



ANNUAL REPORT ON IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES

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EUROPEAN POLICY INSTITUTE (EPI) – SKOPJE

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CONTEXT

The context for advocating EU policy related reforms has greatly changed during the year in Macedonia. The new, more positive spirit in the relations between the European Commission and the Government has alleviated the mistrust visible the year before. The changed relations of the partners through the High Level Accession Dialogue did not bring an inclusive participation of civil society; the inclusiveness was more declarative, than real. Many actors in the civil sector were confused with the new approach and saw it as an attack on the reformists. In this situation, it was very important to assess the situation and predict the next moves realistically and timely. We consider that even within this context EPI succeeded in paving its way to the public scene.

MAIN ACTIVITIES 2012

EPI begun the year of 2012 with the preparation and the publication of the Analysis: **Republic of Macedonia – Adoption of EU Norms: Inertia in Limbo**. EPI published the study on the occasion of the adoption of the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis for 2012 and the discussion in the National Council for Euro-integration (NCEI) and the Committee on European Affairs of the Assembly. The publication provided comprehensive and in-depth analysis of NPAA's content, focusing on the envisaged measures and activities to address EC recommendations in 2011 EC Progress Report. The Analysis provided a follow up on SAA and EPI's 2011 Conference on the 10 year anniversary of the SAA. It also provided elaborations and recommendations on the HLAD, which then was just initiated. The conclusions and the recommendations of the Analysis were discussed within the NCEI and were distributed to all members in the Council for further deliberations. It also served as a basis for preparation of the representative of CSO's at the NCEI's debate. The wide outreach of the publication set EPI as one of media's resource centre on EU affairs.

Moreover, particular media visibility was achieved since the beginning of the High-Level Accession Dialogue (HLAD). Since March 2012, EPI's Director Dr. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova was regularly consulted on HLAD matters. Dr. Jordanova received a regular slot in the daily newspaper "Nova Makedonija" as a columnist and commentator on HLAD's progress. The comments provided were intended to provide a critical, yet realistic overview of Government's activities in implementation of HLAD priorities. Moreover, due to the wide unfamiliarity of the public and the media on HLAD implications on the overall accession process, EPI managed to provide expert and analytical information in this regard. Its involvement in HLAD monitoring culminated with the organization of the Workshop "Dialogue on Accession Dialogue" which was hosted under OSI TTF programme. The workshop was opened by the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of EU Affairs Dr. Teuta Arifi which used the occasion to report on the implemented activities of the Government in terms of HLAD and to demonstrate inclusiveness of the process thorough inclusion of the civil society. EPI's overview of the process initiated several internal debates on the issue, whereby EPI's Director was guest on many TV shows covering EU Affairs. The media coverage of EPI is regularly registered on EPI's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/EPI.Skopje>.

Greatest visibility and influence was achieved on the occasion of the publication of 2012 EC Progress Report on Macedonia. On the basis of a prepared quantitative analysis on the Progress Report, EPI was able to satisfy the media demand for information and analytical approach on the implications of the political conclusion regarding the future of the accession process of Macedonia. EPI by the media is regarded as an objective commentator on the Macedonian EU agenda by adopting and promoting fresh, innovative and balanced approach in promoting its views and stands in this regard. This was particularly demonstrated when both EPI's Director Dr. Jordanova

and EPI's Programme Coordinator Mr. Jovanoski were guests on two different TV shows on the eve of the publication of the progress report.

EPI also provided a comprehensive written input to the Delegation of the European Commission on the IPA Component I Programming exercise for 2012-2013, advocating for more overall consistency of the Programme and clearer setting priorities and objectives. EPI also participated in the debate on the same issue, as well as in the consultation of the Delegation on the monitoring process for the 2012 Progress report.

In November 2012, EPI published a collection of studies "The Use of EU Funds in the Republic of Macedonia – Efficiency, Impact and Absorption Capacity." The study served as ground for a public hearing within the National Council for Euro-integration, which was announced as first among several events on raising the internal parliamentary debate on the use of EU funds. Moreover, the practical impact of the study led to increasing the parliamentary scrutiny over the matter with the first report to be submitted by the Government on the use of EU funds since 2009.

Within the SlovakAid project, a policy paper "Europeanization of the Public Administration through Implementing of the Common Assessment Framework." was developed and presented at a Conference. The paper was also included in the Collection of Selected Policy Papers published by the Slovak Balkan Public Policy Fund (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/106785771/Slovak-Balkan-Public-Policy-Fund-Collection-of-Selected-Policy-Papers>).

Workshop "Dialogue on the Accession Dialogue"

On 12.07.2012, the European Policy Institute (EPI) organized one day workshop on the progress made in terms of the High Level Accession Dialogue (HLAD). The main objective of this event was to initiate an internal debate among the relevant stakeholders in the accession process of the Republic of Macedonia to the European Union. The concept behind the workshop was to host an informal event for enabling mutual discussion, debate and flow of information on all the areas under HLAD between the representatives of the Government and the civil society sector. The event was attended by around 40 participants, representing different stakeholders relevant to the accession process. The participants, according to their interest, were divided in five (5) working groups reflecting each of the HLAD's areas. The participants made thorough analysis of the Roadmap of Government of the Republic of Macedonia for realization of the activities under HLAD, reflected on the implemented measures by the Government and provided recommendations for further improvement of the process, with particular accent on the necessary involvement of the civil society. For photo coverage of the event, please see: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/79169256@N07/sets/72157630664935392/>.

The key note speaker of the event was Dr. Teuta Arifi, the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of European Affairs. According to Dr. Arifi, HLAD represented an inclusive process which demands high participation of the civil society in order to contribute towards the implementation of the activities envisaged in the Roadmap. In her opening speech, Arifi focused on the activities of the Government regarding the decriminalization of the defamation, implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the electoral reform. Moreover, the Director of EPI, Dr. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova noted that HLAD already has a positive connotation in the Macedonian public in an uncertain environment on the future of the accession negotiations and the blocked second phase of the Stabilization and Association Agreement. In addition, Dr. Jordanova stated that HLAD should not be simplified to a process of just ticking boxes for implemented activities, but to make a real use out of it in terms of raising the level of internal debate which will consolidate the process internally.

The impact of the conducted workshop goes in line with the first set of conclusions adopted between the European Union and the Republic of Macedonia on the launching of HLAD in March, 2012. EPI positioned in the core of the monitoring process of all activities undertaken by the Government in implementing HLAD priorities. The first intend was to host the workshop after the

Government adopted the Roadmap in early April; however the event had to be postponed due to last minute cancelation by the DPM Arifi and the Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Nikola Poposki. However, this was additional stimuli for even fiercer monitoring of Government's activities which finally resulted in the organization of the workshop.

The event had wide media coverage, in addition to the official reference to the workshop on the web sites of the Government and the Secretariat for European Affairs (<http://vlada.mk/node/3890?language=en-gb>). It is interesting to note that the event was used to show inclusiveness of the entire process, with particular involvement in the civil society in this regard, thus fostering an internal debate on HLAD. For the organization of the event, EPI was credited in all major electronic media (including the web-site of all major TV station in Macedonia). It is interested to note that the coverage was quite extensive, including pro-Government media (such as Sitel, Kurir, etc - <http://kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/77602-Arifi-Dijalogot-na-visoko-nivo-golema-moznost-za-razdvizuvanje-na-graganskiot-sektor> and http://sitel.com.mk/dnevnik/makedonija/arifi-dijalogot-na-visoko-nivo-ke-go-razdvizi-graganskiot-sektor?utm_source=daily.mk) including the national broadcaster – Macedonian Radio Television (http://www.mtv.com.mk/mk/vesti/makedonija/54646/arifi_dijalogot_na_visoko_nivo_kje_go_razdvizhi_graganskiot_sektor.aspx?utm_source=daily.mk). In addition, all major news agencies reported on the event with a tile "The High Level Accession Dialogue will stimulate the civil society sector." This text appeared on the Macedonian Informative Agency (MIA), Makfax, e-News, TIME.mk, etc. From the text two particular statements given by DPM Arifi and EPI's Director Dr. Ristevska Jordanova were quoted - Dr. Arifi's statement that " [she is] convinced that the high-level dialogue represents a big opportunity for us, taking into consideration it can stimulate not only the administration, but also the Parliament and the civil society as well", and Dr. Jordanova's that "'Our [EPI's] goal is to contribute towards turning the process on ourselves, i.e. for the dialogue to contribute to our internal dialogue, among Macedonian stakeholders."

The Report of the discussion (in Macedonian language) can be accessed on: <http://epi.org.mk/docs/>.

I. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

MATRA project financed by the Royal Dutch Embassy in the Republic of Macedonia: "SUPPORT TO IMPROVEMENT IMPLEMENTATION OF MEDIATION IN MACEDONIA" (7 December 2011 – 7 December 2012)

The project "Support to improvement of implementation of mediation in Macedonia" was launched on December 7 (Project budget approved: \$123.000). As reported, a wide range of activities were realised within the Project until the end of April. A coordinative body was formed responsible for oversight of the project.

A Gap-finding mission was conducted in January 2012, upon which a report was prepared outlining the main weaknesses and challenges. A Table of Correspondence of Macedonian law with the Directive 32008L0052 on certain aspects of mediation in civil and commercial matters was prepared. A research project on perceptions and views of mediators on mediation was commissioned, which identified the main problems facing which mediators are facing and the possible remedies. In March EPI organized two day workshop on developing an Action Plan for promotion of mediation, including a communication programme. Outputs of the workshop were the Draft Action plan on development of mediation and Plan for promotion and communication of

mediation. The Action plan submitted by the Ministry of Justice was adopted by the Government in April.

In May, numbers of crucial activities were realized. Training for judges took place at the Academy of training of judges and public prosecutors which was attended by 11 participants who received certificates. A Refreshment training of mediators was held on 12 and 13 May 2012 in the Faculty of Philosophy/ University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius" in Skopje. In total, 65 mediators were awarded certificates for participation. A Round Table "Mediation in Macedonia - How to proceed?" was held on 16th of May 2012 in the hotel Aleksandar Palace. The round table was opened by the Dutch ambassador in Skopje H.E Mariett Shuurman and the Minister of Justice Mr. Blerim Bexheti and two representatives from the Asser Institute/The Hague attended the round table. There were 68 participants – mediators, representatives from the ministries, courts, foreign representations, academia, Chambers of commerce and NGOs. The round table covered three themes: State of affairs - Concept and vision for mediation; Mediation and the courts and Open issues, possibilities. The conclusions of the Round Table were distributed to the participants and to all mediators.

In order to implement the Plan for promotion and communication of mediation a focus group was created consisting of representatives from EPI, Ministry of Justice, mediators, promotion expert and designer of promotion materials. After series of consultation meetings were held, the promotion materials were prepared and published in mid June. The prepared flyers were distributed through the Appellate courts for their areas and substantial numbers of flyers were distributed to the Basic Court - Civil Court Skopje II. A web page for mediation (www.kmrm.mk) was also created and launched by the end of June. Additionally, promotion activities took place in Gostivar, Tetovo, Bitola and Stip in June, and in Kumanovo in October. On these events were presented the benefits of mediation over litigation, the web site on mediation and conveyed some messages over prioritising mediation

Evaluation and monitoring workshop was held on 21 and 22 June 2012 in Skopje organised for the representatives of the Ministry of Justice, Coordinative body and mediators. As output of the workshop a Manual on evaluation on monitoring was prepared and adopted in August. A specific Programme for support to mediation, including budgetary implications, was elaborated and included in the Draft Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Justice.

The Action Plan for improving of mediation was adopted with Conclusion of the Government as a means to overcome the problems in the field of mediation, according to which the Ministry of justice was committed for fulfilling several crucial activities. EPI also successfully advocated for inclusion of mediation in the Strategic Plan of the Ministry, including budgets. One of the measures defined in the Action Plan for mediation was state subsidies for the first four hours of mediation.

A Decision to subsidize mediation starting from 2013 was adopted by the Government in October. This was very important achievement for the project as it is aimed at ensuring citizens on the benefits of the mediation in practice, without having to suffer certain financial implications. Furthermore it demonstrates a commitment of the Government to take measures for increasing awareness of the usefulness of mediation, increasing its scope in disputes resolution, and encouraging citizens to resolve disputes through mediation. By the end of the year, amendments to the Law on Mediation and the Law on Free Legal Aid are foreseen to be drafted in order to define conditions and criteria for subsidizing mediation by the government (The framework for amendments of the laws cover the financial costs of the mediation for realisation of maximum first 4 hours of the mediation at the hourly cost from 15 to 25 Euros per hour, for mediation before commencing litigation in court).

On the 26.10.2012 EPI in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice and CVC/Netherlands held a round table "Quality standards of mediation in Macedonia." Subject of discussion at the round table was the Draft Manual on quality of mediation in Macedonia, which was previously prepared by Dutch experts. Participants to the roundtable were mediators, representatives of ministries, chambers etc.

The project activities will continue in the upcoming months. In agreement with the Dutch Embassy the project was granted an extension until April 2013. The activities in this regard are reflected in the Working Programme for 2013. Numbers of activities are foreseen in the forthcoming period such as support to drafting legislative and institutional changes, additional promotional events, preparation of final publication and a final conference.

Programme on Monitoring EU funds (IPA Monitor) – Multiannual Programme

The increased interest of the Members of Parliament, civil society and the media, on one side, and the lack of synthesised, structured and regular information on the use of EU funds, on the other side, have instigated EPI to establish a Programme on Monitoring EU funds (IPA Monitor). The Programme is conceptualised as a regular multi-annual activity of the Institute. It will entail a web-based monitoring tool, briefings, studies, and policy recommendations. Moreover, the consultation on the needs of the National Council for Euro-integration, as an important body for the EU accession process (which consists of representatives of the civil society, in addition to MPs) indicated that implementation of IPA was one of its key issues of interest.

Project: Study "Use of EU Funds in Macedonia, in cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung – Skopje

In cooperation with the Friedrich Ebert Foundation – Skopje, EPI conducted a research study to assess the efficiency and impact of the use of the pre-accession funds in Macedonia (IPA), and to evaluate Macedonia's absorption capacities. The study was composed of five case studies (per IPA component), as well as one study on the absorption capacities of Republic of Macedonia for EU funds. A cooperation and mentorship was provided from relevant foreign experts from the new EU member states dealing with the topic. The results from the research were presented at a public hearing in the National Council for European Integration. Final publication will be prepared and will be presented on a final conference. EPI and FES – Skopje signed a Memorandum for cooperation on the Project. The first phase of the Project is covered by a budget of 8043 USD, managed by FES.

The studies were prepared by local experts who responded to a public call for researchers that EPI launched in April in two daily newspapers and disseminated to relevant institutions. A call for the two foreign experts was also prepared and disseminated to targeted institutions as well as individual researchers from the "New Member States". According to the project timetable, at the beginning of November compiled the collection of studies "***The Use of EU Funds in Macedonia – Efficiency, Impact and Absorption Capacity.***"

The public hearing on the results of the publication was held on 5 November 2012 in the National Council for European Integration (NCEI) in the Assembly of Republic of Macedonia (<http://www.sobranie.mk/default.asp?ItemID=E7D088CCF8949A4E96C97754FDE9FF42>).

The hearing was chaired by the president of the Council, Ms. Radmila Sekerinska. The key speakers were the two foreign experts - Mr. Mojmir Mrak and Mr. Martin Valentovic who presented the benefits and challenges of the EU funds and the lessons learned from their respective countries (Slovenia and Slovakia). The main findings of the studies were presented by EPI's director Ms. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova, followed by additional explanatory notes by the researchers who were part of the research team. The public hearing received extensive media coverage and it was reported in most of the media outlets (television, daily and online newspapers). The study and the hearing had a practical policy impact on the matter and raised

open debate in the Parliament. The Secretariat for European Affairs (the office of the National IPA Coordinator) which had not submitted a report on the use of EU funds in Macedonia to the Assembly since 2009, committed to prepare and submit a Report by the end of November as a response to the public hearing initiated by EPI's publication. Due to the sensitivity of the discussed issues, the parliamentary majority (VMRO-DPMNE and DUI) proposed different date for the public hearing on justification grounds that the Deputy Prime Minister for EU Affairs Dr. Teuta Arifi was not able to attend the public hearing due to already scheduled activities. Besides the attempt to postpone the event, the President of the NCEI Ms. Sekerinska announced that this particular public hearing as the first out of several scheduled hearings on the issue of EU funds and proceeded with the event. As a result, a thematic session on the Report by the Government was announced for the beginning of December 2012. In addition, on the basis of the collection of studies, EPI prepared a policy paper as a basis for the discussion on the Government's Report on the use of EU funds. The recommendations from the research studies will be also presented at the session.

The Project is planned to continue in cooperation with FES. Conference for dissemination of the publication's result is envisaged, in addition to several thematic workshops for each IPA component at the beginning of 2013.

EPI was granted a *BTD Project IPA DATA*, with the aim of improving transparency of IPA funds in Macedonia and will shortly start to implement it together with the project partner METAMORPHOSIS - Macedonia.

“Parliamentary scrutiny of EU funds in the Republic of Macedonia” – Think and Link Programme by the European Fund for the Balkans (May 2012 – January 2013)

Within the framework of this Programme, EPI proposed a research study on “Parliamentary scrutiny of EU funds in the Republic of Macedonia” to the annual call under the Think and Link Programme of the European Fund for the Balkans (EFB) for 2012. In April 2012, the EFB granted financial support to EPI under the Think and Link Programme (19.270 USD). The project activities began in May 2012 with a capacity building seminar held in Budva, Montenegro. Both, the main researcher Mr. Aleksandar Jovanoski and the project assistant Ms. Biljana Stojanoska, attended the event. The second capacity building event envisaged by Think and Link Programme will take in November in Belgrade, Serbia. The main output of the project is preparation of an inclusive evidence-based study regarding EU's best practices and regional experiences in terms of parliamentary scrutiny over the use of EU funds.

The research objectives are: to provide evidence on EU best practices of parliament's scrutiny of use of EU funds, with focus on New Member States; to identify the existing gaps and obstacles preventing efficient scrutiny by the Macedonian Parliament of the use of EU funds; and to assess the feasibility for establishment of effective monitoring mechanisms of EU funds by the Parliament. The project will contribute to improving transparency of use of EU funds, as it will exert more pressure and encourage demand for accurate and timely information by Parliament, by civil society and media. The research results will be disseminated to the Parliament, as well as beyond the parliamentary structures. A round table with civil society and experts will be held on the policy paper, to present the findings of the study and to ensure consultation on the recommendations before their presentation to the Parliament bodies. In order to secure greater impact of the project, EPI will galvanise efforts with other agents present in the Assembly. In terms of the implementation, a study visit was conducted in Croatia with representatives from the Croatian Parliament and government institutions responsible for management/monitoring and reporting of EU funds. In addition, a study visit to Bulgaria will be conducted by the end of November. The project's policy paper with the recommendations will be published as a publication in January 2013 as in line with the contract agreement with EFB.

SlovakAid grant on research: 'Europeanization of administration through implementing the Common Assessment Framework'

In March 2012, EPI commenced with the implementation of the 'Europeanization of administration through implementing the Common Assessment Framework' Project, which was selected following a public call for proposals (budget: 5710 USD). The main focus of the project is Implementation of the Common Assessment Framework in Macedonia based on Slovakian experience. Although Macedonia has declared that it will use the CAF as a model for assessment, the CAF has not been widely used, besides some exemplary efforts (State Statistical Office). Its relevance is not recognised even in the context of the top priorities of the Government – economic development and providing better public service to the public.

During March and April 2012, a data base of available documents related to public administration reform and quality management models in Macedonia was completed, an analysis of the systematic assessment of Macedonia' administrative capacity was prepared, and a set of interviews was conducted with representatives from relevant institutions in the country. Furthermore a desk research on the implementation of the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) in EU countries was carried out, following a study trip in Slovakia. During the study trip interviews were conducted with the key experts involved in the process of implementation of the CAF in Slovakia (the head of the former Slovak Civil Service Office, the head of the Quality Department in the Office for Standards, Meteorology and Testing, and the CAF coordinator for Slovakia, the President of the Slovak Society for Quality), and a study visit was done at the Ministry for education, science, research and sport with for observing the practical use of CAF in the organization.

The research carried out in Macedonia and Slovakia, in comparative view, resulted in a policy paper with recommendations, which were presented on a Conference in June 2012. The conference was held in the State Statistical Office (which as an institution was included in the research), attended by 25 representatives of different state institutions, the academia, professional organizations and the civil society. With the presentation of the recommendations, as well as the positive experience of the CAF use in the State Statistical Office, and the benefits of CAF in comparison ISO standards, the conference raised the awareness among the key stakeholders of the Europeanization potential of CAF as a European quality management tool and raised the interest for its implementation.

Final policy paper incorporating the main findings, recommendations and conference conclusions was prepared, published and disseminated to the relevant stakeholders. The paper was also included in the Collection of Selected Policy Papers published by the Slovak Balkan Public Policy Fund (<http://www.scribd.com/doc/106785771/Slovak-Balkan-Public-Policy-Fund-Collection-of-Selected-Policy-Papers>).

Cooperation was established with the Ministry of Information Society and Administration and recommendations presented. EPI will follow the implementation. During the project evaluation by Pontis foundation and the Slovak Embassy in Skopje in October 2012, particular interest was expressed by the Slovak partners for continuous activities regarding the research. In this regard, through the Slovak Embassy in Skopje, EPI will attend to secure additional support for further activities. On the basis of the success of the research results and, EPI established excellent cooperation with the Slovak Embassy.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY

In the first few months of its operation activities, EPI's communication strategy was primarily focused on promoting the Institute among the policy makers, thus achieving higher level of visibility among the EU policy creators within national institutions, academia and civil sector. At

the same time, through an increased presence in the Macedonian media, EPI is presented also to the wider public. The EPI's web page is regularly updated in three languages: Macedonian, Albanian, and English. Most of the documents are also available in the three languages.

Other than the web page, EPI uses the social media tools for achieving visibility and outreach. Facebook page of EPI was created since the first days of its functioning and is regularly updated for promotion of EPI's activities, commentaries on contemporary issues, sharing of relevant articles related to the Euro-integration process and as well as for sharing the institute appearances in the media. The page has currently around 200 followers. Furthermore, a twitter page was also created: @epi_mk.

Lastly, EPI has been increasingly present in the Macedonian media, by providing expert knowledge and opinion on EU specific matters. In the past period, EPI's director had several news paper interviews, comments and appearances in thematic. Since March 2012, EPI was regularly contacted to provide expert opinion and commentaries on the occasion of the beginning of the High Level Accession Dialogue and on the readiness for opening negotiations. The approach and by the media in the reporting period revealed a specific niche that was not explored before by EPI. Journalists turn to EPI when they need expertise or information on EU affairs, which they most frequently fail to get from official sources, regardless of their positioning – pro-Government or pro-opposition.

In addition, the high visibility of EPI's analysis of the High Level Accession Dialogue was promoted in the daily newspaper Nova Makedonija, where EPI's director received a regular slot as a columnist regarding HLAD. The content of the columns was very well received and caused vivid debate on the proposed points of views. The author, Dr. Jordanova, on the basis of the columns was invited to guest of several TV debates regarding HLAD, thus achieving wide spectrum of outreach. During the whole cycle, 7 columns in total were delivered. Even though only available in Macedonian language, the content of the columns are available on-line¹.

One of the organizational high points was the period of the publication of the EC Progress Report on the Republic of Macedonia for 2012. On the eve of the publication of the Report, both director Dr. Jordanova and Mr. Jovanoski were invited in two separate TV debate shows on the expectations of the Progress Report. Dr. Jordanova was guest on TV Alfa "Pressing" show, while Mr. Jovanoski debated in the political debate show "With Chom" broadcasted by the Macedonian National Television (MTV). Moreover, on the basis of the prepared analysis on the EC Progress Report (named Screenshot of the EC 2012 Progress Report – link do web strana). EPI seized the opportunity with the publication of the progress report to position itself as one of the mayor sources of information (including commentaries and analysis) for the media. Quotations and direct references to the analysis provided by Dr. Jordanova were made in almost all media covering the issue. The trend of public appearances, interviews and commentaries by EPI's director and staff continued afterwards.

Mr. Aleksandar Jovanoski, Programme Coordinator at EPI and a fellow of the EFB Community, was invited by the European Fund for the Balkans to take part in first regional TV debate-show

¹ 9.05.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=5912930553&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22575>; 1.08.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=8112942146&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22645>; 8.8.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=8812932196&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22650>; 15.08.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=81512956365&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22656>; 29.08.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=8291291386&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22666>; 22.08.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=82212918267&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22661>; 5.09.2012 - <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/NewsDetal.asp?vest=9512918552&id=13&prilog=0&setlzdanie=22672>

“Vicinity” in Belgrade (<https://www.facebook.com/Okruzenje>). The TV show was attended by eminent experts from the region discussing topics related to the stereotypes in the Balkans, the current financial and economic crisis, the media and the Balkans versus the big powers. Mr. Jovanoski was one of the key speakers on the fifth and final show titled “Being young and being on the Balkans” (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9A4R8DmGpE>). Moreover, Mr. Jovanoski in October 2012 was one of the participants at the first regional EFB Community Conference (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/EFB-Community-Conference>). Mr. Jovanoski was one of the speakers on the Night Owl Sessions on the subject of “Is there a common public space in the Balkans.” Part of his discussion was quoted in Tim Judah’s article “Ex-Yugoslavs know why EU deserves a Nobel Prize”, available on: <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2012-10-14/ex-yugoslavs-know-why-eu-deserves-a-nobel-prize.html>.

Currently EPI is working on

PARTICIPATION AT INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Balkan Peer Exchange, 21.02.2012, Belgrade, Serbia

The non-conference, as organizers (European Fund for the Balkans, Open Society Foundation Think Tank Fund, Balkan Trust for Democracy and the National Endowment for Democracy) was a genuine opportunity to experience an innovative approach to exchange of experience and ideas among advocacy organizations and think tanks and donors. For EPI, the participation in the Conference was an encouragement for participants for innovative approaches, fresh and credible advocacy methods and in establishing their constituencies in the community and the region.

Debate for Macedonia in Brussels on the topic: "The path to EU and NATO - Where Are We?" 29.05.2012, Brussels, Belgium.

In the European office of the "Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung" in Brussels roundtable was held for Macedonia on the topic: "The path to EU and NATO - Where Are We?". EPI's Director Dr. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova attended this debate and shared her analysis on the accession perspective of Macedonia and the implications of the High Level Accession Dialogue on the consolidation of the European agenda. Moreover, the debate was also attended by Ms. Radmila Sekerinska - President of the National Council for European integration and Macedonian Ex-ambassador to the NATO, Mr. Nano Ruzin.

Sofia Forum for the Balkans - Shaping the Region's European Future, 08.06.2012, Sofia, Bulgaria

EPI's Director Dr. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova attended the Sofia Forum for the Balkan and participated at the on-going discussion on the European perspective of the Western Balkans region. The Sofia Forum for the Balkans gathered policy and opinion makers from the Balkans, together with their counterparts from the EU, the United States, the Middle East and North Africa, for in-depth discussions about key issues that, although regional in nature, concern Europe and the transatlantic relationship.

The forum analyzed the international policies towards the countries of the Western Balkans and region's compliance with the standards for European Union accession. It was concluded that Europe confronts the need for intense internal institutional and economic transformation; public debate in the Western Balkans has increasingly turned to issues divergent from the region's European agenda, for reasons related to the nature of political processes, economic difficulties, changing demographics, and the media environment. In this context, a reassessment of the policy agendas of the Western Balkan countries' policy agenda s, and the identification of alternative elites to revitalize the constructive, pro-European agenda in the region, is of great importance.

II. STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

Since EPI's establishment, the main acts of the organization were adopted, as well as a Rulebook for Admissions, Registry and Membership as well Plan for Documentation. Minor amendments to the Statute were done in November 2011 (http://epi.org.mk/docs/statut_epi_mk.pdf). In December, a team building was organized for all members for defining EPI's strategic priorities and drafting of the EPI Programme for 2012. After the completion of the workshop a Strategic plan was prepared outlining three main priorities: 1. Contribution in the creation and implementation of the EU policies in Macedonia; 2. Improving the level of public debates in the process of European integration of Macedonia; 3. Contribution in improvement of the regional cooperation in the area of European integration. In addition, in October 2012, EPI adopted the Working Programme for 2013 and Monitoring and Evaluation Plan for the Working Programme (in Annex).

In March 2012, the Supervisory Board held a meeting after which Assembly was held with all members present. The Supervisory Board reviewed and adopted the Report on EPI's activities for 2012, the Financial Report for 2011 and the draft Programme of EPI for 2012. All documents were recommended for adoption to the Assembly. Following the recommendations of the Supervisory Board; the Assembly of EPI in March 2012 adopted the approved Reports and EPI Working Programme for 2012. The composition of the Supervisory Board and the Management Board remains the same.

Since the European Policy Institute (EPI) was granted the OSI TTF grant, a Director and two Programme Coordinators were employed. Moreover, with the selection of EPI's application for 2012 Think and Link Programme by the European Fund for the Balkans and allocation of additional financial resources for the functioning of the Institute for 2012, EPI was enabled to contract an additional staff member for the Programme on use of European Union funds in the Republic of Macedonia. Therefore, for the period of six months, EPI managed to establish a solid human resources base for smooth and unimpeded implementation of the planned activities for 2012.

Core staff:

- Dr. Malinka Ristevska Jordanova, Director and President of the Management Board
- Mr. Aleksandar Jovanoski, MA, Programme Coordinator
- Ms. Ardita Imeri Abazi, LLM, Programme Coordinator
- Ms. Biljana Stojanoska, MA, Project Coordinator (contracted by FES/EFB)

Aware on the importance of fostering activism and volunteerism, in the projects financed by SlovakAid and the European Fund for the Balkans EPI hired two volunteers, one per project. Both volunteers began their engagement in April 2012. Their contracts ended in June 2012. EPI in its programme planning will continue with the allocation of resources to additionally support engagement of volunteers, a value entrenched in the philosophy of the European Policy Institute. Since July 2012, Mr. Predrag Ivanovski has been engaged as a volunteer under EFB project (his contract is due to January 2013).

EPI subscribed to the Macedonian National Library for ISBN numbering and CIP catalogue for its publications.

Financial procedures were established and applied.

² http://epi.org.mk/docs/godishen_izveshtaj_za_rabota_na_epi_2011_finalno.pdf

Training

EPI seized the opportunities for capacity raising through other projects, especially to tackle the identified weaknesses and challenges – developing and implementing an advocacy and communication strategy, introducing new and innovative actions, approaching donors, etc.

Technical Assistance to the Civil Society, project funded by the European Union

In April 2012, EPI submitted an application to the call announced by TACSO (Technical Assistance to Civil Society Organisations, a project funded by the European Union) on additional strengthening of the organizational and institutional capacities of the Institute. EPI's staff will participate in all activities under the project which are to be implemented by the end of 2012. The capacity building trainings begun in October 2012. Since then, the following training modules were attended by EPI's staff: First module (8-9.10.2012) – Administrative and financial management of organization, legal environment for functioning of NGO sector and budgeting; Second module (15-16.10.2012) – Public relations and communication strategy; Third module (15-16.11.2012) - Advocacy and lobbying for civil society organisations.

National Democratic Institute for international affairs (NDI) programme of strengthening of the civil society participation in the legislative process in the Republic of Macedonia.

The European Policy Institute is part of NDI's programme for new initiatives on the integration of the Republic of Macedonia into the EU, though fostering activities in the democratic development of the country. The project will be implemented until March 2013, with a possibility for additional cooperation and joint activities with NDI and other partner organizations.

The main objective of the project is to strengthen the existing capacities of the CSOs in the areas of legislative lobbying, representation and monitoring, as well as coalition building between the CSO sector and the members of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia. The NDI project will aid the European Policy Institute in four ways: Support of EPI's engagement in the legislative activities of the Assembly (particularly legislative activities deriving from the accession process of the country and the implementation of the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis by fostering direct monitoring and scrutiny over the entire process); Coalition building and effective communication with the citizens on the realization of EPI's activities and objectives; Development of thematic cooperation between the EPI (as part of the NGO sector) and the members of the Assembly, Assembly's committees and political parties; Thematic training on organizational development (through organization of seminars and direct mentorship throughout the duration of the project).

As part of the project activities, EPI's staff attended two capacity building seminars (in September and in November) on lobbying and representation, communication strategy with the Assembly and PR strategies (with special focus on utilization of social media tools).

Furthermore, as EPI was facilitating the development of the Monitoring and evaluation plan on Mediation, this was used as an opportunity for training of EPI's staff's.