

Application

Participant: Macedonia Team

PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS:

As you consider which initiative to put forward for the Open Government Awards, please consider the following questions:

(1) Does the initiative seek to improve a public policy or service?
 Yes No

(2) If yes, does the initiative seek to improve the ability of citizens to provide feedback and/or to make decisions in the design or implementation of a policy or service? For examples of initiatives, see: <http://www.opengovguide.com/topics/citizen-engagement>
 Yes No

If you have answered "Yes" to BOTH of these questions, please proceed with your application.

A. THE TEAM

The following information is required to capture a basic understanding of those responsible for your initiative and any partnerships that have helped you to meet your goals.

INITIATIVE NAME (required)

Provide the name of the initiative that your team is submitting for consideration by the judges of the 2014 Open Government Awards (under the inaugural theme, Citizen Engagement). If the initiative is operating under one or more alternate name(s), provide the name that is most commonly recognized.

Open Government in the Mirror

THE NOMINATION (required)

Begin by describing how this initiative was selected. For example, mention any nomination or consultation process held with civil society partners or others when selecting the initiative. Please offer your explanation of this process in 200 words or less.

GOVERNMENT POINT OF CONTACT (required)

Provide the name and title of a single point of contact for the purposes of communicating with your team. The person should be the most senior individual responsible for overseeing the application submission. Provide the phone number(s), email address(es), and physical address of your designated point of contact. You may provide alternate contact information, if it is a direct means for reaching the designated point of contact.

Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA)
 Irena Bojadzievska
 (irena.bojadzievska@mioa.gov.mk), Gordana Dimitrovska (gordana.dimitrovska@mioa.gov.mk), Vladimir Radosavljevik
 (vladimir.radosavljevik@mioa.gov.mk).

CIVIL SOCIETY POINT OF CONTACT (strongly recommended)

We strongly encourage applicants to submit a joint application from a government agency and a civil society partner. If submitting a joint application, please provide the name and title of a single point of contact at the partner organization. If not, please be sure to focus on the "validation of claims" in Section B (see pg. A-3).

Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC)
 Emina Nuredinowska (emr@mcms.mk), Marija Szadevska (msz@mcms.mk), Borjan Guzelov (bgz@mcms.mk).

OTHER PARTNERSHIPS (optional)

If you are partnering with one or more other government agencies, private sector entities, media, or other organizations, please list each partner. In 250 words or less, provide a brief narrative of the partnership, including the roles that each partner assumes in the initiative.

B. THE INITIATIVE

The Open Government Partnership (OGP) is prepared to celebrate a range of successful applicants to the Open Government Awards. This year's theme is "citizen engagement." To qualify for recognition, we need to understand the various elements of success for your initiative and its sustainability over time.

PROBLEM DEFINITION (required)

In 200 words or less, please identify the specific problem your initiative intended to solve. Why was this problem important to solve at a particular time and for the particular context in which you are working?

Vibrant civic engagement in the policy making process is of crucial importance for democracy. Therefore promotion of participation in law making processes and creation of practice of effective public involvement should be a high priority for every democratic government.

By 2009, in the Republic of Macedonia, the public participation was provided in the conventional offline manner. Yet, despite this possibility, neither the Government was proactive to engage the public, nor the citizens and CSOs were exploiting it. To address the problem in 2009 the Government introduced the Single Electronic Registry of National Legislation (ENER), which aimed to achieve a higher level of citizens', and stakeholders' engagement in law making through the on-line consultation processes. However, despite the established e-tool ENER, several challenges remained. Firstly, besides the given opportunity for online consultations, citizens' engagement remained low and therefore continued to be a challenge on its own. Secondly, very often there is a lack of awareness by the civil servants for consistent implementation of the legal requirements and creation of the better content on ENER. Finally, there are no reports on the results on the effectiveness and impact of the uniform use of ENER, which leaves space for non-accountability of some institutions.

TARGET POPULATION (required)

In 100 words or less, please identify the target population who may benefit from this initiative. Highlight your understanding of the needs or demands of the target population that were addressed by your initiative.

The target population is Ministries proposing the new laws, and general public. The final beneficiaries of initiative implementation are the civil servants responsible for legislation preparation and citizens, CSOs and other stakeholders, proactive and willing to participate, who are affected by the proposed draft laws published on ENER. The results play significant role towards informed citizenry and informed stakeholders, and it serves to boost their participation. Regular publishing of the external monitoring results activates the civil servants to be more attentive towards the open legislative procedure, contributing to keep the Ministries accountable if they malfunctioned to the online policy-making procedure.

INITIATIVE DESIGN (required)

In 350 words or less, describe your initiative's goals and objectives. Focus specifically on how the initiative was designed to meet those objectives. For example, identify stage(s) of the policy/service design or implementation when you solicited citizen participation. What kind of participation did you seek from citizens (e.g., feedback, consultation, joint decision-making, monitoring of activities, etc.)? Explain why this particular approach was best suited to achieve the initiative's goals. How did you encourage citizens to participate? Describe any innovations in the design of the initiative.

Open Government in the Mirror is a synergy of two linked and opposing existing initiatives: one implemented by the Government - ENER – aiming to the **Open Government**, and other implemented by CSO - **Open Government Mirror** – aiming to be a corrective of the Government. It is a good example of a productive cooperation leading to positive changes. The objectives are: 1) increase of citizen's and CSOs' participation in policymaking; 2) increase transparency and accountability of the state institutions; 3) giving recognition to the CSO monitoring results that track transparency and accountability of the state institutions.

ENER (www.ener.gov.mk) is web platform where draft legislation are available for public consultation, making the Government open in law-drafting processes. It serves to the Ministries to involve the consultations and comments from the contested parties from the very beginning when legislation is to be prepared. It gives opportunity to the public to be included in the phase of preparation of the regulatory impact assessment and finally it gives them at least 10 days for consultation of the first draft. However, not all institutions and not in all cases respects this legally obliged procedure. Although, there is internal procedure established by MISA informing the Government on the institutions who disobeyed the protocol, data are not public.

Being aware of challenges and need for pointing "those who break the rules", in 2011 MCIC developed the project "Government Mirror". The goal was to establish a permanent system tracking the openness of institutions and involvement of citizens and CSOs in the law-making processes. It monitors ENER on the daily basis and develops its own database for conducting the assessment of the consultation process. The monitoring results are published in weekly, monthly, quarterly and annual reports presenting the fulfillment of the legal requirements for public involvement.

Recognizing the importance of accepting the external assessment of its own work and deserving the epithet of being **Open Government Mirror** results (www.ogdelonavladata.mk) are also published directly on the ENER platform (<http://goo.gl/bfNgHY>). This innovative approach makes the Government more open to changes and improvements which lead to legislation that suits to its own beneficiaries.

INITIATIVE OUTCOMES (required)

In 250 words or less, describe the intended outcomes and the actual outcomes that the initiative achieved. Who were the ultimate beneficiaries, and what benefits did they experience? For example, list any concrete improvements in policy, services, behaviors, or power relations between the government and citizens. Try to present your case from the perspective of the various stakeholders involved (e.g., your agency, citizens, Civil Society Organizations, media, et al.). If there are any baseline indicators or standards to measure the outcomes of the initiative, such as the breadth of depth of engagement, please describe them in detail.

Since 2009 there have been technical improvements, which lead to opening the legislative system towards the citizens. These improvements would not be possible without the willingness of the Government to be Open and to continuously makes improvements, based on the suggestions from CSOs about the technical shortcomings of ENER.

Although going slowly, there have been improvements in the citizens' engagement, so from only three comments in 2011, 2013 there were 83 comments. This is a result of the commitment in raising awareness and encouraging citizen's participation in the early phases of legislation preparation processes. MISA has been organizing a set of events in promoting the ENER and workshops with CSOs participation for sharing their comments on the obstacles in use of ENER. At the same time MCIC has continuously been sharing the results from its monitoring, to both institutions and public contributing to raise of awareness of the both sides important for the successful impact of public participation.

The foreseen improvements of the synergies of initiatives, will lead to increase of the pressure on the civil servants to strictly follow the legislative rules, having in mind that there is constant monitoring of their work and that the monitoring is acknowledged by the Government.

Finally, MISA is going to use the monitoring results to prepare information for the Government, which by "public naming and shaming" method directly contributes to better accountability of the institutions with corrective effect and contributes towards positive competition between the institutions for more transparent and inclusive institutions.

INITIATIVE SUSTAINABILITY (required)

In 200 words or less, please describe any plans for scaling up and/or sustaining the initiative in the future. Base your description of the strategy on information provided in the previous sections, such as how you intend to leverage your current success and increase your reach or capacity. Address any threats or operational challenges to your initiative and describe how you intend to manage those risks on a regular basis.

Financial sustainability of the initiative is obtained for at least next 5 years, as MCIC is devoted to continuing its activity in contributing towards increasing the openness and transparency of the institutions through the advocacy based on facts and in-depth analysis. Government commitment to continue its efforts in creating the environment for public inclusion in law-making processes insures the institutional sustainability. This commitment is also confirmed in the other various documents (OGP Strategy, Strategy for Cooperation with CSOs, Code of good practice for participation of CSOs in policy-making etc.).

Besides publishing the basic results of the Government Mirror Monitoring, on the ENER website, the additional upgrades will be made in order to rank the Ministries in the real time, based on the level of fulfillment of the legal requirements, for the most open or transparent institution versus the opposite. It is intent that for the first time Government publicly announces institutions, which disobeyed the procedure. MISA will also make visualization of data on ENER in barometers or graphics. Potentially the websites will be connected so that the results from MCIC are automatically updated on ENER.

VALIDATION OF CLAIMS (required)

While it is strongly encouraged that each initiative includes partners, such as Civil Society Organizations, private sector agencies, media entities, etc., it is not a requirement. However, you are required to secure and upload documents from one or more credible nongovernmental actors who can attest to the veracity of any claims made in your application.

You are only allowed to upload one file. If you have multiple documents, please zip them into a single file first. The file types that are allowed to be uploaded have an extension of .ZIP, .PDF, .DOC, .DOCX, .XLS or .XLSX.

114-1 MCIC Letter of Confirmation.pdf

C. THE PITCH

The following information allows each applicant to make their strongest (and final) case for consideration.

BEST CASE (required)

In 250 words or less, please present the most compelling facts for why your initiative should be recognized. This is an opportunity to distinguish your initiative, based on any factors that you have not had the opportunity to describe in the previous sections. What is your best argument for why your initiative has achieved a meaningful outcome? What elements of the initiative makes it different and better than others, that have been tried and tested? Be creative and concise.

Government Mirror Project implemented by MCIC, significantly contributed to addressing the problems of increasing the awareness by the CSOs for ENER as an existing tool for participation in early phases of law-making process. On the other side the monitoring results put pressure to the Government to approaches in solving the problems of enforcement of regulation for public participation in policy making. One of the examples, which describes the impact of the monitoring results is that after the remark in the 2012 Report that "words number limitation in the comment text box is a flaw" the technical improvements of the website led to increasing the limit from 140 words to 100,000 characters, and adding the option for attaching the file with comments. This change directly contributed towards the possibility for more comprehensive comments given by the citizens and CSOs through ENER.

The important element that makes this initiative different then the other examples of cooperation between Government and CSOs is that Government is ready to publish the results of the external monitoring, conducted by CSOs no matter how good or bad are the results of the current state. This is because of the strong commitment of the Government to continuously improve itself on the foundations of open, transparent, reliable and efficient government institutions that communicate and cooperate with the citizens.

VIDEO SUBMISSION (recommended)

OGP does not offer a venue for applicants to meet our judges during the application process. In order to provide the opportunity for making a personal connection, you are encouraged to upload a short video to complement your application. You may also depict an individual participant in your initiative and describe his or her experience. We do not need to know actual names or personal details. Take this opportunity to tell a story, to connect with our panel of experts, so that they might better understand your attention to specific needs.

Video submissions should follow these guidelines:

- Maximum length of 3-4 minutes.
 - Please focus on personal presentations; it's not necessary to develop a sophisticated or polished video.
- Here are some logistical and technical suggestions:
- Video cameras, digital cameras, and phones are easy ways to record a video.
 - Laptop and desktop computers can typically record video through Skype or other software.
 - If possible, set to a low resolution to reduce file size. This will enable an easier video uploading process.
 - If you are having difficulty uploading the video file, try logging out of the application and logging back in using another Internet browser.

Here are general suggestions for delivering a high-quality video pitch:

- Include the following:
 - Introduce yourself and your initiative.
 - Focus on describing your intended benefits and/or services and how they have been effective.
 - What is unique about your initiative, partners, or technical approach?
 - Have your content and language simple.
 - Demonstrate passion through your words and enthusiasm.

*If the burden of developing a video presentation is either prohibitive or might not reflect the best characterization of your initiative, then you are not required to submit one, and the judges are instructed not to discount your application because it may not include a video. We hope that this option offers a new and inventive way in which you can best express the results of your work.