

PRESS RELEASE

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USAID Communications office
+389 2 310 2314;
Cell phone: +389 (0)70 367 547
Email: bvelickovska@usaid.gov

Contact at the project +389 2 3068-630
Cell phone: +389 (0)70 514 631
Email: margarita.gulevska@openthewindows.org

Inclusive Education Through Assistive Technology

Today, the USAID Equal Access for Equal Opportunities project held a roundtable on “Assistive Technology Use in Mainstream Primary Schools: Experiences and Practices.” The roundtable, organized in cooperation with the Municipality of Karpos, brought together teachers, school directors, parents and representatives of education-focused NGOs to review the initial positive experiences of eight primary schools from Skopje and Veles and the benefits teachers found in using assistive technology in their daily work with students with disabilities.

“Together with our partner schools, we have demonstrated that assistive technology can improve the education of students with disabilities,” said LeAnna Marr, USAID Education Office Director. “USAID is proud to have supported yet another innovative educational project in Macedonia that contributes to a modern and inclusive educational system.”

In his opening remarks, the Mayor of Karpos, Stevce Jakimovski, stressed the municipality’s support for improving the educational opportunities of children with disabilities. “We are proud that two schools from Karpos were selected among 21 nation-wide to make the pioneering steps in introducing assistive technology in education.” He noted that the municipality had provided funds to procure assistive computer devices for a first-grade student from one of the schools.

USAID’s Equal Access for Equal Opportunities project will hold two more regional roundtables in Vinica and Krusevo by mid-March. The project, implemented by the Open the Windows association from Skopje, works to improve the inclusiveness of the education system for *all* children and to modernize the education system by introducing information technology in the everyday instructional process. A total of 21 primary schools were equipped and trained in using assistive technology in the instruction.

NOTE TO EDITORS:

The Open the Windows association is dedicated to promoting access to information technology for individuals with disabilities, enabling them to fully exploit their abilities. For details, please visit: (www.openthewindows.org). USAID is proud to partner with Open the Windows. Worldwide, USAID is increasing funding to local organizations to build their capacity and ensure their sustainability over the long term. USAID Macedonia has, in fact, increased the amount going to Macedonian NGOs from \$700,000 in fiscal year 2010 to \$3.4 million in fiscal year 2011. We plan to continue increasing this amount over the next few years.

The American people, through USAID, have invested over \$500 million in Macedonia since 1993. USAID is working with the people of Macedonia to create jobs, strengthen democratic institutions and practices, enhance integrated education, and prepare 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 please visit <http://macedonia.usaid.gov>.