

Project title: Increasing Government Transparency and Accountability Through Electronic Access to Information

Date of visit: April 27, 2007

Place of visit: Town of Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria

The following issues were discussed during the workshop:

1. Conditions for proper implementation of the Bulgarian Access to Public Information Act (APIA)
2. Results from the assessments which Access to Public Information Foundation (AIP) conducted in March 2006 and March 2007 of 411 institutional web sites from the point of view of the APIA
3. Foreign legislation providing for electronic access to information (Hungary, Estonia, USA, Serbia) - publication schemes, list of categories of information subject to active publication
4. Problems with active provision of information, particularly publication on institutional web sites, that officials encounter in their work:
 - lack of specific legal requirement for the creation, keeping, and provision of information in electronic form, as well as for the maintenance of Internet sites;
 - unclear formulation of the obligations for the institutions for active publication of information and control over the implementation of the APIA;
 - lack of responsible information official;
 - unclear legal regulations regarding the publicity of mayor's decisions;
 - lack of a description of the registries that the institutions keep.
5. Categories of information that shall be actively provided by the institutions by publishing them on the web sites:
 - final acts of the local government in their full content;
 - drafts of all acts before their final adoption, as well as information about the opportunities for public discussion/consultation on them;
 - the schedule for the sessions of the local government with the respective agenda;
 - contact information of the members of the local government;
 - a registry of all mayor's decisions and orders;
 - description of the data volumes and resources, used by the respective administration;
 - results from different kind of inspections and imposed sanctions;
 - asset declarations;
 - list of the information categories subject to administrative secret.
6. A model institutional web site from the point of view of access to information was presented.

On the bases of the discussion, the following recommendations were given by the participants in the workshop:

1. The requirement for an information official of a department to be specified in the Access to Public Information Act
2. The publicity of the public procurement contracts to be clearly provided by law
3. Categories of information regarding public procurement tenders subject to provision to be specified by law
4. Main categories of information subject to publication online to be legally defined
5. Unification of the content and structure of institutional web sites by the Minister of State Administration and Administrative Reform or by law
6. A special freedom of information section to be created on the web sites of the institutions