

REPORT
WORKSHOP – FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND OPEN DATA



Topic: Freedom of Information and Open Data – 3rd Action Plan OGP 2016-2018

Место: EU Info Center (Sv. Kiril and Metodij 52 – V, 1000 Skopje)

Date: 9 March 2016



This event is supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) within the project of the European Union “Advocacy for Open Government: Civil Society Agent-setting and Monitoring of Country Action Plans.” The presented positions and opinions during the event do not reflect the positions and opinions of the donors.



The Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) within the project “Advocacy for Open Government: Civil Society Agenda-setting and Monitoring of Country Action Plans” financed by the European Union and supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) held its second workshop entitled *Freedom of Information and Open Data* for the process of drafting the 3rd Action Plan Open Government Partnership (OGP) 2016 – 2018.

Representatives (34 in total) of the state institutions, civil society organizations (CSO) and other stakeholders and citizens were invited to the conference. During the workshop the following topics were discussed: (1) free access to information, (2) open as public good, (3) information infrastructure. Sonja Stefanovska-Trajanovska followed with her presentation, after the opening remarks of Qendresa Sulejmani. She reflected on the need to include the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2030 within the framework of the new AP. Despite the importance of all Goals, she stressed that Goal 16, *Peace and Justice and Strong Institutions*, is of particular importance for the new AP OGP 2016-2018. The social coverage of this goal is and will be achieved through Twitter with #цел16. Gordana Gagic Dimitrovska, national OGP coordinator, discussed the need to overcome the challenges of the 2nd AP, and to produce measures that can be met in the 2-year period with the awarded financial means. She has also highlighted the use the lessons learnt from the previous AP, i.e. the new commitments should be clearly specified. Finally, the first part of the workshop was concluded with some of the best practices concerning Freedom of Information (FOI) and Open Data implemented from the global OGP initiative by Zdravko Veljanov. He underlined the need to clearly define FOI and Open Data, and the proposed measures and commitments to be feasible.

During the second part of the conference, the participants identified some of the challenges regarding FOI and Open Data, and discussed about their relevance, consistency and the possibility to be implemented.

The last part of the workshop was used to identify measures and commitments pursuant to the proposed challenges.

Several challenges followed by measures were proposed in the first sub-thematic part, Information infrastructure. The proposed measures are as follow: introducing INTRANET system and module for biometric identification (fingerprint). The measure was proposed by Sashko Krstevski, and the as implementing institution/party was suggested the Ministry of Interior Affairs. Gordana Gjorchevska from Reaktiv stressed that the institutions are not technically prepared to face the challenges that arise



This event is supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) within the project of the European Union “Advocacy for Open Government: Civil Society Agenda-setting and Monitoring of Country Action Plans.” The presented positions and opinions during the event do not reflect the positions and opinions of the donors.



from FOI and Open Data, i.e. many of them have “out-of-date” technology or have not technology at all. Therefore, they are not equipped electronically to publish data. As a response to tackle this issue was proposed to draft an appraisal report on the technical capacities, followed by a strategy to overcome it. Blagoj Petrushev indicated the issues with the web-page *otvorenipodatoci.gov.mk*. The problem with the web page is when you try to proceed with an external link, the link is usually broken or non-existent.

Regarding the Law on Free Access to Information of Public Importance, Diana Zhupanoska from MCET underlined the inefficiency of the appeal procedure. She considers that the deadline for response should be shortened, and instead of having to submit the request in person and written, it should be provided with the possibility to do it electronically. Moreover, one should clearly define the difference and definition of classified information, i.e. which information is classified and on what grounds. In order to overcome this issue, we need legal amendments, and improved information infrastructure. Additional challenge that has been identified was to raise the awareness of the public, the office holders, heads of department and holders of information, which are responsible for implementing and carrying out the Law on Free Access to Information and Information of Public Importance. Misha Popovikj, considered that ministries should provide more regular updates on their web pages, after the information has been required by a CSO or a citizen. The measure proposed to tackle this challenge was to implement a pilot-project of 10 institutions. The next identified issue was to open the meetings of the Government, or as it has been put, to install e-government software. These software should be part of the transparency modules. Finally, ticketing systems should be introduced, and citizens, CSOs and other stakeholders should have access to government logs.

The final sub-thematic part treated topics related with systemizing open data. There should be central registrar, which can categorize and list all data sets of public importance. In addition, the data should be machine readable, and as an implementing party/institution was identified the Public Procurement Bureau. Another issue discussed during the workshop was transparency and accountability of political parties, i.e. inability to have accurate and precise timeline of form of declaration of assets and liabilities for the holders of offices. These forms should be open and not deleted, after they stop being holders of public offices. MISA stated that the decision depends on the institution that publishes this information and they are limited in their operation. Further challenge was to provide free access to data of business entities which is of public importance. The access to these data sets should be free, since the CSOs do not have sufficient funds to pay for all sets. MISA reiterated that these data sets are financially



This event is supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) within the project of the European Union “Advocacy for Open Government: Civil Society Agenda-setting and Monitoring of Country Action Plans.” The presented positions and opinions during the event do not reflect the positions and opinions of the donors.



supported by the business community, and not much can be done. Last but not least, data sets from otvorenipodatoci.gov.mk web page should have permanence and not constantly swapped or changed with new modified sets, i.e. it calls for standardization of open data at all levels.



This event is supported by the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) within the project of the European Union “Advocacy for Open Government: Civil Society Agent-setting and Monitoring of Country Action Plans.” The presented positions and opinions during the event do not reflect the positions and opinions of the donors.

