all appellate regions to produce a similar publication and offered logistical support. At the time of this writing, three of the four appellate court PJs have sent their drafts. On February 27, the project sent a letter the president of Appellate Court Gostivar encouraging the remaining appellate court to contribute to the effort.

## **2.2.2 Differentiated Case Management – Consultancy**

The Macedonian judiciary has made good progress in reducing pending cases and has significantly lowered the number of backlogged cases. This positive trend is the result of several factors, including the adoption of a new Law on Civil Procedure; the divestiture of enforcement cases to enforcement agents and of uncontested inheritance cases and payment orders to notaries; and better training and more scrupulous oversight by the Supreme Court and the JC. This increase in efficiency was noted in a 2012 EU progress report.

To further streamline the process, JSP retained a US-based consultant to work on differentiated case management system (DCM). The consultancy began on February 10 with the arrival of the international expert, Marcus Zimmer.

During the time in-country, the consultant worked with the judges and court personnel to develop a DCM system for the Macedonian courts (his schedule of meetings and court observations is attached as Annex I). In the course of these meetings and in focus group meetings, the consultant explained the concept and advantages of the DCM protocol in detail. He also observed ACCMIS and spoke to the IT personnel at the Supreme Court and some basic courts to determine how ACCMIS could be utilized if the DCM system is adopted. The reaction by most judges, court administrators and other court personnel was positive.

The consultant has also agreed to prepare a scope of work and action plan for developing a National Standard for Case Resolution.

### **3. RESULT 3: INCREASED FAIRNESS AND EFFICIENCY OF THE ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE THROUGH MORE EFFECTIVE LEGAL PERSONNEL AND EFFICIENT PROCESSES**

#### **3.1. Requirement 3.1: Develop and Implement Targeted Specialized Trainings for Judges, Court Administrative Executives, and Court Staff**

On November 22, 2012, the roundtable “Identifying the Needs for Continuous Education of Judges in the Area of Commercial Law” was held in Skopje. The roundtable generated 21 recommendations for topics to enhance the efficiency of judges and lawyers in the area of commercial law. Two training workshops were held in February based on the roundtable’s findings as follows:

On February 1, a workshop entitled “Practical Implementation of the Law on Civil Procedure with a Special Emphasis on the Provisions for Electronic Delivery and the Implementation of the Law on Electronic Signature and Electronic Data” was held on the Academy premises. This topic is extremely timely as it addresses portions of two new laws that will shortly go into effect: the Law on Civil Procedures (on electronic delivery of court papers) and the Law on Electronic Signatures.

The trainers were Judge Ljubica Kolic, head of the Civil Department of the Skopje II Basic Court and Marin Piperkoski, director of the IT Infrastructure Department at the Clearing House KIBS AD Skopje. There were 53 participants comprising civil and commercial judges, lawyers, and representatives from the different business chambers.

Also in cooperation with the Academy, the project organized a workshop to support the implementation of specialized training on commercial law for judges. The workshop, “Evidence and Quality of Evidence in Commercial Cases with a Special Emphasis on the Expert Testimony/Use of Financial Instruments as Evidence in Commercial Cases,” was delivered at the Academy on February 15, 2013. The trainers were Judge Tatjana Susuleska of the Bitola Appellate Court, who delivered a presentation entitled “Evidence and Quality of Evidence in Commercial Cases with a Special Emphasis on the Expert Testimony” and Mr. Marko Andonov, Law Professor at the University American College, Skopje, with the presentation “Use of Financial Instruments as Evidence in Commercial Cases.” The 28 participants included civil and commercial judges, representatives from the business chambers in Macedonia, and representatives from the Macedonian Bar Association.

#### **3.2 Requirement 3.2 - Improve Caseload Processing and Reduce Backlog of Cases**

Most courts have made a good deal of progress in processing cases and reducing backlogs. However, challenges remain. The Law of Case Management requires case processing committees to be established in each court. One such committee developed draft models of two documents required by law, monthly reports and internal procedures. The president of the JC subsequently approved both models.

JSP will formally present the models to the PJs and court administrators at three regional training workshops, one for each appellate region (combining Skopje and Gostivar). The workshop will include a session in which selected court personnel from each region will train personnel from courts with the greatest backlog of cases. Case processing and backlog

reduction principles will be presented, as well as an in-depth examination of the reasons of case delays in each region.

### **3.2.1 Support for Judicial Sector Automation**

#### ***Automation for High Administrative Court***

Installation of ACCMIS in the High Administrative Court is ongoing. The sub-contractor is expected to complete the installation and training on schedule by April 30, 2013.

#### ***Electronic Digital Recording of Court Hearings and Trials***

The full implementation of electronic recording requires additional training for judges and some court staff. On February 4, the selected vendor began training in two pilot courts (Basic Courts of Bitola and Veles) and then expanded the training to all civil courts with electronic recording devices. The original date for completion was April 25, 2013, but the prime minister requested that the schedule be accelerated. Ms. Ivanovska re-negotiated the contract with the trainer, who agreed to complete the training in the originally designated courts by March 31 at no additional cost.

#### ***Review and Evaluation of the Status of Judicial Automation***

Over the past several years, there has been a proliferation of automation, including ACCMIS. The project has determined that the time is right to evaluate the progress of automation and identify gaps and shortcomings, if any. It is important to determine whether the functionality and interaction between the components are working efficiently and effectively. Long-range strategic planning is needed and this review will be the start of the process for the ITC personnel of the courts and court administration.

Accordingly JSP has requested its on-call ITC expert to conduct this review and make recommendations for future enhancements and development. Following the review, the project will provide the judicial leaders with the opportunity to create an IT strategic plan, including a replacement schedule for outdated and underpowered equipment.

#### ***Meeting of IT Personnel***

On May 31, 2012, IT personnel from all of the courts in Macedonia met for the first time and expressed a need for periodic learning and discussion sessions. Accordingly, a roundtable of all IT court personnel has been scheduled for March 26, 2013. Top IT personnel held a planning session for the roundtable on February 26, where the discussed potential agenda topics and activities to support the IT employees in the courts.

## **II. PROBLEMS AND REMEDIAL ACTIONS**

Problems have been minimal and of the type to be expected in the regular course of implementation.

The project attorney position was filled in December and the 3 month probation period was extended for another 3 months to June 1 to enable JSP to monitor his work a bit longer.

## **III. SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES PLANNED FOR MARCH 2013**

The summary of activities planned for March is as follows:

- Oversee and manage the “Capacity Development Program” with Embra

- Maintain regular communications with Embra and conduct regular coordination meetings according to the sub-contract
- Continue coordination with the Academy for future events
- Continue to accumulate statistical data on case filings, dispositions, and backlogs by court and case type
- Prepare an analysis of the case data in preparation for regional meetings with case processing committees to take place in April
- Re-establish the working group for next phase of the Implementation of Staffing Guidelines
- Continue to work with six pilot courts to meet targets on case processing and needs-based budgets
- Provide support to the courts and the Supreme Court IT Department to implement ACCMIS throughout the courts
- Conduct trainings and roundtables with courts' IT personnel and security experts scheduled for March 26
- Continue to oversee implementation of the contract for development of the ACCMIS application in the High Administrative Court
- Further support the consultancy of the court administration expert in preparing the DCM and begin the process of implementing the system in pilot courts
- Support arrangements and oversee the sub-contractor in preparing for a study tour to Estonia and Sweden
- Public discussion with four NGOs entitled Court Practices and Court Efficiency on March 22
- Assist the CAA administrative office and its new office assistant in preparing CAA brochure;
- Support activities with CAA, CSC, CBC, AO, and JC
- Print and distribute the CAA/CSC Human Resources Manual
- Print brochure on MYLA accomplishments
- Support the development and printing of the JC brochure
- Print the 2012 annual reports of the Appellate Courts
- Settle the Global Fellow Intern due to arrive on March 15
- Continue updating the JSP web site with assistance from the Global Fellow?] Intern
- Conduct student visits to courts and distribute ELSA publication in Skopje II and Bitola Basic and Appellate Courts
- Assist ELSA with a second publication on juvenile justice, including promotion and distribution support
- Continue to oversee training on the electronic recording of court hearings for pilot courts and follow-up training for all civil courts to be completed by March 31.