

Presentation of Mr. Ace Kocevski, Mayor of Municipality of Veles,
Republic of Macedonia

**Topic: „Advantages of the e-governance concept in the process of
decentralization“**

Workshop: „eAdministration, e Democracy“
Bilbao, Spain
10.11.2005

Dear mister Ocariz, Secretary General of the second World Summit of cities,
Dear _____

Dear guests, representatives of the states, multilateral organizations, NGO's
and the business sector,
Dear colleagues, mayors and representatives of municipalities,
Dear friends,

Allow me at first, in my personal name, in the name of the Municipality
Council and in the name of all citizens of Veles to express our gratitude to the
Government of Baskia, UNITAR and CIFAL for the invitation to participate at
this important event for the future development of the local communities.

I feel a great honor and pleasure for the possibility that you have given
to the Municipality of Veles to present the experiences in the field of
implementation of information and communication technology at this
workshop.

It is a fact that we live in time of globalization that is the result of rapid
technological development and liberalization.

This is a time when democracy, development and wealth, depends of
global communications, Internet and electronic commercialization.

The information is the most important resource and the knowledge and
personal development is the most important factor for following and accepting
of changes and the new rules of competitiveness.

PRESENTATION OF EXPERIENCES

In the past four months, the Republic of Macedonia was faced with the
challenge of implementation of the first phase of the decentralization of power
as the most important reform process in the State.

This process has given the new dimension to the local governance as an
important element in the development of democratic processes, because
without developed local governance, there is no democracy.

The new competences imposed new dynamic in providing of services for
the citizens with significantly augmented quantity, particularly in the fields of
urbanism, tax administration, local economic development, education, social
protection, culture, sport and collaboration with NGO sector.

The enlarged quantity of services imposed the need for enhancing of the quality of services and transparency in the municipal work.

Fortunately, the Municipality of Veles has succeeded to foresee the pulse of the coming reforms and early to take over the concrete steps for implementation of information and communication technology as a technical support in the work of municipal administration.

Since the time for years ago when was opened the Center of information and communication technology until today, the Municipality of Veles has succeeded to gain the primacy of the most successful municipality in implementation of the information and communication technology in the Republic of Macedonia and to become a municipality-example in the process of decentralization.

Accordingly the process of decentralization of power and take over of the new competences, the essential transformation in the manner of work of the municipal administration was in the direction of creating the conditions at local level which will provide a long-term and sustainable development of the community.

Link of the key partners in this process: the state, local self-governance, business sector and the citizens are only possible through the utilization of the advantages of information and communication technology.

The results that followed were issued from our clear vision, the quality of offered projects and the great support by domestic and foreign governmental and non-governmental agencies and foundations. I wish to use this occasion to express a public gratitude to all of them.

Thanks to the intensive activities in the framework of implementation of the information and communication technology and a significant number of realized pilot-projects, the municipal administration is continuously modernizing, improving and transforming in to administration where all the employees every day uses the advantages of ICT (Internet and Intranet). Our vision that was saying „Computer on every post“, today is transformed in „Satisfied citizens-our aim“.

At the same time within the process of the technical equipment, we have succeeded to provide the necessary trainings for achieving of basic, advanced and special knowledge and computer skills. The municipal administration, today have new organization design and enhanced capacities of human resource which are competent to work with specialized software solutions. In the Municipality of Veles is established functional Document management system): the archive and office work, following of the court cases, financial management, tax administration, providing of services in area of urbanism, as well as the services for the small closure commercial activities, is realized in electronic way.

The training was one of the essential processes that provide a high level of efficiency, effectiveness and professionalism in the work of administration, in other words, a successful establishment and fulfillment of the needs of back office.

The training process included also a great number of citizens, pupils, students, representatives of NGO's and unemployed persons. One thousand and fifty two persons have successfully completed the training, and around 500 persons are currently in training processes.

The advantage of the information technology in the work of municipal administration was very important for the creation of high quality, rapid, timely, and cheap services for the citizens. Accordingly the decentralization process, this is very important particularly in the field of urbanism and tax administration as a focus of our interests, with aim to provide direct effects of the implementation of e-governance.

The creation of the official web page of the Municipality of Veles was a great step forward in the field of transparency and providing of citizens participation in the creation of local development policy.

At the web page www.veles.gov.mk, the citizens have the possibility, through the forums, to participate with their suggestions and comments in discussions in all fields of life in the local community.

With aim to provide a better services for socially imperiled citizens which are in great number in Veles as a result of the economic collapse of the industrial capacities during the transition process, we have opened the first free access point in the local library. Besides the free access to the global network, this point offers to the citizens also the free trainings in computer skills.

Acceptation of the concept of e-citizenship that has initiate the progress in many countries, imposed the new challindges for the Municipality of Veles.

In that direction, currently we work on implementation of a project for establishing of one stop shop (front office) that will contribute to achieve the following objectives:

- Incorporation of the services for the citizens and the business sector at one same place,
- Use of various sophisticated communication channels based on IT,
- Providing of access for the citizens with disabilities,
- Enhancing of transparency in the work of municipal administration and augmenting the thrust in governance.

All the current activities are part of the „Strategy for establishment of e-municipality“, adopted by the Municipality Council. First in Macedonia, the Municipality of Veles have created the Strategy that is compatible with the National Strategy for implementation of e-society, the Action plan of EU and the recommendations of the World Bank.

The „Strategy for establishment of e-municipality“represents a traced path to be followed by whole public sector which should except the information technology as the mean for improving of the services offered to the citizens and the business sector that will lead to the true promotion of an economic and social development, improving of the internal efficiency and effectiveness of work, the transparency, accessibility to the information and timely services.

The practical realization of the „Strategy for establishment of e-municipality“, „Strategy for establishment of e-municipality“, have already resulted with positive effects in the area of enhancing of the citizens participation in the process of public decisions.

(Case study)

During the preparation of the Strategy, the draft version was published on the official web page of the municipality, accessible at the Internet network as well as on the web page accessible for the citizens through the local cable operator. The citizens have had the possibility to participate with their suggestions, remarks and discussions about the contents of the Strategy at the discussion forums in the framework of web pages.

With aim to provide objective opinion, including the citizens that have no access to Internet, the municipality has organized a public discussion dedicated to the Strategy. In the final version of this strategic document were incorporated all the constructive suggestions and remarks. The Municipality Council has unanimously adopted the Strategy. The positive experiences from the creation of the Strategy have contributed this approach of including of public in making decisions process, to become an every day practice, and a basic principle of transparent work.

The public opinion questioning in the Municipality of Veles is continuously realized through sondages on various questions of the social life that are accessible on the official web page. The aim of this approach that provides the initiation of the public participation is to provide an harmonized implementation of the concepts of e-government, eDemocracy and e-Citizenship in the process of making decisions in all the important areas of the local community life through the participation of the NGO's, business sector and the citizens.

2. DIFFICULTIES IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EXPERIENCES

At the same beginning of the practical realization of the strategic determinations for development of the e-government concept, the problems were clearly obvious in the Municipality of Veles:

- **Lack of financial means** as the priority problem, have requested the additional efforts for finding the means necessary for technical equipment and adequate system solutions.
-The Municipality of Veles surpassed this problem through preparation and practical realization of the quality projects that were supported by the donators. However, the lack of financial means remains one of the greatest barriers for more dynamic implementation of the strategic designations of the municipality for development of the information technology.
- **The low level of computer knowledge and skills**, as a capacity of the municipal administration, has imposed the need of their continuous enhancing and augmenting. The total development of the technical, technological and human resources on local level are significant element for hasten and successful process, but also, a significant element for whole development of the local community.

-Again, through the realization of projects in collaboration with UNDP, were provided the trainings, not only for the employees in the municipal administration, but also for a large number of pupils, students and unemployed persons. One thousand fifty two (1052) persons have successfully passed the trainings in computer skills. A part of the employees have passed special trainings to be able to work with specialized software. With aim to augment the number of the users of computer technology, the trainings at the first free access point are intensively and continuously running.

- One of the greatest problems is the **small number of the Internet users in Macedonia** (according different sources it is moving from 5 until 19% of the population). The expensive telephone impulse and the monopoly position of the Macedonian Telecom are the main reason for the impuissance of the Macedonian citizens, which in circumstances of total economic and social stagnation cannot allow themselves to use the services of the global network.

-For the providers, the solution is in finding an alternative access to Internet through a cable or trough a satellite. In the Municipality of Veles, the citizens already use the services of a cable operator.

- **Lack of reforms of the management in the business sector** is also

-The readiness for transformation of the organization systems and acceptance of the modern work concepts, as a condition for transformation of the industrial society in to society based on knowledge will provide greater implementation of ICT in every day work.

- **The dynamic development of technology**, the choice and the creation of convenient software packages, are also the problems that deserve deeper analyses and taking of concrete steps in the run for development of the information technology.

- At this plan, the Municipality of Veles is already working on a project for transferring of university departments from the information technology field from the Capital to Veles. The development of new study departments will provide the creation of a center of creative human resources, which could contribute in the development of ICT on local as well as on the national level. In this way, we could prevent the loosing of competent human resources, which the most often are in quest of perspective in foreign countries.

For surpassing of the barriers in the transformation process of the local governance to e-governance, we have to fulfill the following conditions:

- Filling of the need of reforms,
- Clear vision, Development of policy and strategy,
- Good Action plan,
- Pronounced political will,
- Large support,
- Convenient organizational structure,
- Implemented e-education in all the educational institutions.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- The global trends imposes the transformations in the methods and design of work in both, public and private sector.
- The use of the information and communication technology at the local level will improve the quality of services offered by municipality.
- In the creation of the new model of municipality, of the great importance will be the providing of access to information and the possibility of citizens to use information from the public sector, also as the creation of conditions for stimulation of on line integration between the citizens and the municipality.
- The Information and communication technology is the powerfull mean for administration , but also for the business sector to generate the convenient conditions for hasten economic development.
- The key moment in the process of decentralization of power is the successful use of the advantages offered by ICT in order to enhance the process efficiency and effectiveness.
- The establishment and successful implementation of the e-government and eDemocracy concepts in the local self-governance impose the need of the integrated processes of development and deepening of the collaboration and the competitiveness of the public and private sector.
- The establishment of the concept of e-governance is the most in benefit of the citizens because it provides a transparent work, enhancing of the mutual trust and their active inclusion in the processes of public decision.
- The process of education should be continuous in public and in private sector and in the same time to include the citizens as direct users of services.
- The effects will be great:
 - Lifting of democracy at significant level,
 - Enhancing of transparency and citizen's participation in making decisions processes,
 - Improving of efficiency and effectiveness of the municipal administration,
 - Intensive economic activity and attraction of investors,
 - Enhancing of collaboration with NGO's and the business sector,
 - Providing of necessary conditions for achievement of the quality standards in providing of services in public and private sector.

Thank you,