



Accountability through Transparency Implementation Status Report

Përgjegjësi nëpërmjet Transparencës

Shqip

Komuna e Strugës

E-Diskutime

Pjesa e E-Diskutimeve ose forumi janë të përcaktuara për diskutime të hapura ndërmjet qytetarëve të komunës për të gjitha temat aktive që gjenden në forum.

Inkurajohen të gjithë qytetarët që në mënyrë të lirshme të diskutojnë hapur dhe të shkëmbejnë opinione, që me siguri do t'u ndihmojë atyre në procesin e jetesë urbane.

Komente

Tema	Koment	Data
Преименување на улиците на град Струга!	Наведете предлози и образложувајте ги околу иницијативата на општинскиот Советот и Градоначалникот на Општина Струга за преименување на улиците на нашиот град.	2007-04-03 11:41:14,PD
Autor	Bravo do Gradonacelnikot i opstinata shto vovede vakov nacin na komunikacija so nas graganite. Ova Vance za ulicite namam nekoj stav, no ubavo e da se slusne na glasot na narodot i tokmu vaka ke imame uvid vo komentarite na site, bas kako shto veli imeto na aplikacijata "otceno i odgovorno". Bravo!	2007-04-05 9:12:50,MD

Done Internet 100%

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Submitted by: eGov Project

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GENERAL INFORMATION

The five-year \$4,950,191 *eGov Project* was awarded by USAID/Macedonia on 14 September 2004 with the signing of Associate Cooperative Agreement No. 165-A-00-04-00102-00 to Internews Network under the dot-GOV Leader with Associates Award (GDG-A-00-01-00009-00).

The eGov Project works closely with the Government of Macedonia, (GOM) and is located in Skopje, the Republic of Macedonia. The key staff of the project is: Gordana Toseva, Chief of Party and Elena Stamatoska, Deputy Chief of Party.

The *eGov Project* is helping increase the efficiency and transparency of public sector management by improving the administrative capacity to implement secure e-government solutions and communication within the GOM and between the GOM and Macedonian businesses and citizens. *The eGov Project* addresses the USAID-Macedonia *SO 1.3 Accelerated Development of the Private Sector and IR 1.3.3 Enabling Environment for Investment Improved*.

www.eGov.org.mk

Introduction

The eGov Project launched in April 2007, in close cooperation with 11 municipalities, an electronic application that opened a new modern channel for citizens to influence and be informed about discussions and decisions within their municipality council and administration.

Citizens can access the application via the municipality web pages and send questions and requests to any Council member or the Mayor and participate in the e-Forum. Information is available on-line about all events and meetings, as well as the agenda for sessions in the Council. The citizens can access draft documents and search through questions, requests, comments and proposals. The system offers statistics of submitted/answered/rejected questions by the administration, Mayor or the Council members as respond to the citizens. The application also offers various possibilities for increase in the efficiency of the internal administration within the Municipality.

A proper utilisation of the system would lead to a significantly increased accountability and transparency of the work within the municipality councils in the Republic of Macedonia and thus enhance democracy, in particular for minorities and disadvantaged groups that normally are cut off from such information and influence. A significant media interest was consequently noticed when the e-Gov Project publicly announced that it would develop and implement the system.

The system was developed in close cooperation with the participating municipalities and the Association of Local Government Units ZELS. In this regard, during the development process the Project organized three workshops aimed at giving the municipalities opportunity to comment and propose solutions for specific modules.

The eGov Project initially intended to install the system in five municipalities across the country. All five selected municipalities had to formally agree to the installation and to formally commit not only to use the system but also to make some investments connected to its proper operation. Investments by the municipalities should cover equipment such as publicly available computers to be used by anyone.

The Project was approached during the preparatory phase by additional six municipalities that also requested the system. Since there were no grounds for refusing them and adding those municipalities would only marginally increase the cost, a MoU regarding the development, installation and operation of the system was signed, at a public event held in Skopje on 14 November 2006, with 11 instead of with five municipalities. The following municipalities signed the MoU and got the system duly installed: City of Skopje, Resen, Strumica, Kavadarci, Gazi Baba, Veles, Bitola, Kocani, Stip, Gostivar and Struga.

The Project intended to carefully follow the usage of the system during a period of around one year and, in case of successful results, invite additional municipalities to join the system.

Marketing of the system

The e-Gov Project organised the following promotional activities upon the launch of the system:

- 5,000 brochures and 200 posters printed in Macedonian and Albanian language distributed to the municipalities and their info centres;
- Promotion of the application at the Municipality Fair 2007 at the USAID umbrella booth;
- Presentation of AT&T at the MIM (Macedonian Institute for Media) School for Young Journalists as a good source of news and a tool for improving the communication and access to information from the local government;
- Distribution of info materials to municipalities through the USAID Local Government Activity;
- Distribution of info materials by MIM to NGOs and media under their Access to Information Initiative.

Citizens, especially in rural areas, are not accustomed to use electronic means of communication. In addition to the promotional activities the Project thus also tried to

establish cooperation with local NGOs to get their support for activating the citizens. However, the factual results did not meet the expectations. The NGOs that were approached declared their readiness and competence to assist but very little activity was delivered by them.

Members of the participating councils and municipally administrations were duly trained by the Project to use the system before its implementation.

De facto usage of the system

All 11 municipalities were regularly approached by the eGov Project and asked about the utilisation of the system. It became clear already at an early stage that the usage by the citizens was far from expected. A few questions were asked over the system by citizens but no proper dialogue with citizens occurred in any of the 11 municipalities. The Council of the Municipality of Struga reported that opinions submitted by citizens through the system had on several occasions directly influenced the composition of the Council agendas.

The system was not used as expected also the local press and the NGOs.

The lack of activity was not explained by any technical problems or any other difficulties in using the system but stemmed apparently from the inherited lack of interest by the citizens, the local media and the NGOs to have a dialogue with the council or municipality administration. This mostly owes to the low democratic capacity in the communities inherited from the socialist past characterized with very centralized governance and virtually no governing power within the local government bodies.

The e-Gov Project selected the Municipality of Struga as a representative of the participating municipalities for a more extensive research on the extent of usage of the system and the value of it to the Council members and municipality administration. The result of the interviews is attached to this report as **Annex 1**.

Although the information from Struga confirmed the disappointing experience regarding the participation from the public, it became clear that the system had had a positive effect on the efficiency of the administration work. The positive reactions in that respect from Struga have been confirmed through contacts also with the other participating municipalities.

It can thus be concluded that the system is being extensively used internally by the respective municipality council. However, the main feature of the system, namely to provide the citizens with an electronic channel for their active participation in council activities have not materialised. No technical problems have been noticed or claimed by anyone as a reason for the system not being used as foreseen.

Conclusions

Although the application has so far not fully met its primary objective, some municipalities and councils consider the electronic AT&T system as being very useful.

Thanks to the system the municipality staff and the Council members have begun to use ICT technology in their every day operations and have improved their internal efficiency and communication. As only one among several examples it can be mentioned that council sessions no longer are been canceled due to copy machine malfunctioning which previously frequently happened.

With the very positive experience of the AT&T system several of the participating municipalities now plan to extend the usage of ICT and make further investments. The Municipality of Struga intends to establish computer/internet access points on 11 locations around the municipality from where citizens will have access to information, and via AT&T communicate with the Municipality.

Although the uptake of the system did not materialize as planned at this stage, it is nevertheless clear that the system actively has contributed to the general introduction of ICT in the municipalities concerned. Actions now taken by municipalities such as Struga also indicate that, although belated, the proper usage among the public could be envisaged.

ANNEX 1

Report from the Municipality of Struga

Population: 63,376

Size of the Municipality Council: 27 persons

Languages used: Macedonian and Albanian

Municipality administration size: 100 persons

Public institutions that have access to the application: Approximately 100, such as local offices of ministries, public enterprises, primary and secondary schools

Comments from the Municipality staff members:

- √ Very satisfied with the implementation of the new system.
- √ The application is used to schedule internal meetings within the municipality administration.
- √ Calendar is updated on regular, almost daily basis.
- √ The forum is not active due human resource needed to administrate/ facilitate the forum. Struga initially used the forum. However, very limited reactions were received from citizens. The forum primarily resulted in questions and comments on non-related subjects and sending not-applicable (offensive) comments.
- √ The Municipality considers that it should pay more attention to the utilization of the application and stimulate the community to use it for improved communication with NGO community as well as with businesses and citizens.
- √ Transparency and accountability has definitively increased, not just with the citizens, but also among the political party representatives in the Council. Now all proactive political parties from the Municipality of Struga can closely monitor the activities of the Mayor and the Council. The previous non-transparent way of blocking Council meetings or changing the agenda for obscure political gains has now been prevented.
- √ ICT information centres have been established at which citizens can gain access to all relevant information.
- √ The ATT has a dual language option; both Macedonian and Albanian language. All materials and communication can thus easily be provided simultaneously in both languages.
- √ The electronic distribution of meeting materials eliminates significant cost and time delays.
- √ In December 2008, the Municipality of Struga submitted a nomination for the Municipality of the Year Award organized by the Association of Local Government Units ZELS, based

on the results achieved in the area of efficiency and transparency through the use of the AT&T application.

Matching investments by the Municipality

30 lap top computers for council members, the Mayor and staff = \$22,000

1 server = \$4,000

Yearly hosting of the application = \$1,400

Comments from Councillors:

- √ Difficult beginning as there was a need to adjust to new technologies.
- √ They no longer call the municipality council coordinator to ask questions on the timing for meeting or related questions.
- √ No complaints of city administration for performance related to support of their work.
- √ The use of ICT will increase the quality of nominated / elected political party representatives in the council and improve the work of this institution.

Comments from the local media:

- √ Local TV stations do not call the municipality to obtain information on council work. They are obtaining this information from ATT.
- √ Ohrid and Struga local media outlets are constantly covering the work of the council and report in positive way, as they have access to all public information in advance as well as after session.

Cost of organizing a session

(Approximate expenditure per session)

Activity	Before	After
Printing of materials	1500 pcs of paper (2 MKD/1 pcs) = 3,000 MKD x 30 persons = 90,000 MKD x 2 (Macedonian and Albanian language) = 180,000 MKD (\$3,900)	0
Cartridge for printer	3 pcs x 3,500 MKD = 10,500 MKD (\$230)	0
Postage of materials	Personal delivery made by 1 person that used 5 work days to distribute materials personally = 3,000 MKD (\$65)	0
Time to distribute materials and inform councillors	Needed to start 13 days before the session in order to distribute the materials (which takes 5 days) on time for the legally required 8 days prior to the session	Information is sent via sms to all 27 councillors 8 days prior to the session and they are informed that materials are available through AT&T