

**WSP International Project in Macedonia**  
**"Project for Common Vision – PEV Macedonia"**  
**2003 Activity Report**

1 – Mission.....	1
2 – Approach and methodology.....	1
2.1 Final part of the preliminary "Country Note" phase (1 January - 30 June 2003).....	2
2.2 First part of the main "Working Groups" phase (1 July - 31 December 2003).....	3
3 – Activities, participants, results.....	3
3.1 Final part of the preliminary "Country Note" phase (1 January - 30 June 2003).....	3
3.2 First part of the main "Working Groups" phase (1 July - 31 December 2003).....	6
4 – Contact details.....	8

## 1 – Mission

The original mission of the project was defined in late 2001 - early 2002 in the aftermath of the Framework Agreement that put an end to the violent conflict in Macedonia. At the end of the project's preliminary phase in August-September 2003, the Macedonian project team re-assessed the socio-political conditions and needs with a view to refining the project's mission and strategy. The main goals of the project, implemented by WSP International's branch office in Macedonia under the name "Project for Common Vision" - PEV Makedonija remain supporting the peace and reconciliation processes and contributing to the strengthening of democratic and socio-economic reforms.

In particular, the project aims at strengthening the capacities of local and national actors to jointly identify and address the root causes of violent conflict and of socio-political tensions, consolidating a culture of consensual dialogue and cooperative decision-making, thus contributing to the reduction of social tensions and the strengthening of the democratization process, particularly the implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

## 2 – Approach and methodology

The project employs the WSP variant of participatory-action research as a means for facilitating a multi-level process of dialogue engaging key stakeholders of the peace process in inclusive interactions aiming at generating consensual social and policy reflections and recommendations. In particular, the process of participatory research is

---

aimed at overcoming differences of understanding and engaging both excluded categories (e.g. ethnic minorities, women, diaspora groups) and decision-makers in a constructive process generating consensual visions of the future and pragmatic policy recommendations. These activities are expected to facilitate the development of capacities to address and overcome tensions and conflicts at local and national levels.

The dialogue and participatory research activities facilitated by the project aim at generating inclusive definitions of key public problems and related policy options and recommendations, exploring and structuring common visions for the country's future, while increasing the level of mutual knowledge and trust between the main actors of the peace process. Operational and programmatic lessons emerging from the process of dialogue-research inform the practice of WSP projects and their stakeholders.

The general principles of the WSP approach are adapted by the multi-ethnic Macedonian PEV team and local and national participants with a view to guaranteeing local ownership, joint responsibility, constant learning and operational flexibility. The project facilitates inclusive in-depth consultations, participatory policy assessment and consensual socio-political dialogue at local and national levels as well as between the local, national and international actors. PEV Makedonija provides an impartial platform for consensual interaction between all actors relevant for the peace and stabilization process in Macedonia - citizens (particularly from conflict areas and excluded categories), political parties, leaders of national and local communities and the international community.

## 2.1 Final part of the preliminary "Country Note" phase (1 January - 30 June 2003)

The central tasks of this project phase (initiated in March-April 2002) were:

- Collective drafting of a "Macedonian Country Note" by the participants in the project's process of dialogue and research. The Country Note drafts serve as main tools for reflecting the participants' demands, interests, proposals, visions and understandings regarding the root causes of the violent conflict, post-conflict priorities, and visions of the future. As such, the draft Notes are used as tools for facilitating socio-political dialogue and mapping areas of emerging consensus

---

rather than being academic papers elaborated in isolation from the stakeholders of the peace and democratisation processes.

- Based on the Country Note findings, a collective identification of "Entry Points" to the rebuilding process, that is, areas of socio-political tensions that need to be jointly addressed in order to reduce the potential for conflict relapse.

## **2.2 First part of the main "Working Groups" phase (1 July - 31 December 2003)**

The main phase of the project consists of forming and facilitating inclusive "Working Groups" of key stakeholders of the five main tension areas (or "Entry Points"). The inclusiveness of the groups and the quality of participation in the groups' analyses determine to a large extent the impact and sustainability of policy recommendations and follow-up activities emerging from their activities.

The decision to form the working groups and their respective shape rests with the National Project Group, representing the project's participants.

## **3 – Activities, participants, results**

### **3.1 Final part of the preliminary "Country Note" phase (1 January - 30 June 2003)**

The first part of 2003 was dedicated to the completion of the preliminary research and dialogue phase. This consultation phase included a large number of citizens from all ethnic groups and regions in the country, representatives of the political parties (mainly party leaders or public relations officers), representatives of the international community, and Macedonian diaspora groups in Switzerland. As a result of the field consultations, two drafts of a "Macedonian Country Note" were prepared, reflecting the major political, social, and economic problems in the Macedonian society as seen by the actors themselves.

The methods and instruments used in 2002 and the first part of 2003 to generate the findings of the draft country notes were:

- field research, collection and systematization of qualitative and quantitative data

- 
- consultations with experts and institutions not directly engaged in field research
  - small and large group meetings, discussions, and community interviews with citizens in rural and urban settings
  - local surveys triangulating qualitative field research
  - interviews with political and international representatives, and external resource persons
  - audio recording and video research
  - analysis of secondary sources (articles, studies, expert sources)
  - based on the first draft Country Note, focused consultations with representatives of the three categories of actors directly covered by the preliminary research. The consultations aimed at verifying the authenticity of the views reflected in the draft and aggregating the large volume of data into clusters of socio-political problems ("Entry Points" to the rebuilding process)
  - a pilot-research with Macedonian diaspora in Switzerland, using similar techniques.

The preliminary phase was implemented in 15 regions, most of them located in the crisis areas in Northern and Western Macedonia, 3 of them mono-ethnic (one Macedonian, one Albanian, one Muslim Macedonian), and the rest of mixed ethnic composition. The project's database includes tables of general and stratified data, over 750 pages of text containing transcripts from group and individual interviews, audio records (over 200 hours) and video records (over 45 hours), four films, and a photo database. The consultations with ethnic Albanian Macedonians in diaspora groups in Switzerland were held in the cantons Valais and Zurich between February and April 2003.

The drafts of the Country Note of Macedonia, produced between April and June 2003, served as tools for facilitating socio-political dialogue without imposing a predetermined agenda to the participants, in order to facilitate collective ownership of the process and its results. They were neither a simple sum of the opinions and attitudes identified through field consultations nor a collection of final policy recommendations for solving the problems identified by participants. The particular function of the country notes was to facilitate the collective identification of key societal and political problems or tensions and to point at areas around which agreement seemed to be the highest.

---

Despite high personnel turnover in the research team and conceptual difficulties in aggregating field findings in a representative document that could be accepted by all participants, PEV completed the preliminary phase on 30 June 2003 when the first conference of the National Project Group (an inclusive forum of representatives of citizens, national political actors and civil society, and international community) was organized in Skopje. At the meeting, the second draft country note served to initiate a preliminary consensus-building process through the collective identification of five main areas of tension ("Entry Points") out of the seven proposed in the second draft. The draft was presented to the members of the National Project Group as an open document requesting consensual agreement on the authenticity of results, the identification of five main areas of tension, and a mandate to continue facilitating a process of participatory research around them.

The meeting was attended by 83 representatives of political parties and state bodies, NGOs, local and national citizen groups, religious communities, embassies and international organizations. The late President of Macedonia Boris Trajkovski addressed the meeting supporting the project's attempt to strengthen the principles of tolerance, and dialogue. The participants discussed constructively and critically the findings of the preliminary research phase and the proposed list of priority areas that would require further in-depth dialogue and research. The discussion resulted in the endorsement of the project approach and the Country Note's findings, the identification of the main 5 conflict-generating areas of discontent requiring further research and policy analysis, and the formulation of criteria for establishing the working groups around the respective issues.

While the process of field consultations was assessed positively by most participants, the main criticism that was expressed at the meeting concerned the validity of the process of generalization and aggregation of field findings into synthetic statements regarding the positions of the participants. This, together with internal and external dissatisfaction with the dynamics between PEV's management and staff, contributed to a distancing of the project's donors from its activities. Staff-management dynamics absorbed an important amount of energy and led to high personnel turnover and reduction in performance throughout most of 2003.

---

The five problem areas adopted as focus for collective dialogue and research in the main phase of the project are:

1. **Legal and cultural state identity.** This cluster of issues deals with the question "what are the foundations for a stable society and an effective polity in the aftermath of violent conflict"? The participants considered that these fundamental questions have been largely neglected in the first decade of Macedonian independence and need to be addressed through a patient, inclusive (that is cross-ethnic and nation-wide) process of dialogue.

2. **Rule of law, decentralization, local self-government and civic initiative** (with special emphasis on the anti-corruption process). These issues pertain to still unresolved grievances of local actors regarding the stabilization of the political system through decentralization (a key requirement of the Framework Agreement), the need for more citizen participation in the policy process, and the delicate process of tackling corruption at all levels.

3. **Economic development, unemployment, poverty, distribution of resources and social problems:** participants agreed that without a prosperous economy and a just system of redistribution and social protection, ethnic and political tensions cannot be successfully contained.

4. **Inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relationships: processes and perspectives for integration.** Deeper and superficial tensions within and between ethnic communities need to be clarified if the deeper social contract underpinning Macedonia's young statehood is to resist the damage inflicted by years of mutual neglect or division (including between members of the same ethnic group) and recent violence.

5. **Euro-Atlantic aspirations and regional integration of the Republic of Macedonia:** a group of demands which reflected the participants' demands to better understand Macedonia's development in a regional and European context.

### **3.2 First part of the main "Working Groups" phase (1 July - 31 December 2003)**

The above "entry points" for the rebuilding process and the mandate received from the national meeting of project participants in June 2003 served as a basis for constituting working groups comprised of local, national, and international actors that are most

---

affected by the respective problems. In this phase (which lasts until September 2004), the main tasks of the working groups were defined as:

- jointly mapping the respective tension areas
- generating pragmatic policy recommendations through consensual and inclusive dialogue informed by research.

The working groups were constituted taking into account the need for inclusiveness and local and national representativity. Building on the relations of trust and the local networks developed in the preliminary phase, the groups initiated in-depth participatory research with local and national actors in 24 communities in crisis areas in autumn 2003.

In October and beginning of November 2003, at various speeds, five working groups were constituted of (1) a core of local and national civil society and political actors - four representatives of the citizens and one expert in the area in question - and one PEV researcher, and (2) a group of external advisers comprising representatives of the political parties, the international community, and local consultants.

In the third quarter of the year, the network of local consultants established during the preliminary phase was revived and enlarged. The terms of reference of local consultants in the main research phase of the project were defined before mid-November.

The core members of the working groups, with the support of external resource persons and the PEV research team, conducted the following activities:

- participated in training in the project's approach and collective definition of objectives and terms of reference (October 2003)
- on the basis of the proposal drafted by PEV in September 2003, refined the preliminary thematic structure of the respective problem area, and defined the group's programme of work (October - November 2003)
- generated a list of issues and questions for expanded meetings with citizens or group interviews (October - November 2003)
- on the basis of PEV's design, consolidated the list of items and questions for an in-depth survey covering the five areas (October - December 2003)
- facilitated, with the support of the PEV research team, consultations in the 24 communities (from mid-November 2003 until mid-2004).

---

The constitution of multi-ethnic working groups represented a consensus-building process in itself, facilitating subsequent group activities in late 2003 and the first part of 2004. The engagement of local and national participants in project activities has been more significant than the one of international actors. The research team of PEV Makedonija team supported the working group members and local consultants throughout this process, careful not to predetermine the results of open interactions or to transform them into a non-participatory process.

#### 4 – Contact details

**WSP International branch office in Macedonia**  
**"Project for Common Vision - PEV"**  
WSP International branch office in Macedonia  
Boulevard Krste Misirkov  
DTC Mavrovka II sprat local 14,15  
1000 Skopje  
Macedonia  
Tel: +389 (0)23 222 183; 222 184; 130 222  
Fax: +389 (0)23 222 176  
[pev@mk.wsp-international.org](mailto:pev@mk.wsp-international.org)

For more operational updates, please visit the Macedonian section of WSP International's website at [www.wsp-international.org](http://www.wsp-international.org)