TRANSPARENCY OF MUNICIPALITIES IN MACEDONIA: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS AND A VIEW TOWARDS EXAMPLES FROM SLOVAKIA

POLICY PAPER

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Contents

LIST OF ACRONYMS

(In alphabetical order)

ADI – Association for Democratic Initiatives

CSO – Civil Society Organisation

Forum CSRD – Forum Center for Strategic Research and Documentation

IDSCS – Institute for Democracy 'Societas Civilis' Skopje

LSG – Local Self-Government

NGO – Non-Governmental Organisation

TI – Transparency International

TIS – Transparency International Slovakia

ZELS -- Community of Municipalities of the Units of Local Self-governments

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this policy paper is to provide a basis for a debate on increasing transparency in municipalities in Macedonia. Taking that local elections are scheduled for the spring of 2013, and this is already bringing issues like accountability at the forefront of political communication, by introducing this analysis we are aiming to modestly contribute to this debate.

Transparent practices are not unknown in local governance in Macedonia. Transparency varies across municipalities and some local governments set out examples while others lack behind. The most usual way in which municipalities communicate or inform citizens about their work seems to be their websites. Municipalities have found websites as a convenient place to publish information, news and documents. The quality of this information varies across municipalities and information in some sections is outdated. In many cases, such inconsistency can be a problem.

This is a result of both policy and human capacity. In the first case, practice is arbitrary and more dependent on political will than procedures. Mayors attempt to control the work of the local government as much as they can which results in lack of transparency. On the other hand, our interviews confirm previous research that there is still a need to train public servants in adopting professional consciousness about transparency and think of their work as something that inevitably has to be public.

We have outlined several good practice examples coming from Macedonia and Slovakia in local governmental practice and procedures as well as civic participation in the process. The aim is to show how issues of transparency and accountability can or should be resolved in the areas of: complaints and issue management; drafting reports of the work of departments that increase accountability; dealing with recruitment policy and organising civil society to oversee or participate in the municipal work.

Based on these examples, the paper ends with a list of recommendations that should be implemented as a possible direction towards developing more transparent and accountable local governments.

2. INTRODUCTION

A. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The aim of this policy paper is to provide a basis for a debate on increasing transparency in municipalities in Macedonia. Taking that local elections are scheduled for the spring of 2013, and this is already bringing issues like accountability at the forefront of political communication, by introducing this analysis we are aiming to modestly contribute to this debate.

Transparent practices are not unknown in local governance in Macedonia. There is a track record of good practices which should not be neglected, however, as always in the field of governance, things cannot remain static and there is room for improvement. Furthermore, transparent governance varies across municipalities and some local governments set out examples while others lack behind.

Therefore we felt important to analyse the ways in which practices of transparent governance have developed and are working in Macedonia. However, equally important was to outline problematic areas. Yet, the goal of the analysis was that by analysing practices that work, and explain those examples, we provide recommendations on how municipalities can improve or develop their own transparent practices and procedures as well as how civil society can extend its impact on this topic.

B. DEFINITION

This policy paper takes transparency in a broader sense combining various meanings people invest in the term. We have started from a narrower understanding of transparency as a principle of 'shedding light on rules, plans, processes and actions.'[1] However, it is important to take in account a broader definition also adopted by Transparency International where the term is

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[1] Transparency International, 'FAQ on Corruption' <http://www.transparency.org/whoweare/organisation/faqs_on_corruption> [accessed 5 March 2012].

understood as a 'duty [of officials] to act visibly, predictably and understandably to promote participation and accountability.'[2]

3. APPROACH

Taking this broader understanding of transparency as a starting point, the research explores several dimensions. The first dimension of the research is the ways in which municipalities have developed procedures and practice of transparent governance. Our main interest was the mode in which local self governments (LSGs) inform about or open their work to a broader public.

The second dimension of this research is the initiatives coming from civil society. The analysis explored civic oversight projects dealing with municipal governance with a goal to provide monitoring and evaluation of transparency or accountability. On the other hand, our research also included initiatives aimed at increasing or developing civic participation where transparency and accountability are extended with a process of including citizens in the process of governance. In this sense, we were also interested to analyse the relationship between municipal governments and the civil society.

The approach of this research combines several research methods. Firstly, we have focused on three municipalities: Veles, Gostivar and Ohrid. We have used these LSGs as case studies where we have conducted our fieldwork consisted of in-depth semi-structured interviews with municipal officials and members of local civil society organisations. We were interested in their experience and opinion on how transparency was or should be established and practiced as well as what have been and what are the remaining challenges.

Secondly, the research includes a desk-research of the projects, reports and analyses done by various CSOs. We were interested to draw a more generalised picture about transparency in Macedonia based on their conclusions and research results. However, we analysed the applied methodologies in order to get an overview of what methods have so far been employed and how transparency was measured.

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[2] Transparency International, *The Anti-Corruption Plain Language Guide* (Transparency International, 2009), p. 56 (p. 44).

This research was initially inspired by TI Slovakia's 'Open Local Government' project and its index of transparency.[3] The idea was to share the Slovak experience in both difficulty and success stories as a sort of a backdrop in the analysis of municipalities in Macedonia. The differences between Macedonian and Slovakian decentralisation models limit the ability to generate a comprehensive comparative study. However, the intention of this research is to provide an insight into examples of cases from Slovakia that might provide and interesting path in the development of transparent municipalities in Macedonia.

4. TRANSPARENT PRACTICES

The legal framework providing the basis for accountable and transparent local governance can be found in several laws. The Law on Local Self-Government in several articles ensures that the public can have access or have the right to be informed about the work of their municipality as well as participate in its work.[4] Furthermore, laws regulating freedom of information, corruption prevention or public procurement additionally ensure transparency in their respective contexts.

A. REPORTING AND PUBLISHING

The most usual way in which municipalities communicate or inform the citizens about their work seems to be their websites. Municipalities have found websites as a convenient place to publish information, news and documents. These sites vary in their usability, content or frequency of publishing information.

A typical municipal website in Macedonia consists of several sections:
1. General information about the municipality and the local government;
2. Information about the Mayor and the Council;
3. Newsletter;
4. Basic legal acts of the LSG such as the Statute;
5. List of services provided by the Local Self-Government
6. Information about the Budget and the Balance Sheet;
7. Contact sections.

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[3] Transparency International Slovakia, 'Open Local Government', 2010 <http://samosprava.transparency.sk/en/> [accessed 5 March 2012].
[4] 'Law on Local Self Government in the Republic of Macedonia' (Official Gazette of RM 5/2002, 2002) Articles: 7, 8 and 25.

The quality of this information varies across municipalities and information in some sections is outdated. In many cases, such inconsistency can be a problem. No matter if the source for such practice is suspicious behaviour, negligence or a technical issue, it signals a lack of enforcement or existence of clear internal procedures ensuring transparent practice. This is a result of both policy and human capacity.

In the first case, as other studies have revealed, practice is arbitrary or more dependent on political will instead of procedures. The study on transparency conducted by Forum CSRD concludes that mayors tend to attempt to control the work of the local government as much as they can, thus becoming a nexus for all the information flow towards the public.[5] Another research has revealed there are cases where officials have denied access to information requests claiming that such information can only be revealed by the mayor.[6]

On the other hand, our interviews confirm previous research that there is still a need to train public servants in adopting professional consciousness about transparency and think of their work as something that inevitably has to be public. In this sense, a representative of the municipality of Veles admitted that not all of the employees fully utilise their ICT solutions for document and project management systems which is the technical basis for their web publishing system. This, one might suggest, makes publishing information more difficult as the responsibility falls on a smaller number of people to gather and organise such information. At the same time, the representative assured us that other practice reveals that it takes years to fully adopt such systems. Similarly, in Ohrid, the municipality representative admitted that there is still a lot to be done in the area of education and capacity building.

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[5] *Research on Transparency and Accountability of the Units of Local Self-Government in the Republic of Macedonia* (Skopje: Forum - Center Strategic Research and Documentation, 2011) <http://forum-csrd.org.mk/documents/Transparentnost%20na%20opstini%20final.pdf> [accessed 19 March 2012].

[6] Cvetko Smilevski, Jonuz Abdulai and Katica Mihajlovic, *Lokalna Odgovorna i Transparentna Samouprava: Izvestaj Od Istrazuvanjeto (local Responsible and Transparent Self-Government: A Research Report)* (Association for Democratic Initiatives, 2012).

One important missing element in the communication process between the local government and the citizens is publishing minutes of meetings and transcripts of Council sessions. The latter has been addressed by the second phase of 'My Councillor' projects implemented by the NGO 'MOST' which dealt with the standards of transparency, responsibility and cooperativeness of the local self-governments. Their analytical focus was on the standards of taking and publishing the transcripts of council sessions. Their conclusions show that there are big differences between how sessions have been logged in comparison to the standards set out in their books of procedures. In cooperation with ZELS they have published a manual in an effort to unify the practice.[7] The issue has been addressed also in the conclusions of another research where recommendations were given to more strictly adhere to common rulebooks ensuring publicity and standards of setting employees meetings and sessions.[8]

Transcripts of council sessions are really important tool in getting members of the body accountable to voters. As one of the two elected bodies of local government, it is important for the public to have information about what their representatives do and decide. Council sessions are open to the public nevertheless, logging documentation about the activities of elected members is lacking.

Some of the more advanced municipalities include E-services which typically consist of lists of downloadable forms and templates about requests or complaints and a document repository where part of decisions, regulation and procedures are published.

The three pilot municipalities (Gostivar, Ohrid and Veles) have adopted all these sections. However, not all of them have published everything they have set up to publish. Important information such as Balance Sheets of some fiscal years is missing or is difficult to find. These e-services are usually document or form repositories for downloading and are not tools that offer real online service.

These websites, however, act as important tool of transparency in these municipalities. In all three cases they offer information about services provided by

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[7] Venco Popovski and others, 'Prirachnik Za Upotreba Na Standardite Za Vodenje Na Zapisnik Od Sednicite Na Sovetot Na Edinicite Na Lokalnite Samoupravi' (MOST, 2012).
[8] Smilevski, Abdulai and Mihajlovic, p. 53.

the municipality with necessary forms needed by the citizens and explanation of deadlines for completing the service. This means that citizens can understand the services and know in advance how long and in what way a particular service should be delivered. This can help them assess the performance of the municipality in their own case.

One should note that according to research, citizens predominantly use the media for informing about the work of the municipality.[9] This is therefore putting into question the emphasis of municipalities to devote all of their resources to their websites. This is not to say that developing websites and services is a pointless practice. However, municipalities need to adopt a comprehensive information strategy that does not exclude technical illiterates or those without and access to ICT technology. Offices acting as a one-stop shop or as information centres, implemented throughout some of the municipalities are a good examples of inclusive practice. They usually offer help to such groups in particular and should be implemented in all of the municipalities.

B. SENDING COMPLAINTS – AN EXAMPLE IN VELES

Out of these three municipalities, the municipality of Veles has implemented a service for reporting complaints by the citizens as part of their e-government system.[10] This enables the citizens to have structured and formalised access to the local government on the communal issues. These complaints and local government response can be openly accessed and seen by others and ensure transparency of communication between the local governments and the citizens.

The problem with this service is that most of these complaints receive a formal response that the issue was forwarded to the responsible department. A more detailed feedback is missing, as well as, perhaps more importantly, the status of resolution. In this sense, there is a lack of information on whether the issue has been resolved or not, as the initial acknowledgement about receiving the complaint is not an indicator of genuine activity. This prevents a complete insight of municipal efficiency in this department and shows relatively one-way communication with the citizens. For a comparison between two similar

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[9] Smilevski, Abdulai and Mihajlovic.
[10] http://www.veles.gov.mk/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1271&Itemid=221

independent services for reporting communal issues to municipalities see bellow, where examples from Macedonia and Slovakia are presented.

C. DEPARTMENT ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTS – AN EXAMPLE FROM OHRID

An interesting example of good practice can be found in publishing the reports of the department of local economic and tourist growth of the municipality of Ohrid.[11] These reports offer information about activities for bolstering economic growth in the municipality; however, they are also concerned with explaining how the municipality spent resources (working hours and money) to address programmatic aims that have previously been set out. These reports hold information about specific activities that have been undertaken, some sort of measurable impact (f.i. media campaign indicators) and the amount of public funds spent on each activity.

This is a good example showing an effort by the local government office to proactively inform the citizens about the work of a specific department. However, it is noticeable that the latest yearly report about the work of the department (year 2011) is missing. This shows a lack of clear internal procedure and deadlines on when information are to be published for the wider public. Furthermore, one may assume that outside of the necessary documents that must be published, there is no additional internal mandatory list of information that the local government has set out to publish. Or, if there is, then the frequency of publishing information online is significantly reduced outside of the minimum requirements.

In addition, as much as it is a good practice to publish reports that set out new boundaries of accountability, it is also important that those documents are understandable for a wider public. Detailed reports will always be good example, however, there is a need for summary reports (or summaries within a report) that would make it easier for a layperson to understand.

A representative of the municipality of Ohrid, for instance, admitted that municipal budgets or financial balance sheets prove to be too complicated. He pointed out that the municipality should (or would) in the future provide narrative versions of these documents in order to increase the outreach for these documents.

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[11] http://www.ohrid.gov.mk/index.asp?novostiID=377

One interesting new project that tries to simplify the fiscal documentation of municipalities is 'Fiscal Monitor'.[12] It is a web service aiming to provide 'easy access to data on the budgets of the biggest municipalities in Macedonia'[13] and provides a platform for comparison between municipalities. Its analytic tool allows visual presentation of municipal revenues and expenditures contextualised by the main items of income and expenses.

D. EMPLOYEE SYSTEMATISATION – AN EXAMPLE FROM GOSTIVAR

The municipality of Gostivar has published a systematisation of the local government employees.[14] This systematisation outlines all work places in the government with specification of the competences and description of activities as well as the educational and experience requirements to hold the position. This kind of systematisation is not particular to the municipality of Gostivar, however, what is important is that it is made accessible to the public. There needs to be a greater time frame for a better assessment of the effects of this rulebook (or policy). This will test to what extent this framework can assure compliancy. Furthermore, it is important to see whether these rulebooks, policies and procedures can survive a change of the local government.

A research on transparency of municipalities done by ADI concludes that citizens remain unsatisfied because of nepotism and partisan nomenclature in the local government recruitment process.[15] Existence of rulebooks about recruitment of municipal officials is thus an important step into regaining public trust in this process. The public can then assess new employments according to the rulebook. However, this is not enough. There needs to be a comprehensive set of procedures and structural setups in order to set a proper path in regaining public trust and amend the process towards good practice in general. An interesting example of

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[12] Forum CSRD, 'Fiskalen Monitor (Fiscal Monitor)', 2012
<http://fiskalenmonitor.mk/?locale=en> [accessed 1 June 2012].
[13] Ibid.
[14] Opshtina Gostivar, 'Pravilnik Za Sistematizacija Na Rabotnite Mesta Vo Opshtinskata Administracija Na Opshtina Gostivar', 2012.
[15] Smilevski, Abdulai and Mihajlovic, p. 49.

reimagining the recruitment process in a Slovak municipality is outlined later in this text.

5. CIVIC PARTICIPATION

The legal framework in Macedonia provides a basis of civic involvement in the work of the local self-governments. The modes of participation include: petitions, referendum, citizen's gathering and public debate.[16] However, citizens are not participating enough in the work of the local governments. A study done on a sample of municipalities in Eastern Macedonia, reveals significantly low levels of civic participation.[17] This is confirmed in a nation level study by IDSCS concluding there is a lack of civic participative political culture.[18]

However, there are successful examples where municipalities have managed to include citizens or NGOs in the decision making process. One of the most notable examples is the municipality of Veles which has a several year tradition of cooperation with CSOs which act as proxies between citizens and the local self-government. NGOs actively participate in developing action programs or allocating budget funds in a process of participatory budgeting. Additionally, part of the CSOs monitor the implementation of the municipal budget according to the items that were planned with the aid of participation.

Similarly, programs run by several CSOs[19] from Macedonia called 'Community Forums'[20] have developed modes of civic participation mainly in the areas of development of project ideas and budgeting. The goal is to engage citizens in a series of meetings to participate in developing the agenda which in later stages would be implemented in parts of the municipal budget. During the course of implementation, such forums were held in a number of municipalities. According to a member of the implementation team, the understanding by mayors that such

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[16] 'Law on Local Self Government in the Republic of Macedonia'.
[17] CCC, EHO and NVO-Infocentar, *Transparent Local Governance: Book of Practices and Recommendations* (Skopje: Center for Civic Communications, 2010).
[18] Nenad Markovic and others, *Political Culture in Macedonia* (Skopje: Fridrich Ebert Stiftung, 2012) forthcoming.
[19] Foundation Institute Open Society Macedonia; Center for Institutional Development; Macedonian Center for International Cooperation; ADI and ALKA
[20] Forumi vo zaednicata

activities are helpful is increasing. These forums, according to our interview seem to have helped some municipalities in including the citizens in part of the decision making process, however additionally, apparently helped build capacities for some employees in budgeting and procurement (as part of the stages of implementation of a forum). An indicator of progress is that these forums have become official part of the ZELS program in 2010 and are to be implemented in all of the municipalities in the near future.

Civic inclusion is a long term process and cannot be done overnight. Certainly, there are some good practices that can be imported. One such practice is allowing the citizens to directly address the Council at its meetings. Such meetings are open to the public and it is not uncommon to see interested parties (usually NGOs) present, however, citizens do not have a guaranteed right to speak. They can address the councillors in other sessions within their rural or urban community meetings. However, the agenda on such meetings usually involves issues of the narrow neighbourhood and not a larger level municipal agenda.

Contrary to this, some municipalities in Slovakia[21] have developed modes of work where citizens can ask for a right to speak and address the Council directly. This direct involvement of citizens in sessions where decisions are formally made is very important, as it enables an inclusive process in the official debate in the Council and the buffer zone between the citizens and the decision is narrower.

6. SLOVAK EXPERIENCE

RECRUITMENT POLICY: AN EXAMPLE FROM SLOVAKIA

Employment in public office remains an issue in Macedonia that slowly progress from obscure towards transparent practice. As a social issue it is usually perceived as a corrupt procedure with elements of partisan nomenclature. In a situation where there is a high rate of unemployment, a job in the public sectors a sought after position.

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[21] City of Bratislava; Stare Mesto etc.

Hiring municipal officials should be a trustworthy and open process. According to a survey done by Transparency International Slovakia (TIS) in 2007, recruitment was recorded as an issue the most affected by corruption.[22] An example of developing recruitment policy in cooperation with civic organisation can be seen in the case of the city of Martin in Slovakia.

At the request of the mayor of Martin in 2008, TIS drafted recommendations for improving anti-corruption policies based on an audit of the work of municipal government. These recommendations included improvements in enforcing the code of ethics for employees of the municipality as well as directives towards publishing open contests for employment, decisions of selecting committees and all surrounding documentation of the selection process. Furthermore, the recommendations covered drafting and publishing professional guidelines for municipal representatives in enterprise boards as well as conflict of interest policies.

The city of Martin adopted most of the recommendations into a variety of policies and procedures. One visible improvement was selection of ethical officer, which, according to TIS should act as a first instance in resolution of issues of conflict of interest or similar complaints during the recruitment process. It also adopted, among others, clearer procedures about open contests.

DIRECT CIVIC INVOLVEMENT: A COMPARISON OF TWO PROJECTS

Two in essence very similar projects of civic involvement seem to have different outcomes in Slovakia and Macedonia. The one in Slovakia is called 'Message to the Mayor'[23] while the project in Macedonia is called 'Repair'. Popravi.mk [24] Basically, both of those projects are offering web based service where citizens can submit complaints and map communal problems in their municipality using their computers or smartphones. These complaints are visible on an interactive map or in several interactive lists based on location (municipality) or category. Complaints are automatically communicated to the municipal office so that local governments

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[22] Transparency International Slovakia and Focus Poll Agency, 2007.
[23] Slovak Governance Institute, 'Odkaz Pre Starostu (Message to the Mayor)' <http://www.odkazprestarostu.sk/> [accessed 5 May 2012].
[24] 'Popravi (Repair)' <http://popravi.mk/posts/podobri-go-svojot-grad> [accessed 6 May 2012].

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can see what their citizens have reported as (perhaps) immediate communal problems in their area.

However, there is a difference in the impact these projects have in their countries. The Macedonian implementation has relied on an assumption that the good idea of the project would be welcomed by the municipalities. Or, basically, it assumed that once municipalities receive the reports in their email inbox they would use them in planning their actions. The citizens can report problems in all eighty four municipalities in Macedonia.

There is no evidence that municipal authorities took action based on these reports. The authors of the web service did not have any hard data on how municipalities or communal inspectors have used the service. The service statistics shows no resolution to the problems. The starting point of the project was the web service itself, as the authors of the service are successful computer programmer and designer, rather than a project around which a service is created.

The 'Message to the Mayor' project has been implemented by the Slovak Governance Institute. This organisation has chosen to implement the service in phases ensuring that they have local human capacity that can review the complaints prior to sending them to the municipal authorities. Therefore, the project is implemented in nine cities in Slovakia which is a fraction of the entire number of municipalities in the country. At the same time, the organisation conducts regular communication activities with the local governments ensuring feedback (positive, negative or ambiguous) on the complaints. Municipalities are given ten days to respond otherwise, after the period the report is labelled as 'unsettled' or in cases where the response was unclear, citizens vote in order to determine the status of the 'resolution'.

This ensures public oversight into the performance of municipalities and can be a base for positive or negative PR based on the level of efficiency. The Slovak Governance Institute claims they regularly communicate with municipalities and in cases of non-responsiveness – with the media. The organisation is trying to bring more users to the service ensuring long term activity of the project. This seems to be one of the biggest challenges they face.

Much of the tools in the 'Message to the Mayor' service in Slovakia are available in the 'Repair' service in Macedonia. However, as there is no organisation dedicated to issues of local governance that has taken over the service, subsequent stages in ensuring response from the municipality are missing.

ANTIKOR – AN INFORMAL NETWORK OF ACTIVISTS

The 'Antikor' network is an interesting example of civic organising in the area of increasing transparency and combating corruption. It represents an informal group established in 2004 of dedicated activists, journalists, councillors and other actors involved in advocacy, investigation or engagement in issues of transparency. Its role is consultative providing sharing of knowledge between its members about new cases, problems, issues and developments in their fields of interest. This sharing of knowledge and expertise is conducted over training sessions about two times a year where members meet in person. Antikor has so far been involved in successfully advocating legislation change, particularly in the areas of municipal laws and access to information.

What is interesting about this network is that it includes local government councillors who have previously proven their dedication in promoting transparency or had been civic activists prior to their engagement in the local government council. During local elections, these candidates for local office lose their voting power in Antikor in order to enable the network to maintain objectivity. However, this inclusion of decision makers is very important as it puts forward cooperation with members of local governments and may as a support to those officials that are pushing boundaries of transparent governance further.

In addition, being a network of different activists, it creates a climate of cooperation and information sharing between members of various organisations. This provides the opportunity to open issues of corruption and transparency in a cooperative manner instead of programs and projects of different organisations acting as 'islands' isolated from each other.

7. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- Transparency varies across municipalities and it is dependent on factors such as policy, political will, clear and enforceable procedures. Additionally, investment in developing such procedures as well as staff training favours the development of transparent practice. Municipalities should seriously invest in developing policies and practice of transparent work. The minimum which ensures transparent work is definition and standardisation of clear procedures as well as their publication. The example of Veles shows that standardisation provides a good basis for transparent workflow.

- Municipalities still lack the practice of proactive publishing as well as documents and reports providing additional insight into the local governments' accountability. Local governments should work on increasing the availability of information and implement pro-active publishing. Municipalities should draft and publish clear guidelines about which information are actively published so the public can assess its implementation.

- Once information is passed to a member of the public upon a request for free access, this information should be made available to others as well (provided there are no limiting factors) on the municipal website. The idea is that since the office must spend resources to provide such information on request, there are no significant additional costs to publish the information while there are clear benefits to transparency.

- Much of the public documents follow technical templates which in some cases might be too complicated for a wider public. Local budgets and balance sheets especially suffer from this, compared to how important they are. Local governments should strive to provide the information in a way which ensures greater availability and understanding. Projects such as 'Fiscal Monitor' strive to simplify important information, but this must also be done by local governments themselves. Municipalities must therefore provide, as much as they can, user friendly variants of technical documentation.

- There are examples where platforms facilitating public participation in the decision making process have a degree of success. It remains to be seen how

successful, overall, will be the 'Community Forums' project. However Adopting 'Community Forums' as part of the municipal statutes (or any other project initiating such participation) is a good practice for inclusion of citizens. This has been done in a number of municipalities so far, at the recommendation of the Community of Local Self-government Units. Furthermore, as there is already a local know-how about conducting these forums, it becomes relatively easier to implement these projects.

- The social context of Macedonia is that employment in public service is viewed as a result of some form of clientelism or nomenclature. Clear guidelines for employment as well as selecting officer in charge of ethics are a good way forward.

- Based on the Law For The Prevention Of Conflict Of Interests, municipalities should draft guides which would further explain situations where conflict of interest occurs as well as detail the procedures for prevention. Municipal officials should be made aware about the provisions of the Law, cases and procedures of prevention in an easily accessible style. These guides should also be published for the citizens or third parties such as companies to take them into account while doing business with the local self-governments. Code of conducts should be tailored along these guides.

- Current e-municipality services act as document and form repository as well as some types of communication or discussion tools. What needs to be done is to follow good examples where e-municipality contains tools enabling public (or individual client) insight about the status of current projects, see the progress of their requests and so on.

- Small municipalities lack the resources (financial and human) to provide comprehensive e-services. Municipalities should cooperate in developing e-municipality that can be shared, similarly to the centralised e-procurement web service. In addition, back ends to e-services such as document, project and client management software which ensure the technical basis for clear and transparent work can also be shared. Municipalities should advocate that e-government solutions for the central state be shared with the local governments.

- Oversight of the municipal work should be a long term process. This is usually hindered by frequent donor practice to fund short term projects. Monitoring activities in these cases, though well done, usually lack a

distribution of results of a single indicator over time. This means that an audit or a survey of services is usually done once which does not account for results that can occur accidentally (e.g. clerk was sick so did not deliver on time). Conducting the fieldwork of a comprehensive study more than once, in different times of the year, is costly; however produces better results.

- As in the case of the city of Martin, CSOs should offer program and recommendations for transformation towards transparent procedures that municipalities can get and adopt as their own rules and procedures. This does not ensure transparency automatically, however it helps those municipalities that lack human or financial capacity to develop such procedures on their own.

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