



May NEWSLETTER



AgBiz customers (Petkov Viktor - "Vipro"; Momcilo Ivanovski - "Bonum Plus"; and Trajce Karadakovski - "Mabi Trade/Dentina") visit COOP Forum

Study Tour Leads to Initial \$70,000 in Sales for Vegetable Processors

In response to a request from the Macedonian Association of Processors, USAID's AgBiz project and the Macedonian Agricultural Advisory Support Programme organized and supported a study tour to Sweden from November 3 to 7, 2008, to help Macedonian vegetable processing companies identify new customers. Representatives of nine Macedonian companies, including Altra, Vipro, Kim, Konimex, Mabi Trade/Dentina, Bonum, Medium Export, Tehnoalat and Pajdakov/MTD Prom, participated in the tour. This was their first opportunity to explore the potential and expand their knowledge of the Swedish market.

During this intensive learning experience, the study group visited four leading Swedish importers of processed/fresh vegetable products as well as the largest food distribution centre in Scandinavia. They also visited numerous retail shops that sell traditional Southeastern European and Balkan foods, and met with the managers of the most well-known supermarkets in Sweden. Participants learned how Macedonian products could be adapted to Swedish tastes and legal requirements.

Tour members analyzed useful information on the Swedish market for traditional Balkan ethnic foods such as ajvar and pindjur. They also collected information on Swedish processed vegetable sales volumes and sales values, company and brand shares, distribution and pricing data.

"The biggest benefits to participants were 1) having a unique opportunity to observe the potential of this new market and its distribution dynamics, and 2) the opportunity to achieve accelerated entry of processed vegetable products into the Swedish market"; said Zlatko Edelinski, the AgBiz Processed Vegetable Value Chain Coordinator and study tour facilitator.

During the study tour, AgBiz clients had "business to business" meetings with Swedish buyers, presented their products and assessed their competitiveness in supplying traditional processed vegetable products to Swedish companies. They concluded that there are numerous opportunities for further developing the Swedish market for Macedonian processed vegetable products, based on strong Swedish demand for ethnic products and a flavor profile that fits current trends in retail and food service channels.

Only three months after the tour, two of the companies that participated have already succeeded in shipping \$70,000 worth of processed vegetable products as well tea and apple vinegar products to new Swedish buyers. The remaining participants are intensively negotiating with potential Swedish buyers.

"This type of activity was very useful for establishing and strengthening new buyer relationships and learning new technologies, for example innovative packaging of pepper based products, and effective organization of exports." said Mr. Tome Kichukov of Tehnoalat.



Students constructing Pythagoras triangular monitored by teacher Jordan Dudeski

Grade 6 Students develop a Pythagoras Teaching Resource

David Malinkovski and Nikola Torbovski, from the “11th of October” primary school in Skopje, have developed an animated video for teaching the Pythagorean Theory with support from their ICT (Information & Communications Technology) teacher, Irina Ivanova.

The animation was the idea of mathematics teacher, Jordan Dudeski, who wanted to find an interesting way to teach the Pythagorean Theory to his 7th year class. Dudeski has also worked with his students and the school's music teacher, Zvonimir Atanasov, to compose a song about Pythagoras.

In addition, Dudeski organized a lesson in which his students worked in groups to discover if the Pythagorean Theory worked in actual practice. This hands-on activity, along with the song and the animation, showed that math lessons can be fun. The students truly focused their effort and attention, and enjoyed their work as well, saying that this was a very helpful method of improving their mathematics skills, and that they will never forget the Pythagorean Theory.

Dudeski explained to USAID's Primary Education Project (PEP) staff, “It is amazing to see how motivated the students are! Through this kind of work, they apply their theoretical knowledge to practice and learn new things easily.”

Dudeski is one of 1400 teachers who have participated in mathematics and science workshops organized by PEP in all regions of Macedonia. These professional development workshops train teachers in new inquiry-driven methodologies that will help them provide their own students with opportunities to develop their mathematical and scientific thinking skills. The workshops promote practical, hands-on activities, such as project-based learning and making use of ICT, as the best way to learn mathematics.

PEP has worked to improve primary education in Macedonia since 2006 through reforms in math and science education, increased access to and use of ICT, improved assessment practices, and school renovations. PEP's math and science component aims to make students familiar with important mathematical concepts in a way that is direct and interesting for their age.



Judge Antoaneta Dimovska, Public Information Officer of the Basic Court Skopje 2, guides a tour in the court for high school students on the occasion of the National Day of the Judiciary

Proactive Public Information Officers in the courts

Srna Naneva, a high school student from Skopje, felt proud as she tried on Judge Antoaneta's robe to see how it feels to be a judge. More than ever, Srna and her classmates were sure they had made the right education choice and reconfirmed their decision to become judges one day.

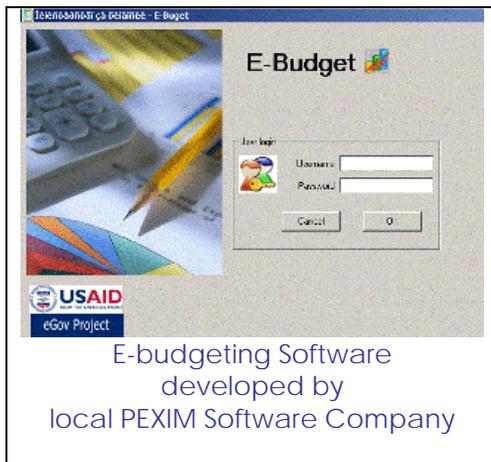
On the occasion of the March 31st National Day of the Judiciary, over thirty high school students and their teachers from the law departments of two Skopje schools visited Basic Court Skopje 2. The visit was organized by Judge Antoaneta Dimovska, Public Information Officer (PIO) of the Court, with support from USAID's Judicial Reform Implementation Project (JRIP).

On her own initiative, Judge Antoaneta decided to hold a rather atypical celebration of the National Day of the Judiciary. "These kids are the future of the judiciary in Macedonia"-said Judge Antoaneta. "They should feel the atmosphere in the courts and see how all the things they learn in theory appear in real life." The judge was visibly excited by the opportunity to host the group, and the students admired her enthusiasm and positive energy.

Judge Antoaneta organized a guided tour to all departments of the court and explained their functions. Students had the opportunity to meet the President of the Court as well as the Court Secretary, and discuss their duties with them. Inside an actual courtroom, the judge explained how a trial is organized. At the end of the visit, students had the opportunity to ask the judge questions about court functions. Their questions ranged from general things such as how is the judge sure that she has always made the right decision, and how big was the biggest sentence ever determined by that court, to specific legal questions, including whether decisions can be based only on a witness' statement, and whether one could terminate a contract for guardianship.

At the end of the visit, both the students and their teachers said they were very pleased with the event, especially because it had been initiated by the court. The teachers and the judge agreed to make such visits a tradition and to provide practical experiences for all students.

Judge Antoaneta is one of 58 court personnel trained by the JRIP in public and media relations from September to November 2008. The goal of JRIP is to help the judiciary develop into a stronger, more effective and independent branch of government. The Project works to ensure that PIOs serve as the courts' media and public relations representatives in all courts in the country, in order to help the courts become more transparent and open to the public. JRIP provides continuous training and on-the-job mentoring to the Court PIOs, develops educational materials and creates networking opportunities for them, and provides direct support to the work they are doing. For this event, the JRIP helped the court design a press release and invite the media to attend. Over twenty journalists and reporters covered the visit.



E-Budgeting Means Efficiency, Accuracy and Transparency

A year and a half after its launch, e-Budgeting is seen as an invaluable tool by those who prepare and monitor the national budget. E-Budgeting was developed for the Ministry of Finance as an electronic means that provides efficient and standardized procedures which significantly improve communication and coordination among all participating institutions.

USAID's e-Government project, which works to increase the efficiency and transparency of the public sector, launched

the system in June, 2007, with the goal of achieving better transparency, analysis and planning of the state budget and monitoring of spending. E-Budgeting has already been used for the 2008 and 2009 National Budgets.

In March 2009, e-Government completed an evaluation of e-Budgeting, surveying members of the Ministry of Finance as well as representatives of the 65 state institutions that directly use the system. The study found that the majority of users are very satisfied with this new way to process budget requests. They find the application useful, easy to use, and time-saving. In fact, while it previously took some two months to collect all budget requests, the e-Budgeting system allows this phase to be completed in a mere two days.

Users noted they now have the extremely beneficial ability to run computerized test scenarios when creating the budget, as well as whenever needed. The evaluation found that the accuracy of the budget drafting process has considerably increased compared to the previous system which was based on Excel spreadsheets. Human errors have been radically reduced and any errors that do occur can now be easily corrected. In addition, due to accurate and up-to-date information, budget analysts' monitoring of spending has improved significantly.

Of particular note is the fact that e-Budgeting has made it possible to publish the National Budget on the Parliament web site for public access, which greatly contributes to the increased transparency of the revision process.

Overall, e-Budgeting users are very satisfied with the tool, so much so that they now want the system to expand to include additional functions, such as document management and treasury applications. In addition to producing a more efficient and transparent budget process, e-Budgeting is serving as a clear demonstration of the applicability and benefits of information and communications technology.

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