
Report on Republic of Macedonia's actions towards the recommended promotion of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace

INTRODUCTION

Republic of Macedonia is investing significant resources and efforts in building information society. It can be easily acknowledged by the volume of implemented projects, as well as the ones that are in progress, or planned for the future. The Ministry of Information Society has been established by the Government as an institution that will create e-development strategies and manage ICT projects. Its area of responsibilities covers almost every aspect mentioned in the Recommendations concerning the promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace.

The Report on the measures taken by Republic of Macedonia in implementing the Recommendation concerning promotion and use of multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace is organized according to the guidelines for preparation of reports by member states to the General Conference. For each recommendation, proper past, ongoing and future projects and activities are outlined, covering the specific provisions of the Recommendation.

I. DEVELOPMENT OF MULTILINGUAL CONTENT AND SYSTEMS

- Please furnish detailed information explaining what measures have been taken to alleviate language barriers. This information should also cover whether any support has been given to capacity-building for the production of local and indigenous content on the Internet.*
- Please describe the measures taken for formulating appropriate national policies on the issues of language survival in cyberspace.*

Computer for every child

“Computer for Every Child” Project was one of the biggest investments in the field of education in Republic of Macedonia. This project provided the following equipment according to categories:

- 1st to 3rd grade elementary school – 52.000 Classmate PC’s,
- 4th to 9th grade elementary school – 107.000 work stations (thin clients),
- High schools – 55.000 work stations,
- Teachers – 22.000 notebooks,
- In addition - 808 printers, 564 LCD projectors and 433 multifunctional devices.

The aforementioned equipment was sufficient All elementary and high schools were covered with this equipment, so now there is a computer on the desk of every pupil in the country. This equipment is used as a supplementary and supportive tool in the education process.

The logistics activities in the schools are already completed. The schools now have totally new communication infrastructure. Free internet is available in all elementary and high schools.

Also trainings for teachers were carried out, with the purpose to include them in both teaching and building information society processes. Software tools were localized in Macedonian and Albanian language. They were adjusted to the EduBuntu operating system which is used in the schools. These tools are used for educational purposes.

With the purpose to promote the educational software and to provide opportunity for all participants in the educational process to gain basic knowledge in this area, a serial of 40 episodes on Macedonian and Albanian language was broadcasted. These episodes can be accessed on the web portal of the Ministry of Information Society.

The project is constantly developed and supplemented with new software tools, e-content, trainings etc., with an ultimate goal – to increase quality in education process.

Increasing number of Macedonian articles on Wikipedia

The project is being implemented in cooperation with private and public institutions that act in synergy toward enrichment of Wikipedia with articles in Macedonian language, as well as with English articles concerning Macedonia. As a result of this initiative and several measures that are being taken, there is a rapid growth of material in the Macedonian Wikipedia.

"Use Macedonian Words" Campaign

This campaign included two activities: Writing an ICT dictionary and Development of Macedonian Fonts.

The idea behind the ICT dictionary was to encourage the usage of Macedonian words and terms when explaining words related to ICT. An expert working group was established that worked on the dictionary. A large number of ICT-related words were identified for which English terms were used on a daily basis. The information and communication technologies dictionary has been already completed and its electronic version is available for free download.

In order to unify Macedonian Cyrillic and Latin fonts throughout the country, fonts that will be used in state institutions, as well as fonts for wide use were developed. In that manner, a standard in communication between institutions was introduced. Also, some past differences from regular Macedonian Cyrillic were fixed.

Digitalization of cultural heritage

The Ministry of Culture drafted a National Strategy for Macedonian cultural heritage digitalization. Several goals are outlined in the Strategy, including permanent protection of the original sample, improving availability of works, ability to use a digital copy for various purposes, presentation of the cultural heritage both nationally and internationally, raising awareness of cultural heritage importance, cultural and alternative tourism etc.

II. FACILITATING ACCESS TO NETWORKS AND SERVICES

- *Please report on national efforts to recognize and support universal access to the Internet as well as to promote access to the Internet as a service of public interest.*
- *Please describe what mechanisms have been established at the local and national levels to facilitate universal access to the Internet through affordable telecommunications and Internet costs.*
- *Please indicate the measures taken for encouraging the development of information strategies and models that facilitate community access and support cooperation on ICT among public service institutions.*
- *What efforts have been made in order to encourage Internet service providers to consider provision of concessionary rates for Internet access in public service institutions?*

E-inclusion strategy

By the end of 2010, a strategic document for e-inclusion will be adopted. E-inclusion refers to activities toward providing access to information and communication technologies (and the benefits they provide) for everyone, including the ones that are challenged by their educational, financial, geographic, or health/age circumstances. The planned guidelines for e-access and e-inclusion will be the foundation for the new strategy. The strategic document will define directions and propose specific measures for inclusion of all people in the development of the new “digital society”. The directions can be categorized in six bullets (in accordance to The Riga Ministerial Declaration on e-Inclusion of June 2006):

- E-Accessibility - make ICT accessible to all, meeting a wide spectrum of people's needs, in particular any special needs.
- Ageing - empower older people to fully participate in economy and society, continue independent lifestyles and enhance their quality of life.
- E-Competences - equip citizens with knowledge, skills and lifelong learning approach needed to increase social inclusion, employability and enrich their lives.
- Socio-Cultural e-Inclusion - enables minorities, migrants and marginalized young people to fully integrate into communities and participate in society by using ICT.
- Geographical e-Inclusion - increase social and economic well being of people in rural, remote and economically disadvantaged areas with the help of ICT.
- Inclusive e-Government - deliver better, more diverse public services for all using ICT while encouraging increased public participation in democracy.

Recommendations for WCAG 2.0

In accordance to the introduced Strategy for equal rights of people with disabilities, as well as to the e-inclusion draft strategy, the plan is to constructively recommend the use of WCAG 2.0 guidelines of the W3C consortium for web sites and e-services by state institutions by the end of 2011. The promotion of these recommendations will target an increase of their usage by the private sector. Benefits from this initiative will bring significant improvement of the web accessibility situation, especially in public sector, thus increasing the communication between government and citizens.

„WI-FI“ in rural areas

The goal of this project is to deploy free internet booths in rural areas. Using wi-fi router, these booths will be free access points with wireless "wi-fi" internet. The low cost of "wi-fi" technology is especially favorable for the territory of the Republic of Macedonia, where an installation of broadband cable would claim multifold resources. The equipment is installed in all district schools located in rural areas. The territory is divided into 13 regions, with 680 access points.

Basic priority of this project is to encourage and support development of the ICT sector in the country. It intends to prepare citizens for the current and developing IT market and the competitive global economy. The project will increase the portion of internet users in Macedonia, making the internet an accessible tool for all citizens, regardless of their place of residence.

Expected benefits of this project are: higher level of internet usage, lowered geographical digital gap and increased computer literacy of the Macedonian citizens.

The World in Hand

"The World in Hand" project - is a part of the Government e-Citizens program which aims to facilitate access to information and communication technologies for the citizens. This project includes establishment of free internet clubs in various cities in Republic of Macedonia, as well as providing free internet access to all interested citizens in general. It shall also bring closer the use of other services and computer applications for personal or professional needs. The objectives of the project are to decrease the digital gap, to increase Internet penetration as well as to support the e-inclusion initiative.

Currently, 22 free internet clubs are working. Another 8 will be opened in 2011. Every internet club is kept in function by three employees with appropriate IT education and

work experience. They carry out daily obligations related to computer maintenance, technical assistance to visitors etc.

Portal for persons with special needs

Sakamznammozam.gov.mk is a portal and a central place where persons with special needs can: get the news, submit complaints, ask questions for their problems, get familiar with their rights and possibilities, receive information about services offered by state institutions, as well as discuss about different issues of their interest. Building a web-community for disabled people is of a great importance, since in this new era it may be the only way for them to live up to their full potential.

Establishment of a Macedonian point for Internet traffic exchange - Matr IX

In 2008, the Government adopted the National Strategy for Electronic Communications and Information Technologies Development, which was then consensually adopted by the Parliament. In accordance to the paragraph No. 2.7, a dialogue between all interested parties (private sector, public sector and MARNet) will be initiated in order to establish a Macedonian point for Internet traffic exchange (hereinafter: Matr IX) within MARNet, as an independent institution. Activities have already been started.

The establishment of Macedonian national public exchange point for Internet traffic - Matr IX, will help providing the following:

- Republic of Macedonia will gain recognition on the world map of online national public points for access and Internet traffic exchange.
- Better regional connectivity, increasing overall security and reliability in using the internet (e.g. buying and selling online), optimization and rationalization of Internet bandwidth and network resources, lower transmission delay, reliability, confidentiality, opening new opportunities and supply new contents.
- Entry of international ISPs and their establishment in the country.
- Development of healthy competition in the market of Internet services, significantly reducing both the costs and the prices of Internet.
- Emergence of new domestic ISP-s specialized in certain content and services.
- Improved conditions for internet provision to economically unattractive areas
- Reduction of traffic that transits to international Internet links, which will further contribute to reducing costs of domestic providers.
- Growth of research and development in information and communication technologies.
- Providing additional backup link for Internet service providers.

III. DEVELOPMENT OF PUBLIC DOMAIN

- Please explain the legal and administrative measures adopted to give effect to the provisions of this part of the Recommendation: a) recognizing and enacting the right of universal online access to public and government-held records; b) identifying and promoting repositories of information and knowledge in the public domain and making them accessible by all; and c) promoting and facilitating ICT literacy, including popularizing and building trust in ICT implementation and use.
- Please also provide information on whether open-access solutions and online accessibility of public domain information were advanced and how.

E-Government Strategy 2010-2012

The Ministry of Information Society drafted the e-Government National Strategy 2010 – 2012, which was adopted by the Government in January 2010. The strategy introduction was a necessity because up until now, there was no strategic integrity or approach to project implementation in the e-Government field. The e-Government Strategy will lead to a higher perspective on e-Government projects, taking into consideration the needs of different public institutions.

The strategy's goal is to transform public administration's processes in a more integrated, efficient and modern manner, by providing services that are fully adapted to the needs of the citizens and businesses.

The principles by which this strategy will be implemented are: adaptation to citizens' needs, confidentiality and security, transparency, higher efficiency, inclusion, convenience, cooperation, standardization, interoperability and e-democracy.

Web portal for e-democracy

According to the e-Government National Strategy 2010-2012, there is a plan to build a web portal for e-democracy that will be a central place where institutions will publish a variety of plans, strategies, possible decisions on which citizens can discuss openly, leave their comments, and criticize and so on. It will also include polls on various issues, specific problems, as well as surveys.

Expected benefits are an e-inclusive society, improved democratic process in the country and increased transparency in the process of drafting and introducing government policies and strategies.

Law on Electronic Governance

The Law on Electronic Governance regulates the exchange of electronic data, as well as the provision of electronic services. This law was introduced in August 2009. A national interoperability framework was created in that manner, which is in accordance to the European Interoperability Framework for Pan-European e-Government Services.

In June 2010, the Ministry of Information Society introduced 7 bylaws that broadly regulate the aspects of the Law on Electronic Governance. It is important to note that the bylaw that regulates technical requests of electronic administrative services involves a provision which states that electronic administrative services should be web accessible for all, including people with disabilities.

Free IT trainings for citizens

Starting from 2007, the Government has been organizing free IT literacy trainings for all citizens interested, in order to improve their basic computer skills. One of the most important segments of the new e-Inclusion strategy will be the free IT trainings for citizens, maintaining continuity with the trainings previously conducted. The new trainings' concept includes utilization of the free internet clubs as training centers for a certain time period. New trainings will be focused on the discriminated groups, intending to provide them with very basic IT skills. These skills should help them accomplish their exact needs (job search, receiving information from public institutions, obtaining an electronic administrative service, sending mails etc.).

Free advanced ICT trainings for unemployed

This program was introduced at the end of 2010, in order to reduce the number of unemployed people, by giving them an advanced ICT education for free. A predefined number of sufficiently interested and gifted, unemployed people will receive advanced ICT trainings for: MS Administrator, MS SQL, Cisco, Java, Oracle, CompTIA A+, and Linux. These individuals will gain knowledge which will add to their competitiveness when searching for a job. Reduction of the unemployment figures is the expected benefit of this program that will increase the IT skills of unemployed.

IV. REAFFIRMING THE EQUITABLE BALANCE BETWEEN THE INTERESTS OF RIGHT-HOLDERS AND THE PUBLIC INTEREST

- *Please indicate what action has your Government taken in order to update the national copyright legislation and its adaptation to cyberspace. Please indicate also how was considered the possibility of encouraging rights-holders and the lawful beneficiaries of limitations and exceptions to copyright and related rights protection to ensure that such limitations and exceptions are applied.*
- *What are the actions planned in your country to give consideration to the development of technological innovations and to their potential impact on access to information?*

Copyright Law

The Copyright Law regulates the authors' rights over their works in the field of literature, science and art, as well as the rights of performers, phonogram and film producers, radio and television organizations and publishers over their performances, as well as realization and protection of copyrights and related rights.

This Law also features provisions for copyright protection on software, and includes articles that allow appropriate measures that have to be taken in this field.

Coordinative body on intellectual property

In 2007 the Government of Republic of Macedonia formed the Coordinative Body on Intellectual Property as a permanent body for establishing coordination in protecting industrial property rights, copyrights and related rights. It has been carried out in accordance to the recommendations from relevant European and international bodies and institutions, which propose measures against piracy and counterfeiting, in order to reach a certain degree of protection in intellectual property. The Coordinative Body on Intellectual Property provides cooperation on issues related to market surveillance and enforces protection of intellectual property rights. It identifies problems of intellectual property, proposes solutions, and undertakes activities prior to creation of suitable policy of protecting industrial property, copyrights and related rights. It also directs participation in coordinated actions as determined in the monthly Action Plan.

The Coordinative Body on Intellectual Property is composed of representatives from state institutions that are directly, or indirectly involved in enforcement of the regime of intellectual property rights, such as: State Office of Industrial Property, Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of

Information Society, Secretariat of European Affairs, State Market Inspectorate, Customs Administration of the Republic of Macedonia and the Public Revenue Office.

The Coordinative Body on Intellectual Property acts on the market for war against piracy and counterfeiting of copyright and related rights and for protection of industrial property rights pursuant to the national legislation in force in the Republic of Macedonia, such as: Law on Copyright and Related Rights, Law on Industrial Property, Trade Law, Law on Customs measures for protection of intellectual property rights, Custom Law, Law on Macedonian language and use of the Cyrillic alphabet, Law on registering of cash payment, Consumers Protection Law, Penalty Code and other regulations.

Field of acting of the Coordinative Body on Intellectual Property is the authorities of inspection surveillances in the framework of these Laws, through provision of coordinative actions with representatives from the institutions that constitute this body.

One of the areas where this Body is active is the software market. It is specific for its rapid increasing rate, as well as for the relatively new kind of infringement that the intellectual property right violation is. With the great diffusion of ICT in Republic of Macedonia, the objective of the Coordinative Body of Intellectual property is to act against spreading software piracy and raising awareness of the meaning of illegal software and consequences of its use.

V. FINAL COMMENTS

- *What efforts has your Government made to establish a system of continuing monitoring of the implementation of the decisions taken at the World Summit on the Information Society and what time-related goals and benchmarks has your Government set in this respect?*
- *What are, according to your Government, the main issues and new challenges that need to be further addressed for promoting multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace? Please provide a brief description in your final comments.*

In order to achieve a coordinated and systematic approach in implementing a wide range of ICT projects aiming to build an information society, in 2008 the Government of the Republic of Macedonia formed a centralized body for planning, management and approval of ICT related projects. The Ministry of Information Society is a body responsible for coordination and implementation of horizontal ICT projects in state institutions, as well as promotion of wide ICT usage, which shall lead to faster economic growth of the country.

In line with everything previously stated, it is only natural that the Ministry of information society will thoroughly cover the area of promoting multilingualism and universal access to cyberspace. However, establishment of multilingualism and universal internet access on a national level is a big challenge. Although significant activities have been conducted in terms of satisfying the established criteria, there is still room for further improvements. The Government is planning a new strategy, a National strategy for e-inclusion, and acting upon it will make a huge impact on the promotion of multilingualism and universal access.