



THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

ACTION PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE INITIATIVE

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP

IN THE REPUBLIC OF CROATIA

FOR PERIOD 2012-2013

Zagreb, 2012

INTRODUCTION

As a member of the global *Open government partnership* initiative, the Republic of Croatia has shown its commitment to supporting the principles of transparency, fight against corruption, empowering citizens, and using the advantages of modern technology in order to make public authority bodies more efficient and accountable on all levels as well as to create prerequisites for more efficient and innovative public service provision and public resource management.

Values on which efforts of countries members of *Open Government Partnership* are based, are entirely complementary to the values which Croatia has committed to during the process of joining the European Union while devoting many years of hard work to fulfilling the requirements for reforms and harmonisation on all levels of social, political and economic activity.

By joining the global *Open Government Partnership* initiative in September 2011, Croatia accepted the obligation to draft its National Action Plan and present it to other countries, members of the initiative, at the annual conference in April 2012. In order to provide information and advice but also encourage the active participation of civil society and interested members of the public in drafting the Action Plan, public discussions were organised in September 2011 and January 2012. The discussions focused on main achievements and challenges in strengthening the openness of public authority bodies. Furthermore, during preparatory activities for drafting the Action Plan, public consultations were conducted and civil society organisations were given the opportunity to equally participate in all stages of its development. Such approach is in line with the Government objective of introducing a new approach to establishing co-operation between state administration bodies, citizens and civil society in order to open the space for united action in creating, implementing and supervising the policies which have direct impact on the citizens. This approach aims to encourage transparency and openness of public authority bodies and involve citizens and civil society in shaping public policy.

Bearing in mind the contents of the discussions with the representatives of the interested public and civil society organisations, which are active in the areas to which Partnership pertains, but also with respect to the objectives set out in the Government Programme for 2011-2015, more efficient public resource management was recognized as a priority challenge. In this context, special attention will be given to strengthening fiscal transparency. This implies openness towards the public concerning the structure and functions of authorities, fiscal policy objectives, public sector account and projections. This includes unhindered access to reliable, comprehensive, timely, comprehensible and internationally comparable information about the Government activities so that both the electorate and the financial markets can accurately assess the financial position, actual expenses and benefits that the Government activities yield including their present and future economic and social implications.

In line with the instructions of the initiative's Steering Committee, the Action Plan was drawn up for the period until the end of 2013. This is a "living document" and as such should

be adjusted accordingly in line with new circumstances that arise in the work of public authority bodies and the contribution of civil society organisations and wider public in general. Also, it should be continuously implemented in everyday work of public authority bodies on all levels in the interest of improving the quality of life of Croatian citizens.

PROGRESS ACHIEVED ON THE WAY TO OPEN GOVERNMENT

In previous years the Republic of Croatia achieved noticeable progress in the areas which are covered by the Open Government Partnership initiative in the context of the demanding process of joining the EU. Strategic framework for the fight against corruption and strengthening openness and transparency of public authorities is comprehensively defined in the Anti-Corruption Strategy and its accompanying Action Plan which comprises 145 measures with specific deadlines for execution, appointed implementation bodies, and funds necessary for the implementation. Notwithstanding the many challenges in the area of strengthening open and transparent government, it can also be useful to point out some of the more important achievements from the previous period:

1. Access to information

Significant progress was achieved by introducing amendments to the Constitution of the Republic of Croatia (Official Gazette, 76/2010 and 85/2010 – consolidated text) which made access to information a constitutionally guaranteed right. Furthermore, by adopting the amendments to the Act on the Right of Access to Information (Official Gazette 77/11) Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency was given authority to perform the tasks of an independent body for the protection of the right of access to information and a body of the second instance in proceedings about exercising the right of access to information on the basis of the above mentioned Act. Additionally, the number of exceptions in which a public body can deny access to information was limited, and a systematic training of information officers initiated.

2. Public participation in shaping public policy

By adopting the Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in procedures of adopting laws, other regulations and acts (Official Gazette 140/2009) in November 2009, prerequisites were created for strengthening transparency in the work of public authority bodies in this area. On the level of central state administration bodies and the Government offices, new coordinators for consultations were given the task of consistently monitoring and coordinating the consultation procedures within their respective bodies and offices. On the other hand, in the last ten years a lot has been done to create the environment conducive to the development of civil society. Croatia was among the first countries in this part of Europe to take concrete steps in creating the legal, institutional and financial frameworks for cooperation with NGOs and other civil society organisations in creating a democratic and socially sensitive society.

3. Information technology – administration at the service of the citizens

Moja uprava (my administration) web portal was set up in 2007 as a place of integrated communication between the system of public authority and public administration and its

users and citizens in general. One of the significant aims of the web portal was to provide the infrastructure needed for an efficient system which enables implementation of open government in practice by connecting all public authority bodies in their joint efforts.

4. Transparency of Public Procurement procedures

Enactment of the Public Procurement Act (Official Gazette 90/2011) has improved transparency in all phases of public procurement. In order to raise the level of transparency in the process of executing public contracts, all public authority bodies are obliged to announce information about concluded public procurement contracts and their execution. Due to the additional efforts of a few civil society organisations, it is now possible to access information on all executed and advertised public procurement procedures in Croatia.

5. Public accessibility of information about the assets owned by public officials and civil servant managers

System of asset declaration for public officials was improved. The list of obligors was expanded in 2011 to include civil servant managers and publication of asset declarations is made possible through www.sukobinteresa.hr website.

6. Increased transparency of political party funding

New Political Activity and Election Campaign Financing Act adopted in 2011 (Official Gazette 24/2011 and 61/2011) established an integrated framework for transparent political party funding and an independent system of monitoring and sanctions in case of Act violations.

7. Established mechanisms for strengthening integrity and openness in the work of public companies

Anti-corruption programme for companies whose majority shareholder is the state is underway in 85 companies. Its aim is to encourage the strengthening of transparency, accountability and integrity in their work. A collective report on the implementation of the programme, together with individual reports of respective companies, was published on www.antikorupcija.hr website.

8. Progress towards fiscal transparency

Ministry of Finance website provides information about the state budget and treasury, EU pre-accession programmes and funds, auctions of treasury stocks (gilts), publications, statistics and reports issued by the Ministry of Finance as well as much more useful information about public finances. At the beginning of 2011, a new Act on Fiscal Responsibility came into effect (Official Gazette 139/2010) whose objective it is to ensure and maintain fiscal responsibility, transparency and medium-term and long-term sustainability of public finances. Although competent public authority bodies publish all key documents regarding the state budget (Strategy of Government programmes for three-year periods, guidelines of economic and fiscal policy for a three-year period, state budget with projections, monthly reports about state budget execution, semi-annual and annual reports on state budget and extrabudgetary funds execution, report on the audit of the annual report on state budget execution carried out by the State Audit Office), there is room for

improvement in terms of their content, but also the accompanying documents e.g. a guidebook for citizens, which would contribute to fiscal transparency as an essential component of a more efficient public resource management as well as strengthen the economic growth. There are many examples of good practice in budget transparency on the local level. Nevertheless, additional efforts are needed in order to enable greater participation of citizens and civil society organisations in local budget planning and monitoring. Regarding transparency of extrabudgetary funds work, the State Audit Office has already begun the positive practice of publishing the reports on audit findings, and new steps in this direction were announced, which will ensure that all previously prepared audit reports on extrabudgetary funds are permanently accessible on the State Audit Office's website.

OBLIGATIONS UNDERTAKEN IN THE ACTION PLAN

Based on the results of the initial public discussions and consultations with civil society organisations, one of the identified priorities of the Action Plan for the implementation of the Open Government Partnership initiative in the Republic of Croatia until the end of 2013 was more efficient public resource management. That is why the choice of measures and activities in the Action Plan primarily focused on the need to cover all relevant areas which could have implications on the quality and efficiency of public resource management. These primarily include budget transparency, access to information, using information technologies and citizen participation in shaping public policies.

A. FISCAL TRANSPARENCY

Fiscal transparency ensures that citizens have access to information needed in order to evaluate the Government's political decisions through monitoring and analysis of such information.

Budget transparency (open budget) implies that it is possible for the citizens to get information about the budget which is complete, relevant, accurate, timely, and presented understandably. Lack of transparency in this area can lead to choosing unpopular and inadequate programmes as well as corrupt and prodigal spending. Open budget protects against wastefulness, fraud and abuse but also enables the citizens to call the authorities to responsibility while strengthening the trust in the political process. Apart from having a positive effect on the quality of management, budget transparency also brings significant financial benefits to the state. Research has shown that countries with more transparent budgets have easier access to international financial markets and lower borrowing costs.

In accordance with best international practices, the key to achieving open budget is that authorities, at different phases of the budgeting process, publish key budgetary documents (guidelines for economic and fiscal policy, government budget proposal, adopted budget,

periodic reports through the year, semi-annual report, annual report and state audit office report), along with their simplified versions (budget for citizens).

In order to improve fiscal transparency, a number of measures and activities are planned mostly in connection with accessibility and public announcement of information from the state budget and financial reports, as well as from local budgets and relevant registers. In so doing, care is taken that all accurate and relevant information from said sources (state budget, reports, local budgets, registers) are available to the public in a timely manner, and also that the content of the sources is clearly defined so that they provide information that is accessible in a form which is understandable to most citizens (budget for citizens).

For the purpose of achieving the above mentioned objectives, the following measures and implementing activities will be taken:

MEASURE 1 IMPROVING THE CONTENT AND TRANSPARENCY OF BUDGETARY DOCUMENTS

Implementing activity 1.1

Publish the proposal of the state budget timely and update it so that it contains the following:

a) Information which shows how proposals of new statutory solutions will influence the revenue and expenditure of the budgetary year in comparison with the existing legislation; b) Functional classification of expenditures for the budgetary year and the year preceding it; c) The state of public debt at the beginning and end of the budgetary year; d) Structure of public debt for the budgetary year and the year preceding it; e) Arrears with current state on 30 June; f) Information on contingent liabilities for the budgetary year (guarantees); g) Information about where it is possible to find the data on the impact of macroeconomic presumptions on budget revenue, expenditure and debt (sensitivity analysis).

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Co-implementing partners: Competent Ministries

Implementation Deadline: November 2012 and November 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity

Implementation Indicators: Proposal of the state budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2013 and 2014 with projections for the following two years updated with the above mentioned elements and published no later than 15 November.

Implementing activity 1.2

Update monthly reports on the execution of the state budget for 2013 with the data on expenses incurred according to the organisational classification and publish them no later than a month following the completion of the period to which they pertain

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Start of Implementation Deadline: February 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity

Implementation Indicators: Monthly reports updated with the data on expenses incurred according to the organisational classification and published no later than a month following the completion of the period to which they pertain.

Implementing activity 1.3

Update the semi-annual report on the state budget execution for 2013 with: a) An explanation about how the changed economic conditions and proposals of new statutory solutions will influence the planned revenue and expenditure by the end of the year; b) Modified revenue and expenditure plan for the budgetary year with detailed explanations within statutory deadlines; c) Information about where the updated revenue and expenditure forecasts for the two years following the budgetary year can be found.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Co-implementing partners: Competent Ministries

Implementation Deadline: September 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity

Implementation Indicators: Proposal of the semi-annual report on the execution of the state budget of the Republic of Croatia for the first half of 2013 which is updated with the above mentioned elements and published no later than 15 September 2013.

Implementing activity 1.4

Update the annual report on the state budget execution for 2012 with an explanation about the difference between the original macroeconomic forecasts for the budgetary year and the real outcomes and publish it within statutory deadlines

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Implementation Deadline: June 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity

Implementation Indicators: Proposal of the annual report on the execution of the state budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2012 updated with the above mentioned elements is published no later than 1 June 2013.

MEASURE 2 IMPROVING TRANSPARENCY OF BUSINESS ACTIVITY OF THE COMPANIES OF SPECIAL STATE INTEREST

Implementing activity 2.1

Publish annual business activity reports of the companies of special state interest no later than 30 September of the current year for the previous year.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Co-implementing partners: Companies of special state interest

Implementation Deadline: September 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Published annual business activity reports of the companies of special state interest no later than 30 September of the current year for the previous year.

MEASURE 3 MAKING THE CONTENTS OF ALL BUDGETARY DOCUMENTS UNDERSTANDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE TO CITIZENS

Implementing activity 3.1

Make simple and easily understandable summaries – guidebooks for citizens (e.g. Budget for Citizens) of key budgetary documents (economic and fiscal policy guidelines, state budget proposal and projections, state budget and projections adopted by the Croatian Parliament, semi-annual and annual reports on the state budget execution) and publish them in a timely manner.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Start of Implementation Deadline: 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: A Guidebook for citizens written and published simultaneously with the Report on the state budget execution of the Republic of Croatia for 2012, together with the Guidelines on economic and fiscal policy for period 2014-2016, the Semi-annual report on the state budget execution of the Republic of Croatia for the first half of 2013, and the Proposal of the state budget of the Republic of Croatia for 2014 with projections for 2015 and 2016 adopted by the Croatian Parliament.

MEASURE 4 IMPROVING ACCESSIBILITY OF LOCAL BUDGET CONTENTS TO THE CITIZENS AND THE PUBLIC

Implementing activity 4.1

Give recommendations and instructions to all local and regional self-government units to publish, on their official web sites, key budgetary documents (budget proposal – when the executive bodies send it to the representative bodies; budget adopted by the representative body – when the representative body adopts it; semi-annual and annual report on execution – when the executive bodies send it to the representative bodies).

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Co-implementing partners: Local and regional self-government units

Implementation Deadline: July 2012 and July 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: In the Budgeting guidelines for local and regional self-government units for 2013 and 2014, instructions are given to all local and regional self-government units to publish key budgetary documents on their web sites within recommended deadlines.

Implementing activity 4.2

Make a standardized format for publishing guidebooks for citizens to accompany the local and regional self-government unit budgets and recommend their timely announcement to local authorities.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Implementation Deadline: July 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Standardized format for publishing a guidebook for citizens is designed and accompanies the publication of local and regional self-government units' budgets. Their announcement recommended in the Guidelines for local and regional self-government units' budget planning for 2014.

B. ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Notwithstanding the significant progress achieved in this area, in order to exercise the principle of transparency and free access to information in the possession of public authority bodies, the Act on the Right of Access to Information needs to be further harmonised with the Constitution so that easier access to information is ensured. Further amendments to the Act are also necessary, particularly in parts which regulate the need to transpose the Directive on the re-use of public sector information, the obligation of consulting the public in adopting new legislation, other regulations and legal acts in accordance with the Code of Practice on Consultation and other issues in connection with improving the exercise of the right of access to information in the first and second instance.

Also, progress in the area of exercising the right of access to information will be achieved by regularly publishing information of public interest, particularly information pertaining to the spending of public funds, ensuring credibility and public announcement of information about political activity and electoral campaign financing, public procurement, and awarding public funds and public contracts.

For the purpose of achieving the above mentioned objectives, it is necessary to implement the following measures and implementing activities:

MEASURE 5 IMPROVING THE LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK FOR EXERCISING THE RIGHT OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Implementing activity 5.1

Amend the Act on the Right of Access to Information

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partners: Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency, The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs, Croatian Information-Documentation Referral Agency

Implementation Deadline: September 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Amendments to the Act on the Right of Access to Information are defined by the Croatian Government, particularly in parts regulating the need to transpose the Directive on the re-use of public sector information, the obligation of consulting the public in adopting new legislation, other regulations and legal acts in accordance with the Code of Practice on Consultation and other issues in connection with improving the exercise of the right of access to information in the first and second instance.

Implementing activity 5.2

Harmonise the Data Confidentiality Act with the amendments to the Act on the Right of Access to Information, depending on the results of expert discussions and the discussions with the interested public

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partners: Croatian Personal Data Protection Agency, Office of the National Security Council, Ministry of the Interior

Implementation Deadline: September 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Expert discussions and the discussions with the interested public conducted, depending on the discussion results and in case of need for further amendments to the Act on the Right of Access to Information envisaged in activity 5.1., amendments to the Data Confidentiality Act defined by the Croatian Government.

MEASURE 6 IMPROVING ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON EXPENDING PUBLIC RESOURCES AND CONTENTS OF RELEVANT REGISTERS

Implementing activity 6.1

Evaluate the implementation of Political Activity and Electoral Campaign Financing Act

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partner: State Election Commission

Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Detailed analysis and evaluation of the Political Activity and Electoral Campaign Financing Act conducted and guidelines for drafting amendments to the Act drawn up, particularly focusing on the issues which were shown to be insufficiently regulated in the implementation.

Implementing activity 6.2

Create prerequisites for the public announcement and permanent accessibility of a searchable database on electoral campaign and political party donors.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partner: State Election Commission

Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Prerequisites created for public announcement and permanent accessibility of a searchable database on electoral campaign and political party donors.

Implementing activity 6.3

On the website www.javnanabava.hr provide a consolidated and publicly available list of links to individual “Registers of public procurement contracts and framework agreements” which were published individually.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Economy

Start of Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Consolidated and publicly available list of links to previously published Registers of public procurement contracts and framework agreements on the website www.javnanabava.hr in line with article 21 of the Public Procurement Act.

Implementing activity 6.4

Publish public procurement contracts and framework agreements concluded by the Central Procurement Office on the Office’s website.

Implementing Body: Central Procurement Office

Start of Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Public procurement contracts and framework agreements concluded by the Central Procurement Office published on the Central Procurement Office’s website (www.sredisnjanabava.hr)

Implementing activity 6.5

Publish all concession contracts for the provision of television and radio media services (without tender documents).

Implementing Body: Electronic Media Agency

Co-implementing partner: Ministry of Culture

Start of Implementation Deadline: November 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: All concession contracts for the provision of television and radio media services (without tender documents) published on the Agency's website

Implementation activity 6.6

Create prerequisites for publishing information on financial and non-financial property managed by the state

Implementing Body: Central State Administrative Office for State Property Management

Co-implementing partners: State Property Management Agency, Ministry of Finance

Start of Implementation Deadline: June 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Published data on financial and non-financial property managed by the state (list of property including purpose, current beneficiaries, and wherever possible also the estimated value)

Implementing activity 6.7

Create prerequisites in the strategic and financial plans of the Ministry of Finance for designing and announcing a publicly searchable database on payments executed through the Treasury Single Account in line with the stipulated budget classifications taking into consideration other ongoing IT projects.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: The strategic and financial plans of the State Treasury contain prerequisites for designing and publishing a publicly searchable database about payments executed through the Treasury Single Account in line with the stipulated budget classifications, taking into account other ongoing IT projects.

Implementing activity 6.8

Recommend to local and regional self-government units the timely announcement of the representative bodies' sessions' agendas and all session materials on their official websites, in line with the provisions of their general acts about the obligatory delivery of

session materials to the members of the representative body no later than five days before the session takes place.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Implementation Deadline: June 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Recommendations to all local and regional self-government units to announce the agendas for their representative bodies' sessions on their websites are drawn up.

Implementing activity 6.9

Envisage in the bill on accounting for NGOs the obligation of making NGOs financial statements publicly available through the NGO Register

Implementing Body: Ministry of Finance

Implementation Deadline: December 2013

Necessary Funds: 70,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: Bill on accounting for NGOs is drafted and stipulates the obligation of public announcement of NGOs financial statements.

Implementing activity 6.10

Improve the public database on grants awarded to civil society organisations for projects and programmes of public interest

Implementing Body: The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Co-implementing partner: National Foundation for Civil Society Development

Start of Implementation Deadline: June 2012

Necessary Funds: 15,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: Public database enlarged to include the information about the results of projects and programmes of NGOs/civil society organisations financed from the state budget

C. USING INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Information technology promotes and supports good governance in three basic ways: 1) by increasing transparency, 2) by facilitating decision making processes and citizen participation, and 3) by improving the efficiency of public goods and services provision.

For the purpose of achieving the objectives of the Action Plan pertaining to the usage of information technology, special emphasis will be given to the following:

MEASURE 7 ENSURING TRANSPARENT WORK OF PUBLIC AUTHORITY BODIES IN THE SERVICE OF EXERCISING CITIZEN RIGHTS

Implementing activity 7.1

Substantial and technical enhancement of *Moja uprava* web portal as a functional service, which contains all the information about how citizens and beneficiaries can exercise their rights before state administration bodies

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partners: State administration bodies

Start of Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: 1,000,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: New technological solution is created for *Moja uprava* web portal, all state administration bodies have well trained staff who are using the portal for announcing public information; within state administration an organisational system for editing *Moja uprava* web portal is set up; the number of users increased to 10,000 per month until the end of 2013.

Implementing activity 7.2

Consolidation and interlinking of all the information pertaining to the status of natural and legal persons, whose records are kept by individual public authority bodies

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partners: Public authority bodies which keep official records on the status of natural and legal persons.

Implementation Deadline: December 2013

Necessary Funds: 2,500,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: A central register system is set up; basic system for electronic data exchange is established in one place; and a user box is created on *Moja uprava* web portal allowing personal access to information kept by state administration bodies about a person.

Implementing activity 7.3

Setting up a scheme of information from other bodies of state administration at *Moja uprava* web portal.

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partners: Personal Data Protection Agency, Croatian Information-Documentation Referral Agency, state administration bodies

Start of Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: *Moja uprava* web portal contains the scheme of public information and of competent state administration bodies.

Implementing activity 7.4

Establish and regularly enhance the system of providing public services through the Internet

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partners: All state administration bodies

Start of Implementation Deadline: December 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Programme for the development of electronic public services is drawn up.

D. CITIZEN AND CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

It is important that the citizens and the civil society participate in the drafting and implementation of public policy thus contributing to the quality of the decision making process and enhancing the quality of the decisions themselves. At the same time, this strengthens the citizens' trust in authorities. In line with best international practices, the executive power should hold consultations with a number of different stakeholders and the interested public during the preparation of budgetary documents, but also in procedures of decision making on issues of public interest in general. In so doing, it is important to be proactive and rely on more than one possible method of consultations, e.g.: Focus groups, social networks, surveys, panel discussions, internet consultations, etc. The Act on Right of Access to Information stipulates that the public authority bodies tasked with drawing up draft laws and regulations are obliged to publish the drafts of these acts. Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in procedures of adopting laws, other regulations and acts provides a good framework for citizen participation in the decision making process. However, its implementation is still lacking, particularly taking into consideration its voluntary character.

In order to ensure citizen and civil society participation in achieving the objectives of the Action Plan, it is necessary to conduct the following measures and implementing activities:

MEASURE 8 SETTING UP A SYSTEM OF PARTICIPATORY DRAFTING AND MONITORING OF STATE AND LOCAL BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing activity 8.1

Support open public discussions and consultations with citizens and civil society organisations in order to identify priorities in budget funds allocation.

Implementing Body: The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Co-implementing Partners: National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Ministry of Finance

Start of Implementation Deadline: January 2013

Necessary Funds: 25,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: Open public discussions conducted in different local communities in order to identify priorities in the area of budget funds allocation for 2014.

Implementing activity 8.2

Enable participation of public employees, scientists, experts and other persons in the discussions about key budgetary documents in sessions of Croatian Parliament working bodies.

Implementing Body: Croatian Parliament

Start of Implementation Deadline: June 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Public employees, scientists, experts and other persons and representatives of the interested public are involved in discussions in sessions of Croatian Parliament working bodies.

Implementing activity 8.3

Support cooperation programmes between local and regional self-government units and civil society organisations in strengthening budget transparency and citizen participation in planning and monitoring local budget implementation.

Implementing Body: The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Co-implementing partners: National Foundation for Civil Society Development, Local and regional self-government units, Associations of cities, municipalities and counties

Start of Implementation Deadline: January 2013

Necessary Funds: 1,500,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: Implemented Programmes for strengthening of budget transparency and citizen participation in local budget planning and monitoring in cooperation between local and regional self-government units and civil society organisations are implemented.

Implementing activity 8.4

Conduct a public discussion about the financial statements of all companies of special state interest

Implementing Body: The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Co-implementing partners: Ministry of Finance, Companies of special state interest

Implementation Deadline: October 2012, October 2013

Necessary Funds: 20,000 HRK

Implementation Indicators: Public discussions about the financial statements of all companies of special state interest conducted with civil society organisations and the representatives of the interested public held.

MEASURE 9 IMPROVING THE PRACTICE OF CONSULTING THE INTERESTED PUBLIC IN PROCEDURES OF ADOPTING NEW LAWS, OTHER REGULATIONS AND ACTS

Implementing activity 9.1

Introduce amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Croatian Government which stipulate the obligation of referring the proposals of draft regulations to the process of consultations (in line with the Code of Practice on Consultation) and require submitting the report on conducted consultations together with draft laws and other regulations

Implementing Body: Government of the Republic of Croatia, upon the proposal by the Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Start of Implementation Deadline: September 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Croatian Government are adopted so that art. 29, par. 4 stipulates the obligation of submitting the report on conducted consultations, and par. 5 the obligation of referring the proposals of draft regulations to the process of consultations in line with the Code and a plan of consultations on the draft laws, other regulations and acts which is passed by the head of the competent body, together with the plan of legislative activities.

Implementing activity 9.2

Set up a standardized internet system for consulting the public in the procedure of adopting new laws, other regulations and acts

Implementing Body: Ministry of Administration

Co-implementing partner: The Office of the President of the Government of the Republic of Croatia

Implementation Deadline: September 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Draft laws, other regulations and acts about which competent state administration bodies conduct consultations with the interested public are timely published on the web portal for consultations before being submitted to the Government for adoption, in line with the Code.

Implementing activity 9.3

Conduct regular training for consultation coordinators and other civil servants so that they are proficient in using the Code of Practice efficiently.

Implementing Body: The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Co-implementing partner: State School for Public Administration

Start of Implementation Deadline: June 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: No less than three two-day seminars for the training of consultation coordinators and other civil servants held

Implementing activity 9.4

Prepare annual reports on the efficient implementation of the Code of Practice on Consultation with the Interested Public in procedures of adopting new laws, other regulations and acts

Implementing Body: The Government Office for Cooperation with NGOs

Co-implementing partners: State administration bodies

Deadline: February 2013

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Annual report on the implementation of the Code of Practice on Consultation drawn up

Implementing activity 9.5

Include the representatives of public employees, scientists, and experts in the work of the Croatian Parliament working bodies

Implementing Body: Croatian Parliament

Deadline: June 2012

Necessary Funds: No additional funds necessary for the implementation of the activity.

Implementation Indicators: Public employees, scientists, and experts are involved in the work of all Croatian Parliament working bodies.