

**United States Agency for International Development**

***MACEDONIAN BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER  
(MBRC)***

*Republic of Macedonia*

**Final Report  
January 2001 – December 2002  
(Including January – May 2003)**

**Task Order # PCE-I-03-98-00015-CCC  
Sub-Task Order # 03**

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## The MBRC at a Glance (1995 – 2003)

([www.mbrc.com.mk/](http://www.mbrc.com.mk/))

In May 2003, the USAID funded component of the Macedonia Business Resource Center (MBRC) ended. However, six local for and non for profit entities have been incubated by the MBRC and are already expanding and further developing its work. During 2001-2002, for sub task order #3 (the focus of this report), the key areas of MBRC's work were trade and investment. The results for the entire project as well as sub-task order #3 speak for themselves and are summarized below. Moreover, the MBRC represents a cost effective, proven development model which offers numerous lessons for future projects. For this reason, lessons learned are paid given extra attention in the report in addition to summarizing and compiling key information.

In Summary, Representative Results of the MBRC Include:

- Performed over 268 seminars, workshops and training programs in 40 different subject areas, training over 5,000 local managers, professionals and consultants
- Facilitated over \$95 million in new trade and investment
- Directly improved and “graduated” 245 companies in multiple areas of accounting, finance, operations, marketing, strategy, etc, to make these companies viable and competitive
- Completed over 1,100 trade and investment deals with more than 300 companies
- Graduated over 20 Macedonian consultants from the professional development program into responsible positions outside the MBRC
- Produced 12 key publications which are comprehensive and authoritative in their respective areas and are considered definitive sources of information in Macedonia
- Developed an outplacement program which can be used as a model for not only other USAID programs but for companies, government agencies, NGOs and non-profit organizations
- Developed and implemented the Training and Investment Management System (TIMS), a comprehensive linked data base enabling up to the minute access, tracking and monitoring of MBRC programs, activities, as well as informative links to partners and clients

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## Sub-Task Order #3 (2001 – 2003)

Selected Accomplishments Include:

- Over \$64 million in trade and investment deals competed with almost 300 companies
- Facilitated trade and investment deals in 34 sectors, representing approximately 75% of the Macedonian economy
- Worked with businesses, individuals, and organizations from 30 countries
- Organized 22 B2B events resulting in approximately \$20 million of trade and investment
- Completed 55 training workshops and seminars throughout Macedonia in over 30 subject areas
- Hosted and took part in 42 trade and investment events including the first ever “Business Roundtable with the Government of Macedonia”
- Published and authored Guide to Macedonia Export and 7 key Macedonian sector guides
- Defined and assisted in the development of the e-commerce sector for Macedonia
- Met or exceeded all 17 benchmarks with 94% of all work days completed by local Macedonians

## The MBRC: A MODEL FOR THE FUTURE

### Cost Effective

*For every \$10,000 spent on Sub-Task Order #3:*

- \$201, 027 of direct trade completed
- \$136, 993 of direct investment accomplished
- 5 people trained and 2 jobs completed

*For every scheduled work day on Sub-Task Order #3:*

- \$3,969 of trade completed and \$ 2,705 of investment accomplished

### Sustainable

- Six local self supporting spins offs, expanded trade and investment linkages, skills and know how in the hands of the local professionals working in all sectors of the economy

### Successful

- Exceeded over half of its benchmarks, meeting all 17 for sub-task order 3
- Quality programs, activities and legacy which surpassed expected results

### Synergies

- Complementary training, BDS, trade and investment activities and events implemented working together with private and public, local and international businesses and organizations from 30 countries and all regions of Macedonia in almost all sectors of the economy

### Capacity Building

- 5000 business managers, professionals, and consultants trained in seminars and workshops across the country in a wide variety of subject areas improving the efficiency, know how, competitiveness and productively of local businesses

### Economic Growth

- 368 jobs directly created, over \$95 million in trade and investment, business linkages, training and deals completed with all key sectors of the economy. Indirect impacts such as jobs and businesses saved and improved, future trade and investment opportunities created, improved capacity, competitiveness, and transparency.

## **Why Did The Project Succeed?**

*\* Do the Little Things Well*

*\* Multifaceted Programs*

*\*The Right Approach to Trade*

*\* Capacity Building*

*\* Strategic Partnerships*

*\* Synergies*

*\* Media Coverage*

*\* Adaptability/Flexibility*

*\*Innovative Technologies*

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## Benchmarks and Results

### Sub-Task Order #3

<i>Benchmark</i>	<i>Outcomes</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
1) Facilitate a minimum of \$15 million in trade deals in 2001 and \$18 million in 2002 for a cumulative total of \$33 million for the entire project	2001-\$24,548,378 (in trade deals) 2002- \$12,827,817 2003- \$818,836 Total: <b>\$38,195,031</b>	✓
2) Facilitate a minimum of \$10 million in investments in 2001 and \$15 million in 2002 for a cumulative total of \$25 million for the entire project	2001-\$10,133,280 (in investment) 2002- \$7,545,951 2003- \$8,349,500 Total: <b>\$26,028,731</b>	✓
3) Host one regional trade event in Macedonia	Events hosted in 2001 – 2 Events hosted in 2002 – 3 Events hosted in 2003 – 1 <b>Total: 6 Regional Trade Events</b>	✓
4) Develop and offer specifically tailored training programs, workshops and seminars in multiple business areas	55 training programs, workshops and seminars offered in 40 different business areas	✓
5) Promote trade and investment opportunities through 10 major international trade and investment events in 2001 and 10 events in 2002 (20 total)	Events in 2001 – 19 Events in 2002 – 23 <b>Total: Promoted trade and investment at 42 events</b>	✓
6) Continue to develop and distribute trade and investment promotional materials	7 sector guides published, and updates of <u>Sources of Finance in Macedonia</u> , and <u>Investing in the Republic of Macedonia Guide</u> . These materials were distributed at all relevant activities where the MBRC was engaged	✓
7) Produce a Guide to Exporting for the Republic of Macedonia	Authored, published and distributed <u>Guide to Macedonia export</u> in 2001	✓
8) Conduct a general sector analysis suitable for the international promotion for 6 of the most promising trade and investment sectors in Macedonia	The MBRC conducted general sector analyses in: IT, Wine, Fruit and Vegetable Processing, Textile, Leather, Tourism and Metalworking	✓
9) Cooperate with local management consulting firms to improve their capacity for providing business and trade and investment support	Worked directly with multiple consulting firms over the course of the task period providing workshops, seminars and other advisory and technical support	✓
10) Offer 10 comprehensive “train the trainers” seminars to local management	Offered 10 “train the trainers” seminars to selected local management consulting firms	✓

consulting firms	in a wide range of areas (see Section III)	
11) Establish strategic partnerships with 5 management consulting firms or associations in both 2001 and 2002	Identified and implemented 5 strategic partnerships in 2001 and 5 strategic partnerships in 2002 <b>Total: 10 strategic partnerships</b>	✓
12) Develop an E-Commerce Development Strategy for Macedonia within first 60 days of task order	Researched and developed E-Commerce Development Strategy within first 60 days of task order (see Attachment B)	✓
13) Establish contacts with Macedonian IT companies, government officials, and interested businesses in the area of e-commerce	Developed a sector guide on e-commerce business in Macedonia in March 2001 and developed contacts and partnerships throughout the sub task order	✓
14) Support the formation of a Macedonian Association of IT companies	A) Throughout 2001, the MBRC supported the formation of the IT association in Macedonia B) Co-hosted and co-organized the First Regional IT conference	✓
15) Assist GOM by facilitating introductions and communications with potential foreign investors for GOM proposed infrastructure projects	The MBRC cooperated with the GOM regarding infrastructure projects throughout the course of the sub-task order	✓
16) Designate one person within MBRC local staff to liaison and facilitate for infrastructure projects	One local professional staff worked as the liaison and facilitator on multiple projects during the sub-task order period	✓
17) Develop, test, and implement privatization plan for the MBRC	Plan was developed, submitted and approved by USAID resulting in: <b>6 self-sustaining local entities spun off from MBRC (See section VII)</b>	✓

## **SECTION I- Task Order Summary**

### *Background: MBRC (1995 – 2000)*

Since Macedonia's independence in 1991, USAID and the U.S. Government have been working in country to assist the people and government of Macedonia with the transfer to a market based economy. In 1995, USAID determined that a more intensive intervention directly into the private sector would be necessary to greatly accelerate the private sector's ability to become independent, viable and competitive. The ways of both doing and thinking about business would have to change radically, and extensive capacity building would be required in areas such as management, finance, accounting, marketing, quality, packaging, operations, trade, investment, human resources, and corporate governance. To respond to this challenge and vital need, USAID/Macedonia decided to fund a program to provide direct technical assistance, training and professional development to private Macedonian companies, managers and consultants. Crimson Capital was chosen as the implementing contractor, and the program was launched in September 1995 as the Macedonian Business Resource Center (MBRC). By providing assistance and a future to private or newly privatized companies, USAID hoped to encourage the Macedonian government to accelerate its privatization program.

This project was highly successful in increasing local business capacity by educating, training, and exposing local business professionals and companies to the skills and tools they would need to compete in a western style economy. During this time, the MBRC trained 245 companies working with over 4,300 local managers, consultants, and professionals. It also worked with over 300 companies in the areas of trade and investment completing a total of over \$30 million in trade and investment. However, more importantly, from its seminars, publications, and activities, the MBRC became "known" as a reliable, responsive, and highly skilled business, trade, training, and investment hub in the Macedonian market for both local and international companies and organizations.

### *Sub-task Order #3: MBRC (2001 – 2003)*

As the original project neared completion in 2000, USAID, the Macedonian beneficiaries, and Crimson Capital saw the opportunity to build on the MBRC's accomplishments. The logical next step was to work to expand the trade and investment activities that previous MBRC work had made possible. Also, both USAID and Crimson realized that much work still needed to be done in training, developing business networks and activities, and other areas to ensure the sustainable impact of the MBRC's multifaceted activities. Moreover, all parties involved wanted to ensure a smooth transition of the MBRC from an USAID funded institution into locally managed, sustainable Macedonian entities.

Sub-Task order #3 was approved by USAID as the crucial final link in completing and expanding on the USAID funded component of the MBRC. Using almost entirely local business managers and trainers, the MBRC concentrated on expanding its trade and investment activities as well the six other objectives listed on page 8. The results were irrefutable: over \$64 million in direct trade and investment, the creation of 368 new jobs, and almost 1000 people trained at MBRC seminars and training events. Additionally, the MBRC was actively involved organizing, assisting, and implementing multiple trade, business and investment events; even serving as a representative for the Macedonian Government on several occasions.

The project met or exceeded all of its 17 benchmarks though the impacts of the sub-task order don't end there. It is even more difficult to assess the *indirect* impacts of the project, i.e. how many jobs were saved due to MBRC inputs, the long term economic impacts of its activities, the trade and investment networks opened for future deals, and the capacity of Macedonian professionals and businesses to grow and compete in both local and global markets. All of this was accomplished under highly unfavorable economic conditions due to the outbreak of war in the spring on 2001 as well as the uncertain political climate surrounding the national elections in September 2002. It is important to highlight as well that all these activities were accomplished for less than \$2 million making this sub-task order arguably one of USAID's most cost-effective programs ever.

Yet, perhaps the most important success story of the sub task order if not the entire project has been where the MBRC stands today. The MBRC has transformed itself into 6 local self sustaining consulting firms (four for profit and two nonprofit), all operated by former MBRC employees and trainees. Many former MBRC employees and trainees have gone on to highly successful careers in a wide variety of fields including industry, government and academia. Appendix A lists the cumulative career profiles of the MBRC's employees and is discussed in more depth in Section III.

The task order was not without challenges. Many of the obstacles that the MBRC staff and its partners had to overcome are discussed on the following pages. What is important though is that they were overcome and this report examines lessons learned so that the positive experiences of the MBRC can be used as building blocks for future USAID projects. Ideally, the lessons and experiences summarized in this report representing the illustrative story of the MBRC will serve as a transmutable model for future BDS, trade, and investment projects.

### *Objectives of Sub-Task Order 3-*

The general objectives of this effort were:

1. Increase trade and investment opportunities for Macedonian companies interested in doing business with U.S. companies and other regional partners.
2. Continue to improve business management capacity and efficiency of Macedonian businesses and assist them to become more competitive.
3. Improve the capacity of the local business management consultants.
4. Define an e-commerce development strategy for Macedonia.
5. Assist the Government of Macedonia (GOM) by facilitating introductions and communications with potential foreign investors for GOM proposed infrastructure projects.
6. Provide ad hoc support to the U.S. Embassy trade and investment developments.
7. Graduate the MBRC into an indigenous self-sustaining institution.

### *Challenges Faced*

The major obstacles to the successful implementation of the sub-task order were related to the outbreak of war in 2001 and its negative effects. As well, the uncertainty surrounding the national elections in September 2002 inhibited trade and investment opportunities. Improving the legal and business environment and access to credit and financial resources for Macedonian companies were challenges throughout the implementation period. Finally, the MBRC had to work to overcome the departure of its Chief of Party as well as the Deputy Chief of Party who were forced to evacuate the country in June 2001.

In March 2001, The Republic of Macedonia faced rebel attacks along its northern border, in the city of Tetovo and surrounding villages. These events had an immediate effect on the Macedonian business community. The border with Kosovo was closed and all goods had to be re-routed through Albania, which increased transportation costs. Within days of the start of these activities, a UK textile company that had recently invested in Macedonia lost a single contract worth USD 600,000. This contract was 30% of its annual business. By the end of the month, the same company had lost over 55% of its annual sales caused by the crisis.

Approximately USD 5,000,000 in possible investment activity, which the MBRC had been working on was put on hold, while investors took a wait and see attitude. Information received from the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce stated that USD 400,000 per day was being lost due to the border closure with Macedonia. The political situation over the period April-June 2001 created an extremely unfavorable environment for business for the rest of 2001 and the majority of 2002. The ongoing military actions of the Albanian terrorists in a number of cities in northern and western Macedonia and near Skopje caused serious problems, which had long-lasting negative effects in all segments of the economy. According to the Macedonia Chamber of Commerce, the direct and indirect damages the Macedonian companies experienced from the terrorist attacks in 2001, amounted to more than USD 700 million.

The impact on the MBRC's activities was direct. Two business-to-business meetings scheduled to take place, one with Croatian and the other one with Slovenian companies in May 2001 had to be postponed. These were the first of many meetings, events and seminars that had to be canceled or rescheduled. MBRC clients also encountered a number of problems since the production processes suffered from the mobilization and the migration of employees, strategic planning became almost impossible, trade deals with foreign partners had to be put on hold, and the threat of continuing instability discouraged foreign investors.

Overall, the Macedonian economy in 2001 went through a very difficult period. The instability in the country virtually destroyed all of the country's economic plans. The crisis directly influenced trade and investment, by cutting output, raising costs, deterring foreign partners from investment and business activities, instead encouraging them to look for safer havens. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) decreased by 4.6% in 2001. The greatest effects were felt in the services sectors. The industrial output fell by 8.8%, although a small increase in the construction sector occurred. Overall, foreign trade volume decreased by 15.3%, with a 10.2% decrease in exports and 16.8% decrease in imports. The trade deficit of the country for 2001 stood at USD 513 million. Inflation in 2001 was 5.3%, while the cost of living increased by 5.9.

In 2002, the overall economic environment did not change much as many Macedonian businesses were generally not looking intensively for new investments or other increases of their

activities due to the lingering effects of the crisis and the unstable political situation in the country before the Parliamentary elections in September 2002. Most investments, both by local as well as foreign investors and businesses were delayed as everyone waited for the elections and for the new government to settle in. During this period, the MBRC's trade and investment opportunities decreased which is reflected in the volume of trade and investment for 2002. The sub-task order was awarded a no-cost extension to May 2003 to compensate for the impact of these negative factors. However, the MBRC was able by March 2003 at no additional cost to meet all of its stated benchmarks.

Another challenge to MBRC activities was the overall business and legal environment in Macedonia. Though the work of the MBRC was not focused on the legal environment, investment and trade opportunities were often hampered by lack of transparency, unresponsiveness of GOM representatives, and a lack of clarity for relevant laws. The representatives of the MBRC worked throughout the course of the project with GOM officials and other business leaders to inform, improve, and update the government about the problems and challenges existing in the legal and business environment that acted as *disincentives* to trade, investment and ultimately economic growth.

The MBRC also encountered obstacles helping Macedonian businesses gain access to capital in order to grow. This had a negative effect on these companies' abilities to engage in trade activities as companies were not able to reach production levels to make export activities a feasible possibility. In fact, most of the managers that the MBRC worked with stated that one of the biggest problems they faced in their day to day operations was the lack of working capital to finance production activities. In order to qualify for both short term and long term loans, real estate collateral of 200-300 % of the loan valued was normally required often at unfavorable interest rates. USAID and Crimson Capital have already addressed this issue with the establishment in 2002 of the Macedonia SME Commercial Finance Fund which works to provide innovative financial products such as purchase order financing and asset based lending—enabling SME's to acquire the necessary capital at reasonable rates of interests to grown their business and drive economic competition. This fund is already actively given loans, actively addressing this universal problem of the “missing middle” and is already being considered as a model for future access to credit type development projects.

The evacuation of both the Chief and Deputy Chief of Party in June 2001 just months into the sub task order left the on the ground responsibility of running the project in the hands of the local Macedonian professionals. Michael Gold took over the responsibilities of Chief of Party working both on and off site for the remainder of the task order. While the loss of the expert ex-patriot staff initially hurt the work of the MBRC, the staff was able to adjust and adapt to continue the successful implementation of the project. That over 75% of the project was completed with no on site ex-patriot advisor is a testament to both the skills and efforts of the Macedonian professional working on the project as well as the legacy and model of the MBRC. Also, this had a positive side effect as it freed up more money enabling the project to be extended for 5 more months. This time was used to complete more work especially in trade and investments as the Macedonian economy began to recover in the beginning of 2003. It also enabled more training and preparation for the sustainability of the six MBRC spin-offs developed during the sub-task order (each discussed in more depth in section VII).

Overall, the MBRC faced a number of very difficult challenges during the implementation of the sub-task order. The majority of these were related to external factors such as the political, economic and security situation during 2001 – 2002. However, the MBRC was able to complete an impressive amount of trade and investment activities as well as training and business events in this unfavorable economic environment, leading to the obvious question: How was the MBRC successful, sustainable and cost-effective under such unfavorable conditions? The section “Lessons Learned” looks at the key factors that made the MBRC such a dynamic project.

### *Lessons Learned*

- ***Do the Little Things Well:*** The MBRC was successful because it was responsive, reliable, objective and knowledgeable. People contacted its professionals on a daily basis from private and public entities in Macedonia and abroad because the MBRC was able to provide them with the correct information, contacts, linkages, and support they needed. On numerous occasions as well, the MBRC staff was complimented on its professional and friendly approach—people liked working with the MBRC and got results.
- ***Strategic Partnerships:*** The MBRC through its connections and previous activities became a vital bridge between business, government, and international organizations involved in all sectors of the Macedonian economy. The MBRC’s linkages and partnerships opened a wide variety of trade and investment opportunities and created access to a number of events and seminars. Relationships and partnerships spread in a web of continual access to trade and investment opportunities as well as expanded capacity building networks.
- ***Multifaceted Challenges Require Multifaceted Responses:*** The MBRC was developed in accordance with USAID’s efforts to strengthen a private sector in Macedonia that faced a whole host of barriers to grow and develop in a western style economy. The MBRC was able to accomplish so much in this environment because it implemented a multifaceted approach that cut across education, economic development, training, technological transfer, technical expertise and advising, public and private entities, local and international resources, etc. Moreover, involving and integrating all these aspects was a core part of the MBRC’s implementation plan.
- ***Synergies:*** At a typical event where the MBRC was involved, its professionals engaged in building strategic partnerships, trade and investment networks, promoted MBRC activities, distributed relevant publications, explored opportunities for new training events, etc. This was the result of conscious effort of the MBRC to take the variety of pieces and activities of the MBRC’s programs and to make them work together in the most appropriate, cost-effective and efficient manner. The result was that each element of the MBRC’s work served as a marketing, development and promotion tool for other pieces generating greater exposure, access and possibilities all leading to the overall success of the project.
- ***Doing Trade and Investment Right:*** The MBRC’s approach to trade and investment was based on the philosophy that it takes a lot more than just hosting trade events. Rather, the MBRC worked to target the right sectors, firms, and relationships where trade potential existed and drew on what firms did well, creating relationship that could work. They the MBRC invested as much time as needed in matchmaking firms, building relationships, trouble shooting, and hosting and organizing targeted B2B events. The results manifested themselves in deals completed (over 1100) working with 30 different nationalities.

- ***Reputation and Media Coverage:*** The exciting work of the MBRC was continually covered by the Macedonian press. The MBRC staff worked hard to educate and inform the press about its activities and events. This helped to spread the news about its activities (at no cost to the MBRC), build its reputation, open new doors and opportunities, and to solidify its position in the Macedonian private sector. Through its extensive and positive media coverage, the MBRC became a known name throughout Macedonia. This further increased its visibility, networks and helped to accomplish the MBRC's goals.
  
- ***Capacity building leads to economic growth:*** When the MBRC started working in 1995, it recognized that in many areas, Macedonia was not ready for expanded trade and investment. Accordingly, its staff focused its energies on building the capacity, skills, and internal resources of Macedonian professional and companies. In 1999, as the fruits of these labors began to manifest themselves as the MBRC started to target more trade and investment activities. Moreover, the MBRC's local staff was able to successfully implement almost all of the sub-task order's work themselves with only 6% of the work days completed by ex-patriot advisors. Ultimately, this approach paid off as many of the businesses and individuals previously trained and improved were the most successful in completing trade and investment deals leading to millions of dollars entering the Macedonian economy helping to fuel economic growth.
  
- ***Flexibility and Adaptability:*** As an economic rule, trade and investment promotion is highly difficult in situations of political and economic instability. Due to the political and economic events in Macedonia in 2001 and 2002, the MBRC had to be flexible and adapt to the environment to make its activities work. It worked with international relief agencies to establish trade deals for construction materials for refugee projects; it took part in private sector events that worked to address the instability in the country, etc. Though these had not been original elements of the MBRC's plan, its ability to adjust quickly to the negative economic situation and adapts its programs and activities accordingly enabled the MBRC to still meet and in many cases exceed the TO's benchmarks.

***Innovative Technological Approaches:*** One major reason that the MBRC was so responsive, organized, and cost efficient was its use of innovative technological approaches. Just one example is the "Trade and Investment Management System" (TIMS) developed by MBRC professionals that enabled up to the minute tracking and monitoring of all MBRC trade and investment activities. The TIMS system put a wide range of information at the hands of the MBRC staff enabling improved internal operations, seamless connections of business and trade opportunities, and quick, easy access to organized, comprehensive information. The TIMS system drastically improved the efficiency, capability, and monitoring of the MBRC as well as its internal management. At any given moment, the COP and other supervisors could see what trade and investment deals a certain employee was working on, and every staff member could access information quickly and easily.

## **Section II TRADE AND INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES**

### **Summary**

The trade and investment activities conducted by the MBRC involved much more than organizing general trade fairs. Rather, the MBRC and its professionals took a multifaceted approach to generating trade and investment on the Macedonian markets. It worked with companies of all sizes throughout the country to identify, prepare, attract and complete trade and investment deals both within Macedonia and with international partners working with businesses and organizations from 30 countries. It organized, participated, and implemented numerous trade events, conferences and B2B events during the sub task order in a wide variety of fields. In fact, the MBRC exceeded the benchmark for events in Macedonia by 500%, by co-organizing and co-hosting 6 major events, and exceeded the benchmark for participating in international events by over 200%. Distributed at these events were the materials published and distributed by the MBRC's staff including 7 sector guides as well as 2 reprints of former publications and a newly authored "An Introductory Guide to Macedonian Export."

### **Companies, Representatives, and Organizations from the Following Countries engaged in trade and investment activities with the MBRC: (2001 – 2003)**

- Albania
- Greece
- France
- Belgium
- Hungary
- Italy
- Germany
- Turkey
- Canada
- Bosnia
- Sweden
- Holland
- Japan
- Poland
- Iceland
- Australia
- US
- Norway
- Serbia
- Bulgaria
- Yugoslavia
- Croatia
- Slovenia
- Montenegro
- Spain
- Taiwan
- Ireland
- Switzerland
- Czech Republic
- Ukraine

### **Publications (2001 and 2002)**

Bi-annually, up-dated and republished: The Sources of Finance in Macedonia

Bi-annually, up-dated and republished: Investing in the Republic of Macedonia Guide

On a annual basis, published: An Introductory Guide to Macedonian Export

### **– The MBRC Sector Guides**

Electronic Commerce Guide  
Agribusiness Sector Guide (Fruits and Vegetables)  
Wine Guide  
Textile Guide  
Information Technology Guide  
Leather Guide  
Metal Processing

The key to the success of the MBRC's trade and investment activities was its multilayered approach which generated numerous synergies and networks which continually opened up new trade and investment opportunities. In addition, crucial to these activities, were the previous relationships, networks, and the proven reputation of the MBRC already established during its first 5 years in operation. Interested businesses on the Macedonian markets continually came to the MBRC for help in finding the right company for exporting opportunities or the right institution to support investment opportunities. The MBRC itself became a bridge between interested business parties from both sides looking for business opportunities but needing a reliable, objective organization that could help facilitate the process.

Many of the companies that the MBRC worked with included professionals or managers who had been trained at past MBRC events or had taken part in previous trade or B2B events. Many of the examples listed in this section demonstrate the empirical logic of the MBRC model. As business improved, developed and grew, they reached a stage where they were attractive for investment and trade opportunities and were able to produce results leading to the further growth of their companies.

Another impressive element of the MBRC trade and investment activities is the wide range of sectors engage. Not only did the MBRC work with key economic sector in Macedonia such as the agricultural and construction sectors, but it worked as well with more socially focused entities such as assisting the development and growth of the first privately owned retirement community in Macedonia and working with 2 schools to help secure investments to support their educational activities. It also played a role in assisting international development organizations and peace keeping forces to secure necessary supplies for humanitarian operations to assist refugee populations.

How did the MBRC make all of this happen? Its Trade Department played a crucial role in making trade deals and establishing business linkages. The Trade Department assistance for clients included the following activities: establishing initial contacts with potential customers or partners, entering new markets and expansion of existing ones, and seeking out potential buyers or sellers. In accomplishing successful trade deals, the department used all possible resources including the MBRC database (TIMS), the MBRC Library, Internet, Directories, the GTN System and other matchmaking programs. After the Trade Department had made the initial introduction, the client often required further assistance through the product presentation and the negotiations. In order to maximize the probability of a successful deal, the process required professional and close cooperation between the client and MBRC Team. It also required continual effort, responsiveness, and paying sharp attention to make the best possible matches for trade partners. One essential reason that the MBRC was able to complete so many successful trade deals was this focus on matchmaking, targeting and screening companies for specific B2B opportunities.

The MBRC Investment Department actively assisted clients in preparing investment proposals, loan applications and business plans. Its objective was to provide high quality consulting services by developing detailed analyses and assumptions of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats that faced a given project. The MBRC team included in all stages of developing the investment idea: collecting and analyzing data, identifying industry trends, defining investment alternatives, investment appraisal, conversion of financial statements according to international accounting standards, financial projections and assumptions, defining the available sources of financing, and helping make contacts and successful negotiations.

The activities of the Investment Department, along with investment facilitation and consulting, included other consulting services, such as strategic, marketing, and financial consulting. During the crisis period which involved dramatically decreased investment interest, the MBRC helped companies focus on increasing their competitiveness and capacity building, especially for their top management. The MBRC took an active role in this area by providing consulting services to its clients, both on a one-on-one basis (in-house consulting) and through its seminar programs offered to broader audiences.

The direct results of these activities have already been discussed. However, the *indirect* impacts of all these activities which is much harder to assess is sure to be greater: The wide range of capacity building skills that took place through MBRC trade and investment deals and events, the improved business capability, competitiveness, access to international markets, and networks resulting from the MBRC's interventions. A number of companies successfully matched by the MBRC which completed trade and investment deals during 2001 – 2003 reported they planned to continue and build their business relationships. It is impossible to correctly estimate the total number of new jobs as well as dollars of trade, investment, and business opportunities these linkages will create as well as the positive impacts these transactions and partnerships will have on the Macedonian economy.

**Macedonian Business Resource Center****Trade Deals By Sector (1995 – 2003)**

<b>Industry Sector</b>	<b>Value of Trade Transaction USD</b>	<b># of Deals</b>
Automotive industry	852,398	39
Ceramics	130	1
Chemical	3,693,587	125
Civil construction	9,734,190	50
Electrical	2,541,005	97
Electrical wire	2,441	1
Food processing	18,307,972	101
Furniture	1,370,453	69
Glass	101,660	6
IT	1,146,415	71
Leather	156,430	4
Machines	394,270	25
Media	3,700	1
Medicine	823,633	53
Metal Industry	11,749,638	122
Office materials	869,839	57
Oil	380,943	8
Packaging	190,050	11
Paper	30,554	1
Plastic	68,641	5
Printing	970	1
Services	899,316	40
Sport	78,931	7
Textile	3,710,546	48
Trade	1,870,669	87
Transport	7,940	4
Wood	5,000	1
Wood processing	681,444	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>59,672,765</b>	<b>1,055</b>

## **Macedonian Business Resource Center Investment Deals By Sectors (1995 – 2003)**

<b>Industry Sectors</b>	<b># of Deals</b>	<b>Value of Investments - USD</b>
Agriculture	4	1,845,000
Automotive industry	2	656,000
Business service providers	1	400,000
Cable and wiring	1	2,500,000
Chemical	5	1,668,780
Civil construction	2	1,291,450
Food processing	9	4,244,500
Furniture	1	60,000
Machines	6	1,739,000
Marketing	4	1,530,000
Printing	2	538,443
Services	5	2,018,500
Textile	16	15,975,951
Tourism	1	500,000
Trade	1	560,000
Wine	1	41,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>35,568,624</b>

## **Illustrative examples of trade and investment deals:**

### **Trikotex - Kramatex, Solin Plastika and Arex (Slovenia, Croatia)**

Trikotex is a textile company specializing in the production of gloves. It has 65 employees and is located in Kavadarci. During the past several years, the company faced problems caused by the loss of its markets and excess staff. MBRC had previously assisted in the development of an investment proposal for new equipment. The manager approached the MBRC seeking assistance in reestablishing contacts with old clients and searching for new ones. The MBRC trade specialist contacted several companies from different countries. Based on the MBRC contacts the companies from the ex - Yugoslavian republics showed the greatest interest for Trikotex products. The MBRC provided information to Trikotex for potential companies and made the initial contact. It was arranged for Trikotex to visit one company from Slovenia and two from Croatia, which resulted in the signing of contracts. From these meetings 3 contracts were signed.

The total value of the 3 deals was USD 130,000.

### **Meri Terzieva, Skopje**

Meri Terzieva, located in Skopje is a business that provides accommodation and care for terminally ill elderly people. The company was established in February 1997 and is 100% privately owned. Meri Terzieva is the only residence in the Republic of Macedonia that offers accommodation, care and organization of the social life of its clients/residents. The company has introduced a new system for care of the elderly in Macedonia.

In June 2000, Meri Terzieva turned to the MBRC with a request for assistance in the development of a proposal for a bank loan. Ms. Terzieva began the negotiations with the owner of the building considering both options, renting or purchasing. After analysis of the financial projections made by the MBRC, Ms. Terzieva made a decision to purchase the building to expand the capacity and segregate the terminally ill residents. Based upon the proposal prepared by the MBRC,

Meri Terzieva received a USD 22,500 loan from NEPA and a USD 16,000 German grant.

### **Replek, Skopje - Glaxo Wellcome, UK**

Glaxo Wellcome is one of the largest pharmaceutical companies in UK. The company has been engaged in extensive research and development, and production of various medicines for more than twenty years.

Ms. Kirjas, manager of Glaxo Wellcome's newly established representative office in Skopje, approached the MBRC seeking assistance in locating clients for medicines. The MBRC representative recommended several wholesalers. Replek, one of the largest wholesalers, was selected. Glaxo Wellcome and Replek reached an agreement that resulted in a trade deal.

The trade deal involved the purchase of medicines with a total value of USD 38,500.

The companies continued their cooperation, which led to a follow-up deal valued at USD 34,210.

**Ereniku Kompani, Skopje - Dajti, Kosovo**

Ereniku Kompani is a private company located in Skopje. Since its establishment as a private company in 1992, Ereniku Kompani has concentrated on trading with building materials. In the beginning, this company started with production of nails, but soon export and import of different kinds of building materials became the most important and the most profitable company activity. Although constantly present in the Kosovo market, Ereniku Kompani did not have any major trade deals. The huge breakthrough came when Dajti, a construction company from Kosovo, approached the MBRC seeking assistance in finding a reliable partner, which is capable of exporting building materials to Kosovo. Dajti was chosen as the best bidder in a tender of Prompt and the Agency for Reconstruction, for the reconstruction of the houses in the region of Kacanik and Ferizaj.

The first and the second phase were completed with a trade deal in the amount of approximately USD 2,000,000. The third (and the last) phase included a follow-up, valued at USD 1,991,750.

**MIS-KOM**

MIS-KOM is located in Struga, a city in the southwest of the Republic of Macedonia. The company was established in 1993 and its main activity is the production of cardboard boxes. The company is registered as a company for professional training and employment of impaired people. The total number of employees is 30, of which 40% are impaired.

The raw materials used by MIS-KOM, corrugated cardboard sheets, are imported from Bulgaria and Greece and some purchased from Komuna in Skopje. MIS-KOM's clients are companies in the tobacco, food, textile, wood, metal and other industries in Macedonia. The annual sales amount to USD 1,000,000. The future plans of the company address the expansion in making corrugated cardboard sheets instead of buying it as they do at present.

MIS-KOM became a client of the MBRC in October 1997. The MBRC assistance has covered several areas of MIS-KOM's business activity. However, the main emphasis was put on MIS-KOM plans for expansion. In this regard, the MBRC performed a financial analysis of current financial operations of the company and its profitability. Later, the assistance moved on to preparation of a feasibility study and a business plan. During this process information was provided about producers of the required equipment, availability of second hand equipment, its value and technical characteristics. On several occasions a revision of the initial investment plan was made. The supplier of the equipment helped in the decision making, since it offered to finance part of the equipment.

Direct results of the joint efforts of the MBRC and MIS-KOM include:

- In 1998 MIS-KOM obtained a loan (USD 180,000) for the purchase of a 4000 square meters facility to install the planned equipment.
- In 2000 the company obtained a loan of USD 700,000 for the purchase of new equipment
- In 2001 the company obtained a loan of USD 250,000 for working capital.

**Pishev - AJC International**

AJC International is a large meat exporter from the US. The main headquarter office is located in Atlanta, and it has several branch offices in South America, Europe and Asia. The company exports frozen meat, fish and poultry worldwide.

AJC International contacted the MBRC to ask for assistance in locating potential customers for frozen meat, poultry and fish products. The MBRC contacted several Macedonian companies that showed an interest. Also, during the visit to Macedonia the MBRC arranged meetings between AJC International and several Macedonian companies. The first contract was signed with the company Pishev for delivering poultry.

The total value of the deal was USD 401,400.

**IRC - Agromak; EMRAH KOMERC; EL-TRANS**

The International Rescue Committee (IRC) is a voluntary organization providing relief protection and resettlement services for refugees and victims of operations of violent conflict. Due to the situation in Macedonia, IRC has been financing and maintaining the reconstruction of the destroyed regions of Skopje, Tetovo and Kumanovo. The reconstruction that is provided by IRC is in the field of construction including shelter and water sanitation projects.

The IRC field office Skopje also provides logistics support to the IRC headquarter in Kosovo. The operations include supply of various products needed for construction.

The MBRC has worked with IRC since the establishment of its office in Macedonia in 1999. The representative from IRC office in Skopje asked for MBRC assistance in locating different types of construction materials and services. The MBRC offered help in finding and establishing contacts with companies that offer competitive prices, as well as high quality of the materials and services.

The request was for the following sanitary elements: aluminum sheets, electrical equipment, tiles, glass, sand, etc., including the construction services for some of the materials. The construction work was intended for the destroyed houses in the villages around Kumanovo, Matejce, Sklupcane, Nikustak, Brest and Vaksince. Three companies were involved in completing this trade deal. The companies are the following: Agromak, EMRAH KOMERC and EL-TRANS.

The total amount of these trade deals was USD 85,000.

**Orka Tekstil**

Orka Tekstil is part of Orka Holding. Orka was established in 1990 and as a family business grew into a holding company. Orka Tekstil was established in 1999. Its main activity is production of garments on a CMT basis for prestigious international clients.

Orka Tekstil approached the MBRC asking for help with its new investment. The MBRC prepared an investment proposal for Orka Tekstil. The company used the proposal to apply for a

loan from the MBPR credit line that would be serviced through Investbanka, and to base its own internal investments on.

The company's total investment amounted to USD 4,513,101. It applied for a credit in the amount of USD 392,000, which the company would use to purchase production equipment. Of the total investment, 75% was construction works, 15% equipment and 10% working capital.

Through this investment the company would be able to secure 355 jobs in the course of the next five years.

## **Illustrative examples of trade and investment events:**

### **The First Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Roundtable**

In March 2001, The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU), supported by the Macedonian Business Resource Center, organized the first roundtable with the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, following the same pattern that the EIU has successfully implemented in Central and Eastern Europe. The event was sponsored by seven major international institutions: the MBRC, Altheimer&Gray Law Firm, Telecom companies Makedonski Telekomunikacii and MATAV, Insurance company QBE, Skopje Brewery and Ernst&Young consulting company.

The roundtable attracted over 100 participants, the majority of whom were representatives of international companies, which included among others: Merrill Lynch, Deutsche Bank, Marsh Europe Insurance, Creditanstalt Investment Bank, Enron Wind, Citibank Romania, British American Tobacco, GlaxoSmithKline, HypoVereinsbank, IBM, Lazard, Lek, Slovenia, Mytilineos Holdings, Oracle Software, Phillips, Phillip Moris, Podravka, Croatia, PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and Thessaloniki Water.

### **Competitiveness Study for Macedonia Conference**

The MBRC, on a very short notice, organized the presentation of the Competitiveness Study for Macedonia, financed by USAID. The MBRC recruited more than 160 participants to attend and actively participate in an inspiring seminar. The MBRC succeeded in bringing together business, government and academia leaders, including more than ten leaders from each of the targeted industry sectors (Agribusiness, Information Technology, Apparel, Tourism). Mr. Kevin Murphy, CEO of J.E.Austin Associates and Mr. Stephen Gonyea from USAID Macedonia, initiated the Competitiveness Initiative for Macedonia. The seminar was followed by an engaging discussion on competitiveness issues involving more than 15 participants.

### **Regional Development Conference for Southeast Europe, Skopje**

The MBRC organized the Regional Development Conference for Southeast Europe (SEE) that took place on June 19 - 20, 2002, in Skopje, Republic of Macedonia. The conference covered interesting topics, evaluating the current economic situation in the region and emphasizing the need for establishing stronger regional cooperation and creation of a common market. Guests from almost all of the Balkan countries attended the conference.

### **Skopje Fair**

The MBRC worked with the Skopje Fair in organizing the first fair of finance and business opportunities in Macedonian. This fair was a collection and presentation of the financial offer and demand in the Republic of Macedonia, popularization of the services from the financial sphere and business opportunities in front of and for the users. FINEXPO provided information for the payment operation system, foreign and local currency operations, credits for enterprises and citizens, warranties, mortgages, pay cards and other bank services regarding the advantages for investments, transactions, multi-channel banking, private bank insurance, entrepreneurship, life-insurance, property insurance, credit insurance, insurance against risk, consulting services, presentations of services, projects, perspectives etc.

Participants in FINEXPO were: banks, insurance companies, funds and foundations, audit companies, foreign donating and crediting companies, investment companies, brokerage companies, depositories, consulting companies, stock-exchange companies, companies providing and offering software solutions, equipment and security for financial institutions, tax and legal advisories, stock-exchange agencies.

**Economist Conference--Second Business Roundtable with the Government of Macedonia**

The MBRC and Crimson Capital initiated and helped organize the Second Business Roundtable with the Government of Macedonia. The MBRC also promoted the event, which resulted with triple participation in comparison with the First Business Roundtable with the Government of Macedonia. With the PR/Media assistance of the MBRC, the media coverage was excellent, with coverage on TV, Radio and Print Media. Nenad Pecek, head of the Economist Conferences for the region, has already contacted Michael Gold, Managing Director of Crimson Capital and COP of the MBRC, to help organize the Third Roundtable based on the tremendous success of this event.

## **Illustrative examples of Business-to-Business (B2B) Events:**

### **B2B Event with Hungarian Companies (April 26, 2001)**

Nineteen Hungarian companies, representing industry sectors such as metal, grain, meat processing, automobile, and the printing industry met with 56 Macedonian companies.

### **B2B Event with Canadian Companies (October 13 - 17, 2001)**

The meeting was organized by the MBRC in cooperation with the Trade Facilitation Office Canada – TFOC. The purpose was to introduce Canadian importers to the export potential of the Macedonian food industry.

### **B2B Event with Bulgarian and Kosovo Companies (April 18, 2002)**

A B2B meeting between Macedonian, Bulgarian and Kosovo companies from the construction and machine building industry was organized at the Aleksandar Palace Hotel in Skopje by the MBRC in cooperation with FLAG TDC, the Commercial Department of the Bulgarian Embassy in Macedonia and the Kosovo Business Support (KBS). More than 250 companies participated at the meeting, where 180 were from Macedonia, 47 from Bulgaria and 24 from Kosovo. All the companies welcomed the initiative and asked for similar meetings to be organized in the future.

### **B2B Event with Kosovo, Albanian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Montenegrin, Croatian and Slovenian companies (September 12, 2002)**

This event was a follow up in the realization of the action plan done on the B2B meeting between the MBRC, KBS, FLAG and AATDA, which took place in Tirana, Albania on July 15, 2002. *More than 300 companies participated at this B2B event.* All the companies welcomed the initiative and asked for similar meetings to be organized in the future. Their suggestion was to involve Serbia and Romania as well.

## **Section III CAPACITY BUILDING OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT, PROFESSIONALS, AND CONSULTANTS**

### **Summary**

Under sub-task order #3, the MBRC continued training activities to improve the business management capacity and efficiency of Macedonian businesses, consulting companies and associations in order to make them more competitive and productive. The MBRC organized 55 training events during the sub-task order, involving over 900 participants. A special focus was placed on building up capabilities that contributed, and were closely related to trade and investment and subsequent employment generation, local management consulting firms and associations capacity building; promotion of ethnic diversity in identifying beneficiaries, as well as on assisting women owned and operated businesses. Over the course of the entire MBRC project, over 5,000 local managers, consultants and government officials were trained through over 320 seminar events in 40 different subject areas.

As planned, the assistance given to the companies and business community was mainly through two training programs. The first one targeted a more general audience focusing on trade and investment, export promotion development, packaging and labeling, international paying, shipping, product standards, developing proposals and investment studies. The second one focused on consulting companies and associations consisted of special tailored seminars to participating firms to develop their capacity for providing services in business, to improve the quality of services they offer, and to establish effective and efficient organization structures. The seminar material were developed internally by the teams consisting of ex-pat and Macedonian professionals, and through cooperation with Macedonian Consulting Association (MCA); through cooperation with other USAID project ex-pat staff members and with the support of The American Chamber of Commerce in Macedonia.

The overall capacity building approach taken by the MBRC was two pronged; working to mentor and train its own local professionals as well as individuals from external organizations. The MBRC Graduates Guide (appendix A) takes a closer look at the internal growth promoted by MBRC activities. It further demonstrates the strong sustainability and legacy effects of mentoring local professionals and providing them with the skills and experience they need to become leaders in industry, government and academia.

### **Cross-border Farmer Association Development Workshop and Business-to-Business Meeting**

The Cross-border Farmer Association Development Workshop held on June 26-28, 2002, in Pristina was organized by the Macedonian Business Resource Center (MBRC), Mercy Corps Macedonia and Kosovo, GTZ Support to the Modernization of the Macedonian Agriculture, ACDI/VOCA Macedonia, the International Fertilizer Development Corporation (IFDC/KADP), the Alliance of Kosovar Agribusinesses (AKA) Kosovo, and Kosovo Business Support (KBS).

The goal of the workshop was to establish communication and cooperation between private farmers in the region on an association level, finding business partners as well as to look into possibilities to integrate the regional market for agricultural inputs and products through increased agribusiness and policy co-ordination.

Over 36 representatives from 12 Macedonian Farmers' Associations were present at the workshop and had the possibility to meet with around 50 farmers/associations from Kosovo. On this 'business-to-business' meeting 25 enterprises from Macedonia established contacts with 20 enterprises from Kosovo both acting and working in the Agri-food and processing sector.

## **Section IV E-COMMERCE DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITIES**

The MBRC's e-commerce activities involved 3 components. First, the MBRC's professionals developed, published and distributed "The Republic of Macedonia Electronic Commerce Strategy" paper during the first 60 days of the sub-task order. Secondly, the MBRC assisted Macedonian IT companies, the Macedonian Government, and other interested businesses in their efforts to develop this rapidly growing sector. Finally, the MBRC supported the formation and development of a Macedonian Association of IT companies. All these strategies worked together to try and help Macedonia take some of its first crucial steps towards the stated goal of the Republic of Macedonia to become a regional leader in the field. A summary of some events and activities is below.

- On November 6, 2001, the retrospective of the 14th Bled Electronic Commerce Conference was organized by SEED and emphasized on e – Everything: e – Commerce, e – Government, e – Household, e – Democracy. The MBRC's Mirjana Apostolova led the meeting as part of the MCA 2000 work-team. The main objective of the retrospective was to identify Macedonia's position in the global e-commerce environment and the possibilities of expanding and cultivating e-commerce activities in the country.
- The IT Conference "E-Government; E-Business", held at the end of February 2002, called for institutionalizing of an E-Commerce strategy. During the month of April 2002, the working group VIP 2002, where Georgi Trenkoski from the MBRC is a member, adopted the action plan for institutional support and a media campaign. Several high-level meetings were held and the E-Declaration was supported by MASIT (Macedonian Association of Software and Information Technology) as well as various Business Associations and Chambers of Commerce. The media actively supported the E-Declaration through several targeted reports and The MBRC was instrumental in getting the E-Declaration institutionalized and promoted in the media and thus raising public awareness. The MBRC, as one of the initiators of MASIT, helped the Macedonian IT companies bridge their differences and support this very valuable initiative. The MBRC, through the working group, also assisted in the promotion of the E-Declaration to the Government, public and academia.
- The MBRC assisted the private software company, Login Systems, in staging of the LS VIP 2002 "E-Business; E-Government" Conference. The Conference took place from February 26 - 28, 2002 in Skopje. The Conference gathered over 150 government, business, academia and NGO leaders to talk about the importance of information technology in Macedonia and the imminent emergence of Electronic Government. The MBRC representative, Georgi Trenkoski, was asked to be the moderator of the first session on digital signatures and electronic keys. He delivered a short presentation on the necessity of adopting technology in everyday life. The conference drew significant attention from the Government, the business community and the media, and the MBRC used it as a tool to promote its business services and especially its work in establishing the MASIT (Macedonian Association of Software and Information Technology) and its brochures, Electronic Commerce Strategy for the Republic of Macedonia and its Information Technology Guide.
- The MBRC continues to assist the Macedonian Telecommunications Authority in their strategic activities. The Macedonian Telecommunications Authority specifically asked the

MBRC to provide assistance in both its training program and the protection of its intellectual property.

- The MBRC worked with MASIT, the Macedonian Association for Information Technology in the fall 2002 to organize the 1st Conference of SE Europe Information Technology Associations – a conference on regional cooperation of the information technology associations from the SE Europe region, the first conference of this kind in the region. Participants to the conference were IT associations from the countries in the SE Europe region: Slovenia, Croatia, Hungary, Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro), Romania, Moldavia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania, Greece, Cyprus and Turkey. The conference got a permanent character and it was proposed that this conference be held in a different country from the region each year.

## **Section V ASSISTING GOM INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS**

The political and economic instability present during the majority of the sub task order created a difficult environment for the realization of a variety of Government of Macedonia infrastructure projects. Many prominent projects had to be delayed such as the reconstruction and extension of the airport in Skopje, the upgrading of water supply systems in several cities in Macedonia, and the introduction of the second mobile telephone operator in the country. One member of the MBRC was slated to focus 5% of his time to toward facilitating introduction and communications with potential foreign investors. Though, in reality, more members of the MBRC team were involved and the time commitment exceeded what had been originally planned. However, relationships and networks created through working on GOM infrastructure contributed to developing trade and investment networks and possibilities—another example of the synergies created by the MBRC’s efforts. A selection of some of this work is presented below.

➤ The MBRC assisted the US environmental engineering company Enviro Europa on several projects. A grant agreement was signed for financing a feasibility study for the reconstruction of the wastewater treatment plant in one of the OHIS units, mostly financed by the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA). This project was an introduction to other wastewater projects in Macedonia. The MBRC also assisted Enviro and the Macedonian authorities in the procurement of a high-tech mobile laboratory from Enviro, equipped with a radioactive measurement system and to be used by the state inspection office around Macedonia. The MBRC also assisted in the negotiations towards contracting Enviro to manage the state medical waste in Macedonia.

➤ The MBRC continued to assist in the restructuring of the gas sector in Macedonia. Several meetings were held with the representatives of the state power company Elektrostopanstvo na Makedonija (ESM) and the gas utility GA-MA.

➤ The MBRC representative was asked by the OSCE (Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe) to take a leading role in assessing the needs of the crisis-torn regions for infrastructure reconstruction and development. The OSCE Mission to Macedonia asked the MBRC to organize a meeting with the business representatives (MBRC clients) in the Kumanovo-Lipkovo region. The meeting and the follow-up activities were used to identify the needs of the region especially focusing on infrastructure issues.

➤ In October, the Fourth Euro-Atlantic Conference on Potential for Public-Private Cooperation in Central and Eastern European Countries was staged within the framework of the Southeast Europe Economic Forum. The Conference gathered ministers from Eastern and Western Europe together with top level representatives of the business, media and academic circles. The MBRC was invited and participated in this important conference.

Main topics of the Euro-Atlantic conference were:

- Liberalization of the Energy Market - Profits and Dilemmas. Where the agendas (interests) intersect or contradict. The EU legislation - current status and what are the next stages.
- Using PPPs to Develop Transport, Port, Road and Logistics Infrastructure - Where and How to Invest. Risk allocation in PPPs.
- Strategies for restructuring and/or privatizing of telecommunications in the region.

Deregulation and monopolies - regional aspects, economic perspectives and social impact. The 2002 agenda.

- Water - Strategic Resource. Regional trends and projects. Privatization in the sector. Water balance and environment.
  - The IFIs' Role and Policy in Financing Infrastructure Projects in Southeast Europe. NATO's Security Investment Program - General Approach.
- The MBRC assisted the Macedonian Telecom Regulatory Authority and INA (Greek Institute of Telecommunications) to stage the first South Eastern Europe Symposium on Independent Regulation of Telecommunications, which was held in Skopje on January 16-17, 2002. The Symposium was a big success and brought for the first time the independent telecom regulatory authorities from each Southeastern European country as well as the leading international telecom companies, such as Ericsson, Siemens, Motorola, OTE, Makedonski Telekomunikacii and Mobimak. Due to the MBRC role in staging the event, the MBRC was asked to engage in the setting up of a Telecom Academia in Thessaloniki, Greece, and a permanent networking between the authorities.
- The MBRC continued its support to Elektrostopanstvo na Makedonija (ESM) and the government in the process of restructuring and privatization. The MBRC's role in working to ensure a transparent and professional restructuring and privatization of ESM was of crucial importance for the development of the whole infrastructure sector and will probably lead to many new foreign direct investments.

## **Section VI PROVIDING AD HOC SUPPORT TO US EMBASSY TRADE AND INVESTMENT ACTIVITIES**

The MBRC worked with the US Embassy on a continual basis on a variety of trade and investment opportunities, connected events, and meetings. The MBRC was able to provide the Embassy with accurate and current information for potential trade and investment partners for its programs, MBRC publications were distributed to US Embassy trade and investment partners, and the both the MBRC and the US Embassy were able to utilize each other to better generate media coverage and interest in their activities. Like its other strategic partnerships, working in close collaboration with the US Embassy opened a number of doors for both parties which worked to generate appropriate contacts and facilitate trade and investment deals. Just some examples of how the US Embassy and the MBRC worked together are mentioned below.

- The MBRC organized a visit of the Economic Officer of the United States Embassy to Macedonia, Mr. Victor Myev, to the Directorate for Telecommunications of Macedonia. The visit was very successful and led to an initial agreement to set up training modules for the employees of the Directorate in the States, in partnership with the FCC (Federal Commission for Communication) and the ITTI (International Training in Telecommunications Institute). The training will take place in the second half of the year and will significantly build the capacities of the Telecommunications Directorate of Macedonia.
- With help and updated information provided by Mr. Jordan Damchevski, Senior Economic Analyst at the American Embassy in Skopje, the MBRC team was able to compile an article in the AmCham newsletter. ChamberNews, a bi-monthly magazine of the American Chamber of Commerce in the Czech Republic covers the Chamber Matters as well as a country report, in this case the Republic of Macedonia. The edition of 1400 copies is distributed directly to company's representatives, other AmChams located in Eurasia, to the US Embassy in the Czech Republic and during AmCham Events.
- The joint effort of The Macedonian Business Resource Center, the United States Trade and Development Agency and the American Chamber of Commerce in Macedonia resulted in great success at the Skopje Fair - Agroexpo and Tehnoma on October 1-5 and 22-27, 2002. The American Catalog Show, an initiative by the Department of Commerce at the Embassy of the United States of America in Skopje was presented. It functioned in a way that during big fairs worldwide it promotes certain enterprises through the Catalog Show which is aimed to provide business linkages locally and internationally. The MBRC helped this event with its presence during both fairs by promoting its best practices and providing trade and investment facilitation in Macedonia at the fairs.

## **Section VII Graduate the MBRC into an Indigenous Self Sustaining Institution**

The MBRC transition activities were accelerated in the last half of 2001. These activities involved all current MBRC staff and the MBRC Chief of Party. The work was carried out through numerous discussions, SWOT analyses and brainstorming sessions. The main purpose was to define the activity areas for the future prosperous development of the MBRC, specifically those areas that will meet market demands and can be fee generating. An outside consultant, Ms. Laurel Druben, a specialist in business development and sustainability, was engaged to further facilitate the strategic planning of the MBRC. Based on extensive interviews conducted with the MBRC employees, and after learning more about MBRC current activities and the qualifications of its staff, Ms. Druben recommended a possible approach in regard to MBRC self-sustainability, which proved to be consistent and synergistic with the overall strategy developed by the Chief of Party, MBRC team members and USAID. This approach sets out the creation of two entities for future MBRC activities: 1) a for-profit entity with commercial practice areas and services, and 2) a non-for-profit organization with program areas including policy advocacy, trade & investment promotion, etc. Ultimately, these 2 entities would grow into 6 as MBRC staff identified a number of potential areas for future growth. These entities are outlined on the following pages.

In order to assist and support the staff members in their future career movements, the MBRC developed an innovative Outplacement Program. The main aim of the program was to help staff members who had been a part of the reduction in force process in developing a practical plan and valuable skills to assist in their job transition. There were two (2) alternatives available to the staff members once they were notified of the RIF. The staff members received a thirty-day notice of RIF and they could make a choice regarding how this thirty-day severance period was handled.

1. They could choose to immediately leave the MBRC and receive their thirty-day severance package. Their association with the MBRC would be immediately finalized. They would be eligible for letters of reference, but would not receive any outplacement support. They would sign letters indicating that they do not wish to receive this opportunity.
2. They could elect to utilize the services of the outplacement program that was developed and stay at the MBRC for the thirty-day period. During this time they were provided with a group office, a local telephone, access to a computer and printer and the full assistance of our outplacement program. This program consisted of four weeks of assistance in preparing personalized letters to members of the business community in Macedonia noting their skills and availability; introduction to the outplacement process using the Outplacement Handbook; counseling and advice on constructing CVs, cover letter outline, the thank you note; interview techniques and the support of the MBRC in general.

Overall, this second option was chosen by almost all of the MBRC staff. Through their detailed, professional, and comprehensive preparation for developing their next career opportunity, many of MBRC's staff was able to secure highly desirable positions in a wide range of fields.

## **MBRC SPINOFFS**

### **For Profit:**

- Center for Business Cooperation (CDS)
- Export Consortium
- MBRC Consulting
- Macedonian Consulting Group (MCG)

### **Not for Profit:**

- MBRC-TI.Net
- MBCR-CDS

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## **Center for Business Cooperation - CDS**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Center for Business Cooperation – CDS is a private consulting company located in Skopje, Macedonia that provides business development services. We are a spin-off from the Macedonian Business Resource Center (MBRC), a USAID project that was managed by Crimson Capital for seven years. Equipped with domestic and international experience, expertise, and enthusiasm our team assists clients in becoming more efficient, innovative and competitive on the domestic and international markets in the area of business planning and investment analysis, enterprise-level management consulting services, trade and export promotion, advocacy and association building, and event logistics. Throughout the work experience our consultants have proven to be leaders, project managers, and specialists in their own field. Our diverse expertise combined as a team shows excellent synergy potentials that lead towards high quality results. The CDS has five full time consultants, and all of them are also the founders of MBRC-CDS, an NGO whose goals are to support economic development.

### **CDS VISION**

To be the leading business services provider in Macedonia and key subject in promoting the regional economic development.

### **CDS MISSION**

To support the growth of the Republic of Macedonia and Southeast Europe through concrete projects while being directly involved with the companies. In this regard we work closely with a network of business development agencies, consulting companies, international institutions and business associations in Macedonia and abroad.

### **CLIENTS**

Our services are available to all international and domestic entities and individuals that are interested in business development, growth and prosperity in Macedonia and Southeast Europe.

## ACTIVITIES

The company is comprised of multidisciplinary consultants that are specialized in five strategic target areas:

### 1. Business Planning and Investment Analysis

Our Business Planning program is aimed at supporting foreign and domestic investments in Macedonia. We give investment support to local companies and are the first link to investment opportunities in Macedonia for foreign investors.

- **Local investment support** - Preparation of business plans, investment proposals, feasibility studies, and grant proposals as well as locating foreign investment and strategic partners and acquiring information on the available sources of financing.
- **Assistance to foreign investors** - Providing up to date and accurate information on the overall investment climate in Macedonia, information on industry trends, and investment legislation as well as investment solutions from our basket of investment opportunities in Macedonia.

### 2. Enterprise-level management consulting services

Our consultants are offering tailored, company-specific technical assistance in the areas of:

- **Information Technology** – research and strategy development
- **Marketing** – introduction and successful implementation of the concept as an imperative for improving the competitiveness on a “demand-driven” market
- **Strategic Management** – help companies to restructure and improve by assisting them in analyzing and learning from their environments, establishing strategic direction, and creating strategies that are intended to help achieve established goals
- **Corporate Governance** – the CDS will assist company managers to adopt the recent changes of the “Law for Trading Companies” to their organization and provide continues consulting by following the development trends in the legal framework.

### 3. Trade and Export Promotion

In order to finalize a successful trade deal we use various databases, search mechanisms, partner organizations and matchmaking programs and assist our clients in locating foreign partners and products, finding new markets, providing contact information, assistance in trade facilitation, and follow-up services. Our consultants have been directly involved in the organization of several important domestic and international Business-to-Business events, fairs, conferences and seminars.

#### 4. Advocacy and Association Building

Our team works on promoting the development of coalitions with other key stakeholders and the government in order to effectively address how best to meet the needs of the business community in Macedonia. The goal is to provide uniform advice to the public and local and state policymakers regarding economic development issues.

In addition our goal is to help develop and assist as many business associations possible including management consulting associations in order to create a wholesale market for consulting services.

#### 5. Event logistics

The CDS is known for its ability to stage very big and international events such as conferences, seminars, B2B meetings, and round tables. Our support guarantees quality attendance, comprehensive media coverage and other value added services. We have done a comprehensive job in developing and improving companies' image and visibility, thus establishing ourselves as a powerful public relations and media partner.

### BUSINESS NETWORKING

The CDS team puts its core efforts to supporting and developing the business networking in the region of Southeast Europe. The implementation of our business-networking program is ensured by an intensive cooperation with a number of relevant institutions. Our network is comprised of development agencies, local and foreign companies, business associations and government agencies.

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### Export Consortium

EXPORTCONSORTIUM.COM

#### *Our Vision*

Commercial Interest Community based on co-operative and interdisciplinary association of companies and individuals engaged with production and processing of fruits and vegetables that improves the capacities in terms of successful and competitive export.

#### *Our Mission*

To establish mutual trust and confidence between companies and individuals ready to deal with nowadays challenge in Macedonia - creating new products in the area of fresh and processed (frozen) fruits and vegetables which are competitive on global markets.

#### *Our Goals*

- To increase the capacity of the private agribusiness sector (fruits and vegetables) in Macedonia to produce, package and market a wide variety of demand-driven, value-added agricultural commodities.
- To support and organize for export agri producers and food processing companies capable of meeting the strong market demand in terms of quality, terms of delivery and prices.
- To serve as a role model for other economy sectors.

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## **Our basic beliefs - values and principles -**

### **Quality**

Quality applies to our products, our manufacturing methods, our marketing efforts, our people, and our relationships with each other. We will only produce and sell products that enhance the quality of life and well-being. These will be the highest quality products offered in our respective markets because the Consortium growth and business success have been built on quality. We will continuously look for ways to achieve daily improvements which will, over time, result in consistently superior products and performance.

At The Export Consortium.com, quality comes first. Sales growth and earnings will follow.

### **People**

We will be fair with our employees and members and maintain an environment that encourages personal responsibility within the Consortium and the community. In return, we expect our employees and members to be responsible for not only their individual jobs but for the Consortium as a whole.

We firmly believe that the highest quality people produce the highest quality product and services; that the highest business ethics require the highest personal ethics; and that responsible people produce exceptional results.

### **Ethics**

The same strong, ethical values on which our Consortium relies, provide the standards by which we conduct our business as well as ourselves. We accept nothing less regardless of the circumstances. Therefore, we will maintain the highest standards of business ethics with our customers, suppliers, employees, and members and with the communities in which we work.

### **Growth**

Along with day-to-day operations, we are also concerned with the potential whether it be in the development of new products and new markets, the discovery of new manufacturing or management techniques, or the personal growth and development of our people and ideas.

We are committed to strong balanced growth that will protect and enhance our consumer franchise within prudent financial parameters. The interest of all members of the Consortium will be respected and protected.

## **Independence**

We have a strong feeling toward belonging to the Consortium and full independence of each member. We strive to be an example of successful organization which operate under these values in a free entrepreneurial system in free market economy.

We will remain free and independent of political and governmental influence because of our strive and motivation to trace freely our way toward the success.

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## **MBRC CONSULTING LTD.**

### **COMPANY PROFILE**

THE MBRC CONSULTING LTD. WAS ESTABLISHED IN FEBRUARY 2002 TO PROVIDE BUSINESS SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT CONSULTING SERVICES TO MACEDONIAN COMPANIES AND WILL SERVE AS A ONE-STOP-SHOP FOR FOREIGN COMPANIES AND ORGANIZATIONS FOR THEIR ACTIVITIES IN MACEDONIA AND THE REGION.

THE MBRC CONSULTING LTD. IS A SPIN-OFF FROM THE USAID-SPONSORED PROJECT MACEDONIAN BUSINESS RESOURCE CENTER (MBRC) THAT HAS OPERATED SUCCESSFULLY IN MACEDONIA FROM 1995 TO 2002. THE MBRC CONSULTING LTD. INCORPORATES ALL CORE AND MOST OF THE EMPLOYEES OF THE MBRC PROJECT.

*The MBRC Consulting Ltd. continues the tradition by being a majority female-owned business, where close to half o its associates are from the minority ethnic communities.*

The MBRC Consulting Ltd. is composed of multi-disciplinary experts specialized in many areas, such as:

- Trade, Export & Investment Promotion
  - Association Building
  - Information Technology (IT) Consulting
  - Building competitive advantage on micro- and macro- level
  - Training of Trainers
  - Management Training
  - Finance
  - Project development, implementation and monitoring
  - Sustainability/Fee based operation Consulting
  - International Corporate Services
  - Foreign Direct Investment, Acquisitions, Joint Ventures, Strategic Partnerships
  - Enterprise Restructuring and Improvement
  - Debt & Equity Financing
  - Industrial and Manufacturing Operations Improvement
  - Marketing & Sales
  - Infrastructure Projects (energy, water, telecom, transport, etc.)
  - Business Planning, Finance & Accounting, Valuation
-

## **MACEDONIAN CONSULTING GROUP (MCG)**

**The Macedonian Consulting Group (MCG)** was set up in 1999 by several professionals eager to implement western style consultancy practices in the Republic of Macedonia. The reason for establishing this group was our shared belief in the need for a professional consulting company within the Macedonian business community.

MCG is an independent company that actively maintains and widens its well-developed network of contacts with companies and institutions throughout Macedonia.

MCG is composed of three professionals who specialize in general management; finance; marketing; and agribusiness. Furthermore, in order to provide a wider scope of services, MCG has established a network of associate experts in various areas, such as law, environment, agriculture, energy saving etc.

### **Our mission**

Our mission statement is to become the premium business-consulting agency in the Republic of Macedonia. What we offer is western-style performance combined with our extensive knowledge of the Macedonian business environment.

The highest standard of customer satisfaction is our ultimate goal.

### **Areas of expertise**

Highlights of MCG members' areas of expertise and skills:

- MCG has established a number of trade contacts and potential joint venture partnerships;
- Marketing research, marketing plans and promotion;
- Business plan and feasibility study preparation;
- Financial and cost management analysis;
- Strategic planning and organizational management;
- An extensive knowledge of the domestic business environment;
- Assistance in overall business improvement of Macedonian companies.

### **Projects**

These are some examples of international projects carried out by the MCG members:

- "Country Assessment" document made for East-West Institute from the US for the requirements of the Workgroup for Economic Strategy (10 / 1999);
- A marketing survey of the availability of construction materials in Macedonia, for the purpose of the reconstruction of Kosovo, on behalf of International Management Group (IMG) and European Commission (07 / 1999);
- A detailed marketing study "Marketing Survey of Agri-Intermediaries in Macedonia"- founded by the Government of Netherlands, document No. 791097-AL004401;
- An agricultural sector study in Macedonia on behalf of Senter, the Netherlands Agency for Economic Cooperation;
- Assistance in establishing several successful long-term commercial partnerships between Macedonian agribusiness companies and interested parties in abroad;
- A marketing survey for bread supplies in Southern-East Macedonia;
- A survey of the media in Macedonia.
- Business plans and feasibility studies for several Macedonian companies

### **MCG Core Group**

**The MCG core group** consists of three individuals:

#### **Ms. Natasa Ljubeckij**

Natasa Ljubeckij is a team leader of Macedonian Consulting Group (MCG). Her responsibilities include the overall management of all international and domestic projects for the company, as well as the identification, development and management of "teams" of professional consultants.

Ms. Ljubeckij is considered as one of the leading professionals in the agribusiness area in the Balkans. Her specialty is development of an agribusiness sector analysis; import/export development; and preparation of business plans and investment profiles for investments in Macedonian agribusiness and agriculture sector; and marketing of them. Working on a number of international projects she is able to provide a unique combination of extensive knowledge about Macedonian economy in post privatization period, combined with western trends and practices. She has led and successfully accomplished several projects in establishing trade and joint venture relationships between Macedonian and foreign companies in a private sector.

#### **Mr. Saso Risteski**

Mr. Risteski is considered as one of the leading Macedonian consultants. His focus of interest is in several categories – marketing, management and agribusiness. Risteski operates with a full range of marketing skills, especially marketing planning, export marketing, marketing research and training. He is very competent in project development, management and implementation.

Risteski has worked with professional western consultants, which enabled him to obtain a clear insight of not only businesses in the Balkan region, but in the Western Europe and United Kingdom and the United States. He is currently working on his Master of Science program at the school of economics in Skopje, Macedonia.

#### **Mr. Blagoja Milosevski**

Mr. Milosevski has extensive experience in management consulting. He has provided consulting services to manufacturing industry in the areas of business planning, information technology and financial analysis. Prior to joining MCG he has been with several Macedonian and foreign companies including the Macedonian Business Resource Center where he worked as a project manager.

Mr. Milosevski holds a B.Sc. in Mechanical Engineering. He has participated on a number of management training courses in the country and abroad. Currently he is pursuing his Masters degree in Business Economy. He is fluent in most Slavic languages, English and has a working knowledge in German.

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## **MBRC-TI.Net**

### **Growing the Macedonian Economy through Trade and Investment Support**

#### **About us**

**MBRC-TI.Net** (MBRC Trade & Investment Network) is a not-for-profit organization established in February of 2003 to support private sector development, exports and foreign investment in Macedonia. MBRC-TI.Net is a successor entity of the highly successful USAID-sponsored Macedonian Business Resource Center (MBRC). The MBRC was set up in late 1995 by Crimson Capital to support and assist Macedonian private businesses in their growth and development.

#### **Mission & Strategy of MBRC-TI.Net**

- Establish a network of companies and organizations from the region and worldwide
- Promote business cooperation and coordination among its members
- Expand existing database of trade and investment contacts
- Serve as a clearinghouse for up-to-date trade and investment related information
- Organize business to business (B2B) trade and investment fairs
- Export/trade/investment facilitation and promotion
- Train managers in trade, investment and business development
- Policy and advocacy assistance

#### **Advantages of becoming a member**

- Access to various databases and matchmaking programs designed to maximize the probability of a successful business deal
- Obtaining of up-to-date, accurate and relevant information about targeted markets
- Advice on trade related issues, such as quality standards, customs, taxation, legal aspects, export financing, etc.
- Advice on investment environment and specific investment opportunities

### **We will help you**

- Enter new markets and expand your existing ones
- Seek out potential customers, marketing agents and distributors
- Establish introductory contacts with potential customers or partners and assist through the negotiations
- Develop investment proposals and feasibility studies
- Obtain trade and investment finance
- Improve product quality, packaging and marketing materials to meet market needs
- Achieve improvement in production know-how & technology and qualification of workforce
- Meet legal and regulatory requirements domestically and abroad

### **An example of our partners**

Albania	Albanian - American Trade and Development Association, (AATDA) GTZ American Chamber of Commerce, Global Trade and Technology Network (GTN)
Bosnia	Chamber of Commerce, Global Trade and Technology Network (GTN)
Bulgaria	International Executive Service Corps (IESC) – Firm Level Assistance Group (FLAG)
Croatia	Croatian Employers Association (HUP)
Hungary	American Chamber of Commerce
Kosovo	Kosovo Business Support (KBS)
Montenegro	Firm Level Assistance Group (FLAG)
Romania	Freemarkonsult
Serbia	Chamber of Commerce
USA	All American Small Business Exporters Association Limited (AASBEA)

### **Contact**

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## **MBRC-CDS**

Who we are?

MBRC – Center for Business Co-operation is a Non Governmental Organization whose main focus of activity is providing services for business development promotion. It is a spin-off from the Macedonian Business Resource Center (MBRC), a USAID project that was managed by Crimson Capital for seven years.

### **What do we offer?**

Equipped with domestic and international experience, expertise, and enthusiasm our NGO assists clients in becoming more efficient, innovative and competitive on the domestic and international markets in the area of trade, investment, finance, marketing, management, corporate governance, and information technology.

### **Enterprise-level management consulting**

### **Trade and Export Promotion**

### **Investment Promotion**

### **Association building**

### **Advocacy policy**

### **Training**

Our network:

#### **Development Agencies**

FLAG Bulgaria, KBS Kosovo, Crown Agents, GTZ, SEED, Macedonian Chamber of Commerce, HUP Croatia, ITD Hungary, ICE Macedonia, Trade Facilitation Office of Canada, Mercy Corps, World Bank, etc.

#### **Consulting Companies**

Crimson Capital, MBRC Consulting, First Nat Consulting, Gruppo Sogesy, Price Waterhouse Coopers, KPMG, Consulting Corporation, etc.

#### **Business Associations**

Macedonian Association of Information Technology (MASIT), Macedonian Brokerage Association, Tourist Association of Republic of Macedonia (TARM), etc.

#### **Individual Companies**

NBRM, Skopje Brewery, Vitaminka A.D., Fersped A.D., Macedonian Stock Exchange, Reifeizenbank, etc.

#### **Government agencies**

CIDA, USAID, UNDP, CENTER, CETRA, DEIK, SIPPO, SOFI, SENEXPO, SIDA, HELLEXPO, CETRA, etc.



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