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INTERNEWS

**e-Gov Project**

# **Accountability through Transparency**

**For the municipalities in the Republic of Macedonia**

**- System Description -**

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<b>INTRODUCCION.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1. USERS OF THE SYSTEM.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.1 Citizens .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.2 Mayor and Administration of the municipality.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.3 Members of the Council.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>2. LEGAL BASIS FOR FUNCTIONING OF THE MUNICIPALITIES .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3. FEATURES OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH TRANSPARENCY SOFTWARE APPLICATION .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.1 The citizens.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>3.2 Features for the administration .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>3.3 Features for the members of the council .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>4. TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF THE MUNICIPALITIES.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.1 SW Platform.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>4.2 Hardware equipment to be used for the software application .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>5. ACCESS RIGHTS.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>6. SECURITY AND SAFETY .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>7. LANGUAGE .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>8. BACK UP AND RECOVERY.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>9. TRAINING.....</b>	<b>7</b>

## **INTRODUCCION**

The USAID e-Gov Project, together with the USAID/Make Decentralization Work Project will design and implement a software application called Accountability Through Transparency.

This software application shall provide a simple and modern channel for the citizens to communicate with the members of the council of their municipality, as well as with the municipality administration. The software application will provide improved exchange of information regarding the discussions held and decisions made by the council. It will thus increase the accountability and transparency of the work within the municipality councils in the Republic of Macedonia.

### **1. USERS OF THE SYSTEM**

The Accountability through Transparency software application will have the following users.

#### **1.1 Citizens**

According to the Law on Local Self-government, the citizens have the right to submit proposals, requests, suggestions and comments to the Mayor, municipality's administration and the Council members.

The citizens are entitled to answers and reports from the Mayor, the administration and the Council.

#### **1.2 Mayor and Administration of the municipality**

The Mayor of the municipality is selected by the citizens and is obliged to work for the benefits of the people.

The Mayor is managing the performance of the municipality administration.

The Administration of the municipality is collecting and preparing materials to be discussed at the meetings of the Council.

The Administration assists the Mayor and the Council to perform the responsibilities prescribed by the Law.

The Administration is managing the documents of the municipality.

#### **1.3 Members of the Council**

The members of the Council are selected by the citizens of the municipality. They are the voice of the people and they control the performance of the Mayor and the municipality.

The members of the Council have the right to propose and suggest issues to be discussed by the Council. They also analyze and discuss the materials prepared by the municipality administration.

The members of the Council make decisions upon issues proposed for discussion at the meetings of the council.

## **2. LEGAL BASIS FOR FUNCTIONING OF THE MUNICIPALITIES**

- **Law on Local Self-government** (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 5/02)
- **Model Statutes** of the municipalities; **Model Rules of procedure** of the municipalities<sup>1</sup>
- **Law on Free Access to Public Information** (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 13/06)

## **3. FEATURES OF THE ACCOUNTABILITY THROUGH TRANSPARENCY SOFTWARE APPLICATION**

The Accountability Through Transparency software application should provide the following features.

### **3.1 The citizens**

Each citizen will be able to go on-line, open the web site of the municipality and select the Accountability Through Transparency section.

In this part of the municipality's web site each citizens/visitor will have the following options:

1. **Post** a question, request or comment to the municipality.
  - *Additionally citizens will be given an option to submit a question to an individual member of the Council.*
2. **Search** all questions, request, proposals, comments posted by other citizens and all the answers given by the municipality institutions.
3. **Submit** a proposal to be discussed at one of the next meetings of the Council (not later than two weeks before the meeting is scheduled)
4. **Look at the calendar and the agenda** for the next meeting of the Council (published at least 7 days before the scheduled meeting)
5. **Access and Read all documents** (materials) of public character prepared for the next meeting of the Council (published at least 7 days before the scheduled meeting).

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<sup>1</sup> Models proposed by ZELS (Union of local self government units) – available on their web site: <http://www.zels.org.mk>

6. **Access and Read all decisions and conclusions** from previous meetings of the Council.

7. **Insight of the voting list;** find information about how each individual Council member voted for each item of the agenda, which comprehends previous entry of the name of each individual Council member in the system (creation of database).

8. **Forum** will be opened so that citizens can initiate on-line discussions with the members of the Council.

### 3.2 Features for the administration

The administration of the municipality, including the Mayor, will use the following features:

1. **Access and read** the posted questions from the citizens; analyze the questions;

2. **Distribute the questions to** administration unit responsible for concrete issues with a request that the unit gives a feedback answer. "Reminder" should be designed and inserted in the system so that it timely alarms all players involved. A chain of submission and reception confirmation e-mails should be enabled for that purpose as well.

3. **Prepare** materials to be discussed at the next meeting of the Council.

4. **Publish on-line** all materials and the agenda prepared for the next meeting of the Council (7 days before the meeting is scheduled, at latest). If some of the materials are not available in electronic format, the administration will scan the material and then publish on-line.

*\* A link under each agenda item will lead to the relevant documents.*

5. **Update** the calendar of meetings of the Council.

6. **Take minutes** from the meeting of the Council; **register each individual vote** of the Council members; **define the Decisions and conclusions** made at the meeting.

7. **Publish on-line** decisions and conclusions, as well as the register of the votes from the meeting of the Council.

### 3.3 Features for the members of the council

The members of the council will be able to go on-line and use the following features

1. **Access and read all questions** submitted by the citizens.

2. **Access the forum** and e-talk to the citizens.

3. All other features related to publishing of Agenda and the documents before and after the session of the Council.

#### **4. TECHNICAL CAPACITY OF THE MUNICIPALITIES**

The Accountability through Transparency software application will initially be installed and implemented by a few pilot municipalities and later on extended to additional ones. The software shall thus be designed to suit a large number of municipalities. If some adaptations would be necessary for some municipalities, these adaptations should be simple enough for the municipality administration to make.

##### **4.1 SW Platform**

The pilot municipalities are equipped with their own Microsoft Windows based server, Internet connection and LAN. The SW application should be fully compatible with the Microsoft platform.

The software application will be installed on the municipality web server. The pilot municipality will assign at least one IT person to administrate the application. However, this is not foreseen to be a full time position.

##### **4.2 Hardware equipment to be used for the software application**

Relevant administration employees engaged in the process of preparing materials for the Mayor and the Council will have a computer for the electronic preparation of all documents.

The administration will also have a scanner to transform hard copies into electronic versions.

At least two computers and one projector shall be available during the Council meetings. One of the computers and the projector shall be used for presenting the documents which will be discussed at the meeting. The other computer shall be used for taking minutes.

One computer within the municipality will be publicly available for the citizens, so they can visit and use the application even if they don't possess a private PC.

The Mayor will have a personal computer connected to the server.

#### **5. ACCESS RIGHTS**

All citizens will have free access to the on-line features of the Accountability through Transparency software application. No registration will be required.

However, access by citizens to working versions of the documents and documents that contain classified information shall be denied.

The Mayor will have access to all features of the software application.

The administration will have special access rights for extracting questions from the citizens, for designing and filling in special templates, for publishing documents on line

and for using the features for conducting of the Council's meetings. Each published document will have to be previously approved by the Head of Unit for organising the meetings of the Council.

The members of the Council will have access to all on-line features of the software application.

## **6. SECURITY AND SAFETY**

The software developer must provide all necessary security standards for Web applications. Especially, this section of the web site should be protected with SSL. Moreover, possibility for attaching digital certificates as manner of identification, as well as manner of "officialising" the communication should be enabled, but it will be up to the municipality to decide if digital certificates should be used.

## **7. LANGUAGE**

The software application will be available in Macedonian and Albanian language.

## **8. BACK UP AND RECOVERY**

The system must store data and on request to show data of all materials prepared for the meetings of the Council, as well as of all Minutes produced at each meeting.

The contractor is requested to elaborate and propose sustainable policy and reliable system for back-up and restoration of the data in the database. The back-up strategy and the system must provide fast, simple and safe data recovery.

## **9. TRAINING**

The developer of the software application shall organise and conduct training for 6 system administrators. Training materials (manuals) for the system administrators shall be provided both in paper and electronic form in Macedonian and Albanian language.

In addition 6 Heads of *Unit for organising the meeting of the Council* and 6 officers from the administration (one from each municipality) shall be trained for the features relevant to them. User-friendly manuals shall be prepared for these users both in Macedonian and Albanian language.

In addition, an information meeting shall be conducted for the Mayor and all council members.

Printed information material shall also be produced to be distributed in a relevant way among citizens. The software developer shall provide the content while printing and distribution will be done by the two Projects.