

## SIXTH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME

**FP6-045003-WEB.DEP**

**Western Balkans Democratic Participation**



# NATIONAL WEB.DEP Workshop MIA

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## Introduction

The MIA-WEB.DEP Workshop "Practical Effects of e-Democracy and e-Communication" took place in hotel "Best Western", Skopje, Republic of Macedonia, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of December 2008. The event was carefully planned ahead as very important dissemination activity in terms of participation and publicity. The Workshop location was chosen to be hotel "Best Western" in Skopje, because it's located in the very centre of the city and easily reached by the participants.

## 1. WEB.DEP Workshop Skopje - Agenda and Objectives

### 1.1. Agenda

Time	Subject	Organizations
10:30 - 11:00	Arrival/Registration of Participants	ALL
11:00 - 11:10	Welcome note and short introduction in WEB.DEP	MIA
11:10 - 11:25	E-communication in Macedonia today and tomorrow, e-government and e-democracy	Ministry of Information Society
11:25 - 12:15	Role of journalists in WEB.DEP project	MIA, ESIEMTH, Center for Research and Policy Making
12:20 - 13:30	Internet communication role in creation of public opinion. Experiences, fresh ideas...	Newspapers online editions
13:30 - 14:00	<b>Snack and coffee break</b>	
14:00 - 15:15	Blog atmosphere in Macedonia	Blog community
15:15 - 16:00	MIA WEB.DEP Forum and central forum	MIA, TANJUG, ATA
16:00 - 16:15	Workshop conclusion	ALL

### 1.2. Workshop Objectives

- ❖ Informing participants, especially media, NGOs and Government representatives about the WEB.DEP project
- ❖ Presenting the objectives of MIA WEB.DEP
- ❖ Drawing attention of journalists, media and potential actors to become part of WEB.DEP initiative
- ❖ Promoting WEB.DEP to a wider public through TV, Newspapers, Radio, etc.

The main objective of the workshop was to inform media, NGOs, Government representatives and wider public about WEB.DEP. For the purpose of achieving this objective, MIA invited national and local media, whereas leaflets, flyers, posters and press releases were produced to visually inform the Albanian audience. WEB.DEP project was presented as a new experience worth trying and participating.



The attendance of Deputy-Minister of Information Society and her speech encouraged us and all participants that the Macedonian Government would seriously pay attention to WEB.DEP and would answer questions posted at MIA WEB.DEP.

Considering Internet communication role in creating public opinion, we get very interesting ideas and proposals about how to make WEB.DEP more effective and interesting, and we promote WEB.DEP as service to the people.

Most of the participants registered at MIA WEB.DEP before the workshop, and others said that they would do that after the workshop. Everybody said that they would disseminate information about WEB.DEP to friends, colleagues, partners etc.

## 2. Publicity for MIA WEB.DEP Workshop

Ten days before the Skopje WEB.DEP Workshop, MIA created, produced and widely distributed the following publicity materials:

- ❖ Press releases in Macedonian/Albanian/English languages
- ❖ 100 Flyers/Invitations distributed via mail to main local organizations
- ❖ 1 big banner (2m x 1m)
- ❖ Pens with WEB.DEP logo for workshop participants
- ❖ 2 GB USB sticks with MIA WEB.DEP logo for workshop participants
- ❖ 50 public relations officers of different organizations were contacted through an e-mail base list/phone calls

During the Workshop day, MIA WEB.DEP team provided publicity services such as:

- ❖ 200 clients of MIA received by e-mail the news item published on WEB.DEP conference
- ❖ Mobile phone messages were sent to mobile users of T-Mobile Macedonia
- ❖ Good media coverage on national & local level:
  - 2 Foreign News Agencies present at event
  - 3 Daily Newspapers present at event
  - 1 National Public TV station
  - 1 International TV/radio station - Voice of America

## 3. Participants

On December 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, the Skopje WEB.DEP workshop gathered around 40-45 participants, representing many organizations with an interest in WEB.DEP issues, including the Government, NGOs, academicians, business community, students and citizens.

Participants

- 4 Government representatives 9.8%
- 2 scientists/academicians 4.9%
- 1 media group 2.5%
- 1 Chamber of Commerce 2.5%
- 12 partners 29%
- 7 students 17.1%
- 3 NGOs 7.3%

- 9 journalists from media 22%
- 2 bloggers 4.9%

\* The original list of the workshop participants is attached to this document

## 4. Workshop Speakers and Presentations

### 4.1. Speakers

The invited speakers of the WEB.DEP Workshop Skopje were keynote figures coming from online media, Government agencies, relevant organizations and institutions, WEB.DEP partners and business community. The target was to inform the audience about WEB.DEP and to get useful information and suggestions about the functioning of WEB.DEP.

Each of them has specific interest in the field of media, e-technologies, e-democracy, or was somehow interested in issues related to WEB.DEP. The workshop was a very good opportunity to establish communication and relationship with various representatives for reaching the people or the community they come from.

Name of Speakers	Organisation
Zivko Georgievski	Macedonian Information Agency
Jasmina Tasevska	Macedonian Information Agency
Mirjana Sekulovska	Ministry of Information Society
Lazaros Chantzinakos ESIEMTH	ESIEMTH
Riste Zmejkovski	Center for Research and Policy Making
Ilija Talev	Center for Research and Policy Making
Zoran Ricliev	Utrinski vesnik newspaper - online edition
Igor Penev	Vecer newspaper - online edition
Mersiha Usein	Secretariat for European Affairs. Government of Republic of Macedonia
Mence Galapceva	Secretariat for European Affairs, Government of Republic of Macedonia
Darko Budlioski	Blog community
Angelko Ugrosanovic	TANJUG
Elona Limaj	ATA

## 4.2. Presentations

The WEB.DEF Workshop in Skopje started with a welcome note by Jasmina Tasevska, editor of the foreign policy desk in the Macedonian Information Agency-MIA. At the beginning, she thanked attending participants, saying, "MIA together with the national news agencies of Albania and Serbia, ATA and TANJUG respectively, has realised project WEB.DEF (Western Balkans Democracy Process). WEB.DEF is an Internet forum which goal is to impose influence by citizens, NGOs and science on the policy decision-makers".

- Afterwards, Mirjana Sekulovska, Deputy-Minister of Information Society, officially opened the workshop. She said, "Internet communication plays a huge role in creation of the public opinion. The Ministry of Information Society, supported by the Government, believes that e-communication in our country could be raised at a European level, and we are working on several projects that will primarily benefit citizens".

- One such project is 'e-Citizens, IT-Educated Nation', providing free IT education, which is useful for their active participation in projects and fora, including WEB.DEF. Namely, free IT courses for 22,500 citizens were carried out in 2007, and due to the large interest, these courses resume in 2008, 2009 and 2010.
- Project 'World at the Palm' included the opening of free Internet clubs in 15 cities in Macedonia, enabling free Internet access. Another 15 clubs will be opened in as many cities in the country in 2009.
- In the framework of project 'Free Internet', citizens had the opportunity to use free Internet for two months in mid-2008, and the same will happen in December. Six more weeks of free Internet are envisaged in 2009, whereas all citizens will acquire free Internet for six weeks twice a year in 2010 and 2011.
- 'Civil Portal' is also realized, enabling access to about 200 Government services, where citizens can ask questions and get answers, along with access to the electoral list.
- Project 'Free WI-FI Points' is to be launched at attractive city locations in 2009 (bus stands, libraries, faculties etc), thus achieving increased transparency in the use of Internet services by citizens, especially in citizens' inclusion in the decision-making and management processes, through the new platforms – fora, blogs and social networks.

The new Internet media enable a shift in the focus of centralized media systems, essential civil democracy and participation, transparency and incentive for civil activism. Another Government project aimed at raising the level of e-communication in Republic of Macedonia is the introduction of VOIP in state administration, i.e. voice communication through Internet protocol, thus significantly reducing costs for fixed telephony.

Regarding WEB.DEF, she said it is a direct fruit of democracy, adding, "Its primary goal is use of Internet for the purpose of including people, who should influence political decisions by authorities through their positions and opinions. It covers a number of topics in the fields of art and culture, economy and business, education, ecology/environment, human rights, labor, lifestyle, regional development, science and technology, social issues etc".

- Zivko Georgievski editor in MIA referred to the role of journalists in the WEB.DEF project. "Firstly, the idea of the project, even though it may sound too ambitious, is that it is constituted of a professional potential that is able to join together or to share the viewpoints of citizens, NGOs, the academic world with the state administration, Government. Moreover, because unfortunately we are still attributed to as being national but also a state-run agency, thus being a lot easier to establish feedback between the Government and those participating in the forum.

The most important idea, if we succeed in this, is to be able to summarize all the viewpoints, suggestions, positions of the forum's participants as soon as they are collected, to present

those summaries to the Culture Minister, if they refer to culture, or to any other competent minister, depending on the field in question and to tell him/her what the citizens think.

What is more important is that the minister or ministry will be bound to respond what he/she thinks about the citizens' standings, thus establishing an interaction that hopefully will yield positive results and something will be achieved. Not that we're doing anything spectacular, but we should sublimate piece by piece and out of these pieces we should make smaller results, even though we can be pleased with the fact that the news agencies are also contributing to accelerated democratic development, prompt comprehension of EU and being able to say we're mature and capable to act in an European manner and the results will be evident.

I believe this is a good beginning and it wouldn't be too optimistic if I say that sometime in the spring of 2009, we will be able to gladly announce that certain results have been achieved from the ideas and the WEB.DEP project platforms in Serbia, Albania and Macedonia.

- Riste Zmejovski from the Center for Research and Policy Making said, "on behalf of the Center and myself, I would like to welcome this project. Undoubtedly, it is laying some democratic foundations with regard to Internet communication in Macedonia and it is instrumental, although we're a bit late regarding the project, compared to other countries and other examples".

First of all, on the behalf of the Center and my own, I would like to welcome this project. Undoubtedly, it is laying some democratic foundations with regard to the Internet communication in Macedonia and it is instrumental, although we're a bit late regarding the project, compared to other countries and other examples.

Particularly, our think-tank network PASOS, comprising think-tank centers from the European Union, held an annual assembly in Prague three weeks ago on topic "Think-Tanks' Contribution to Influencing Creation of Public Policies." There are numerous examples throughout Europe how think-tank centers influence the creation of policies for the government in completely different ways, similar with what you have been doing with WEB.DEP.

Therefore, I think you have to, first and foremost, develop the forum to a higher level, because there are fora on other Macedonian web sites with two-three visitors or none at all, thus no discussion, and we cannot expect these fora to exert influence in any way.

Furthermore, the positive side of WEB.DEP is that it can be turned into leading Internet portal offering information from various spheres, because I believe this is what we lack. For the time being, A1 and Dnevnik are the most read portals in terms of displaying information on politics or more concretely on public policies from any given sphere. Therefore, I think that if you could manage to achieve that level, you would be more powerful given the communication established with the civic sector, because we'll have an Internet partner and the flow of information would be easier, quicker and simpler than the flow of information enabled by the press and TV stations.

- Ilija Talev from the Center for Research and Policy Making said that participative journalism allows some kind of communication between the government and citizens, authorities and ordinary citizens. Therefore, it is the role that journalists will play in incorporating the views of ordinary citizens in their articles, detecting the things that are important to the citizens, instead of reporting sensational news stories, because their editors believe it will boost their popularity, etc...

This project improves the chance for establishing a so-called grassroots democracy – a democracy originating from the people, a process which guarantees that politics does not start and end on Election Day, that some kind of positive solution for the entire society will be reached throughout the government's mandate, including citizens' input via the journalist and media.

Finally, I would like to say that we (the Research Center) are planning on using the portal, leaving comments, reading the news, monitoring the developments, using it as a medium for contacting other research centers in order to work on joint projects with cross border implications. I wish you success and I hope we'll cooperate in the future to boost the quality of your and our work.

- Zoran Riclev editor of the online edition of newspaper "Utrinski Vesnik" referred most to the moderation and authorization of comments. His experience was very useful, because he worked on online comments by readers on his newspaper. Conclusions from his rich experience are:

- Moderation of comments in general, is not appropriately developed
- Administrators must know the IP address of people who write comments (because somebody can sign in with a false name);
- Knowing the IP address is important for further possible lawsuits and resolving disputes, if there are any;
- There must be moderators available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for moderation of comments and posting comments online;
- Comments must be moderated and published online maximum one hour after somebody posts them.

- Mersiha Usein from the Secretariat for European Affairs (Government of the Republic of Macedonia) extended congratulations on the project, saying that cooperation with state institutions must be improved. On behalf of the Secretariat for European Affairs, she said that it would answer all posts and comments related to European affairs.

- Igor Penev, editor of online edition of newspaper "Vecer" said that moderation of comments is not good solution because people can't wait for their comment to be published online. He suggested that comments should be moderated after they are published. Somebody posts a comment, and the comment is published at the same time, but if the content of the comment is inappropriate, then the moderator should remove it. In this case, there must be moderators available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

He added, "It is a fact that stories with most comments by readers are the most read stories, i.e. most visited stories at the Internet, because those who do not comment open those texts in order to see what people talk about.

- Mence Galapceva, IT consultant on a British project in the Secretariat for European Affairs, suggested that the WEB.DEP forum should be different from other online forums where everybody can state an opinion. She said that WEB.DEP should have different concept from other forums. It should be directed at the intellectual group. According to her, there are too many ordinary forums where people can say everything about everybody, and that is why WEB.DEP should be different, where people can say what they really think about an issue. She added that PR sectors of every institution should be obligated to answer questions posted at WEB.DEP. Regarding moderation, she said that there must be moderation if we want WEB.DEP to be serious forum.

- Verica Ordanova, editor of online business portal "Total" said that topics that don't include politics and gossip are not so "interesting" among people. She stated that on their forum, people post comments about gossip rather than about some economic theme. She stated that WEB.DEP is a good idea and wished us luck.

After the break, we continued with the blog atmosphere in Macedonia. On this topic, we invited representative of that community and one of the speakers was one of the oldest bloggers in Macedonia, Darko Budlioski. He said that there are approximately 20 criteria to evaluate if a blog is good or not, adding that comments about blogs is just one of the criteria. But some very good bloggers don't allow comments for their post and that doesn't mean that the post is not good.

Colleagues from ATA and TANJUG, Elona Limaj and Angelko Ugrosanovic respectively, saluted project WEB.DEP and said it is a very good way to improve relations among Balkan countries that are not EU members yet.

At the end, Mr. Georgievski said, "now we have the platform, we have positive ambition, not because we are national or state news agencies. At the end, we are journalists with spirit, vocational thinking and now we can make steps to influence as citizens, as NGOs, as academicians and scientists, to people in the various cabinets, to people who make decisions. That will not be only a success of MIA. MIA is only the transporter. This will be a success of all of us". He also invited everybody to join WEB.DEP central forum in order to discuss and provoke themes and discussions that would be really Balkan-European and would bring ideas on resolving various issues.

## 5. Conclusions

- Participants of Skopje workshop found the WEB.DEP project and its idea interesting.
- In general, all participants at the workshop said they would like to become part of this project.
- The workshop speakers brought fresh information from different fields of interests. The data and facts will be used for defining the WEB.DEP topic priorities and the tools for approaching the different target-groups.
- The workshop was a useful forum to consult with our target audiences and to talk about issues relevant to the work of the WEB.DEP project and have people feedback on MIA WEB.DEP platform.

## 6. List of participants at WEB.DEP workshop held on December 3, 2008 in Skopje

No.	Name and surname	Institution
1.	Mirjana Sekulovska	Ministry of Information Society
2.	Zivko Georgievski	MIA
3.	Jasmina Tasevska	MIA
4.	Angelko Ugrosanovic	Tanjug
5.	Igor Radojcic	Tanjug
6.	Jelena Petrovic	Tanjug
7.	Svetlana Gurovic	Tanjug
8.	Elona Limaj	ATA
9.	Riste Zmejkovski	Center for Research and Policy Making
10.	Ilija Talev	Center for Research and Policy Making
11.	Dimitar Nikolovski	Center for Research and Policy Making
12.	Violeta Cvetkovska	Agency for Electronic Communications
13.	Lazaros Chantzinakos	ESIEMTH
14.	Vasiliki Kouidou	ESIEMTH
15.	Mersiha Usein	Secretariat for European Affairs
16.	Mence Galapceva	Secretariat for European Affairs



<b>17.</b>	Pandorka Arsovska	MIA
<b>18.</b>	Ajrie Redzeqi	MIA
<b>19.</b>	Hatka Smailovic	MIA
<b>20.</b>	Branko Cvetkovski	MIA
<b>21.</b>	Stanka Damjanovska	Economic Chamber
<b>22.</b>	Ilina Gligorovska	Law Faculty, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius"
<b>23.</b>	Zoran Rieliev	Utrinski Vesnik
<b>24.</b>	Igor Penev	Vecer
<b>25.</b>	Sonja Trajkovska	VOA
<b>26.</b>	Serjoza Nedelkoski	Forum
<b>27.</b>	Ljupco Jurukovski	On.net
<b>28.</b>	Darko Budlioski	Blogger
<b>29.</b>	Violeta Angelova	MIA
<b>30.</b>	Cvetanka Ristova	MIA
<b>31.</b>	Marina Damcevska	Sitel
<b>32.</b>	Verica Jordanova	Total-Kapital
<b>33.</b>	Aleksandar Ristov	Nova Makedonija
<b>34.</b>	Dragica Hristova	Spic
<b>35.</b>	Marjan Nelkovski	Student
<b>36.</b>	Dzemail Kefar	Student
<b>37.</b>	Senada Brutam	Student
<b>38.</b>	Kristina Atovska	Student
<b>39.</b>	Teodora Velickovska	Student
<b>40.</b>	Dina Spirovska	Student
<b>41.</b>	Keti Petkovska	Student