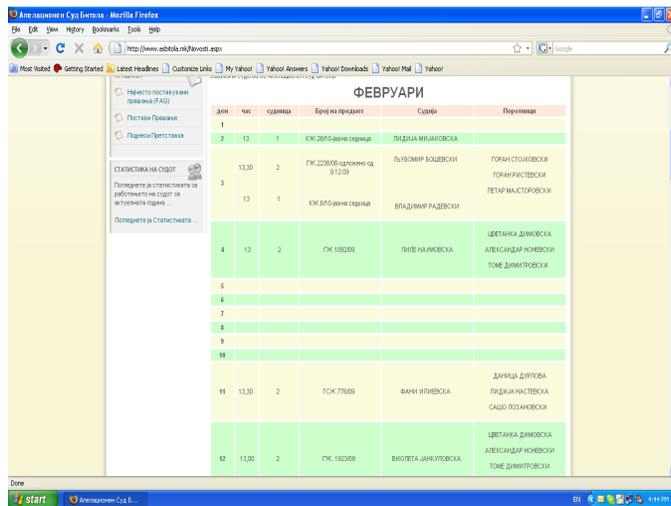




NEWSLETTER April 2010

Computerization of the Judiciary Reduces Backlogs



For people involved in a court case in the Basic Court in Kocani or the Appellate Courts in Bitola or Stip, it is now possible to find out when the trial is scheduled, up to two months in advance, in the privacy of one's home using a personal computer. The information available includes the exact date, time, the appointed judge and lay judges. Moreover, all changes in the schedules will automatically be posted on each court's website, so individuals can easily learn when changes have been made.

These data are generated directly from the new Automated Court Case Management and Information System (ACCMIS), which became a reality in all courts in Macedonia on January 1st, 2010, through the support of the USAID Judicial Reform Implementation Project (JRIP). In addition to helping individuals get information about their cases, the new system will have a long lasting positive influence on the judiciary. It completely automates the flow of court cases, thereby simplifying case processing and reducing its duration. ACCMIS has contributed to the reduction of the number of backlogged cases, which has been one of the biggest problems in the judicial system. The system has standardized processing and nomenclatures on a central level, enables easy access to important information and legislation related to cases, and provides for automatic report generation, while improving the protection and security of the data.

According to Judge Stojance Ribarev, President of the Appellate Court in Stip, "ACCMIS has proved to be a very important management tool in our everyday work. It provides for accurate and updated documentation of all court cases, which enables us to closely monitor the case flow and urge timely court decisions. It also offers information on the activities of judges and court administration, and help us optimize the use of our human resources."

Through the use of ACCMIS, JRIP is helping to increase the transparency and accountability of judges and courts, which should lead to citizens' increased confidence in the judiciary.

Energy Efficiency Improvements Lead to Cost Savings

The USAID Macedonia Local Government Activity Project (MLGA) assists municipalities learning to manage the assets they gained through decentralization, such as ownership of public buildings previously owned by the central government. After years of minimal maintenance, many buildings are leaking heat, wasting electricity, and costing the taxpayers of Macedonia a bundle. In many cases, operating costs were three to ten times higher than comparable U.S. and European standards.



Working with Energy Conservation Services International (ENSI), MLGA is helping municipalities like Karposh develop a Municipal Energy Efficiency Plan (MEEP). MEEPs help local governments to understand their operating costs and plan capital investments that improve conditions, reduce energy consumption, and save money. A team comprised of municipal staff now audits energy efficiency in municipal buildings and develops realistic plans for funding energy efficiency upgrades based on actual and projected costs.

The Jan Amos Komenski School in Karposh undertook capital improvements to rebuild a structure destroyed by fire, and to increase the school's size. These renovations were partially funded through a loan secured under the USAID Development Credit Authority program, which provides guarantees for funding of energy efficient infrastructure projects in municipalities. In the first year, results showed that the school's heating costs were reduced by over 10%, and energy costs by over 36%.

The Komenski School's total energy operating cost savings in the first year were over \$13,680, but total adjusted savings were closer to \$19,500, given that heating and electricity prices nationwide increased 12% and 10% respectively during this period. Overall, the first year cost efficiency of all improvements exceeded MEEP estimates. In addition to significant operating cost reduction, MEEP improvements also enhance environmental conditions in schools, use less energy while increasing the brightness of public street lights, and reduce carbon emissions.

"We are very proud of the efficiency improvements we've made at the J.A. Komenski school, which would not have been possible without the assistance of USAID" said Stevce Jakimovski, Mayor of Karpos Municipality. "Our students and teachers benefit greatly from the improved facilities, and our taxpayers benefit from reduced operating costs. This is a great example of good government at work, not only for Karposh, but for all of Macedonia."

Improving municipal management capacity is a critical strategy for successful decentralization in Macedonia, helping to improve conditions today, save taxpayers money in the future, and reduce the environmental impact of energy use.

USAID Helps Macedonian Apparel Companies Partner with EU Buyers



Twenty-nine of Macedonia's leading apparel manufacturers met and discussed export deals with a group of buyers from the United Kingdom, Austria and Germany at the first Macedonia – EU Apparel Business to Business (B2B) event on March 2nd. The USAID Competitiveness Project organized the event in a joint effort with the Dutch Center for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), the German Technical Cooperation (GTZ), the Swiss Import Promotion Program (SIPPO), and the Macedonia Textile Trade Association (TTA).

The B2B started with a day of one-on-one pre-matched meetings, with more than 130 meetings taking place overall. The event was followed by more than 50 factory visits over the next three days, based on the outcomes of B2B meetings. Buyers included Topshop, Monsoon, Triumph, BMB Clothing, Whistles, Archive Design and Albiro, all of which are interested in extending their supplier base with Macedonian apparel producers.

“The Macedonian apparel industry is moving away from CMT (cut-make-trim) towards production of value added apparel products. For this initiative to succeed, it is essential to identify and pursue new markets” said Natasa Sivevska, Executive Director of Textile Trade Association. “This B2B event, bringing new potential buyers from the United Kingdom and other countries, is a catalyst for the transition towards full package production.”

Leoni Barrie, a journalist who covered the B2B for the Just-Style.com business blog, wrote “The idea is a simple one: take more than 20 Macedonian apparel companies and put them in a room together with buyers from the UK, Austria and Germany. If it felt a bit like matchmaking, that's probably because it was..... Joking aside, it really is a brilliant way to meet a new manufacturing partner, and an idea that would surely be welcomed if it was adopted in more countries.”

The Competitiveness Project works closely with Macedonian companies in the targeted - apparel, light manufacturing, and information and communication technology (ICT) sectors to help them identify new buyers and meet their specific demands. The Project supports companies' participation in trade fairs and B2B events, improves productivity, assists in the adoption of international standards, and facilitates access to new finance. These initiatives lead to new jobs and increased value added exports, thereby building stronger and more competitive companies. The Macedonia – EU Apparel B2B is expected to become an annual event.

USAID Newsflash



USAID Fosters Internships in Macedonia - Over 4,300 people visited the e-Career Fair which took place from March 15-19, organized by the National Internship and Job Placement Program of the USAID Competitiveness Project. The Fair, only the second of its kind in the region, offered exclusive job and internship advertisements, virtual stands of 45 companies, and had more than 25 hours of live programs, including chat sessions with managers of well-known companies and representatives of universities and vocational schools, plus the opportunity for students and job seekers to talk to interns and colleagues that were employed as a result of their internships. During the Fair, 985 new students registered on the portal www.mycareer.com.mk, which now has over 6,300 students and 290 companies participating, and can boast 729 internships placed in its first year, with 126 interns retained for employment following their internships.

E-Gov Applications Win MASIT Awards - Two applications developed by the USAID e-Gov Project won awards for best e-solution in public administration at the ICT Excellence Awards organized by MASIT (the Macedonia ICT Chamber of Commerce) in February. EXIM, the single window for export/import licenses and tariff quotas, took first place, and the integrated e-Procurement system took second. Both will go on, as nominees of MASIT, to compete in the Global ICT Excellence Awards organized by the World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) in Amsterdam in May. The WITSA Awards program aims at identifying the most outstanding users of information and communications technology.

Launch of New Project: Equal Access for Equal Opportunities - On March 24, USAID launched a new program to increase opportunities for primary school students with disabilities in Macedonia. The program "Equal Access for Equal Opportunities" will promote the use of assistive technology as a tool for improving the quality of education of students with disabilities in the regular school environment. The association Open the Windows will implement this two-year program, targeting 20 schools that have students with disabilities. They will assess the needs of students with disabilities in primary schools, provide assistive devices and train teachers at the schools in how to use assistive technology.



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The American people, through USAID, have invested nearly \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is implementing projects that create jobs, reduce corruption, and prepare Macedonian students for the workforce. These initiatives improve the quality of life and support Macedonia's transition to a stable and prosperous democracy. USAID provides economic and humanitarian assistance in more than 100 countries. For more information about USAID programs on economic growth, education, democracy and governance, please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.