Metamorphosis Annual Report for 2021

Covering the programme activities between

January 1 to December 31, 2021

February 2022
Skopje, North Macedonia

Contents

Background

Vision: The Metamorphosis Foundation envisions a society where engaged and aware citizens actively use innovative tools to exercise their civic rights and responsibilities, where they are vigilant in influencing and holding their government to account, and thus ensure democratic, accountable, and responsive governance.

Mission to Achieve the Vision: The Metamorphosis Foundation is an independent organization, working in North Macedonia and its wider European home. The team is composed of committed democracy activists, united in common cause and the common values of mutual accountability, open communication, and an unshakeable commitment to universal human rights and democracy.

The Foundation strengthens the awareness and capacity of citizens and civil society to assume their fullest possible role as activists for democracy, while supporting government to fulfil its democratic role in serving society. Metamorphosis' programmes focus on:

- media for democracy;
- social accountability;
- education for innovation;
- human rights online.

The Foundation supports those who struggle for these essential elements of a democratic and inclusive society, and it advocates for this work as a key partner with governments and citizens. It aims to become a leading national and regional advocate in supporting and enabling citizen engagement and government accountability, with a particular emphasis on the use of information technology and knowledge-sharing.

Metamorphosis was established in 1999 as part of the e-publishing program of the Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM), it became an independent foundation in 2004. During the first fourteen years of activity it established diverse portfolio of capacities as a basis of its reputation. Metamorphosis has formed lasting partnerships with various donors, including the EU, OSCE, USAID, the foreign affairs ministries and the embassies of USA, UK, Netherlands, France, Germany, Poland; grant makers such as Open Society Institute and FOSM, NED, BTD, as well as cooperation with business sector donors such as Microsoft and Google.

Metamorphosis responded effectively across the four programmes to the pandemic crisis which marked the last two years. Our programmes proved substantial to supporting civil society, public servants, youth, journalists and teachers in facing the new conditions that were imposed on all of us.

The media outlets of the Foundation responded with agility to the growing volume of disinformation preceding and following the outbreak of the pandemic as well as the political processes in the country that exacerbated the situation with the disinformation often time. In 2021 Truthmeter produced over 1000 articles, of which **400 were fact-checks on the topic of COVID 19 and vaccines** available in Macedonian, Albanian and English language. We tackled the infodemic committedly and contributed significantly to raising awareness among the general public about the spreading of dangerous disinformation, particularly on social media. Unfortunately, it backfired with a smear campaign targeting Metamorphosis' team. It began in November 2020 when Metamorphosis was libellously

accused of conducting censorship on Facebook through articles which displayed personal data and photos of its employees in the style of obituaries and it has been going on throughout 2021 as well. Alongside disinformation about the nature of the work of fact-checkers, this smear campaign includes hate speech, personal abuse, online harassment, as well as an offline intimidation incident against Metamorphosis administrative staff. The Council of Media Ethics, Association of Journalists of Macedonia and journalist trade union condemned the hate speech campaign, and the EU and UK ambassadors published expressions of support for the journalists and other staff.

Supporting civil society, journalists, youth and teachers through capacity development activities has been among the highlights of Metamorphosis' work in 2021. Educational efforts were intensified and we **offered over 55 trainings and reached at least 2400 representatives among civil society, journalists, youth, teachers and civil servants**. The main topics covered during the reporting period include open data, open educational resources, increasing civic engagement in implementing the Digital Agenda, digital safety and security, countering disinformation, building positive narratives, media literacy online, data journalism as well as trainings on how to use online classroom software. In addition to extensive trainings, we supported 41 CSOs through re-granting and provided mentoring on various areas with the goal of **empowering community organisations** to take initiative in their immediate community. In the efforts to support civil society to thrive during the pandemic we also supported **16 CSOs** from North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania to gain access to **187 licensed software packages.**

Significant achievements were also made in advocacy for good governance, open data, combating disinformation and the promotion of the Digital agenda through **40 advocacy events**, reaching out to **at least 2800 people**. In addition, in 50 central level institutions were monitored for their openness via the Openness Index and for the degree to which they implement the Government Strategy for Transparency. At the local level we also monitored the openness of 81 municipalities and used the body of knowledge generated through this research to advocate for improvement of policies and practices in institutions at the local as well as central level. Hand in hand with the trainings and meetings with civil servants to contribute to the improvement of policies, we have also supported **27 institutions at the local and central level in opening up over 270 significant data sets** with the direct support of our team. The institutions were trained on the use of open data and equipped with respective procedure templates to be able to continue the mission of providing open access to as much of data they possess as possible.

In 2021 Metamorphosis continued to receive institutional support from the Sigrid Rousing Trust, what has contributed significantly to the amount of advocacy and networking activities that we have undertaken in the second half of the year.

Metamorphosis continued its work as a member of international civil society networks IFEX, APC, EDRI, Global Voices, Creative Commons, ACTION SEE, TransparenCEE and the Internet Freedom Platform of Eastern and Central Europe and Eurasia.

2021 was a highly productive and awarding year for Metamorphosis. The programme objectives pursued through the projects implemented in 2021 continue to be our priorities in 2022. Below is a summary of the projects Metamorphosis has worked on in 2021 and of the highlights of the achievements in the four programmes.

Media for Democracy

Free and professional media plays a crucial role in providing knowledge and in giving voice to citizens, disclosing corruption and developing a culture of criticism where citizens are less fearful about questioning government action and empowered to meaningfully participate in democratic processes.

Metamorphosis Foundation recognizes that an informed citizenry is vital to ensuring public and private sector accountability. Moreover, broad public access to information and the freedom to create and communicate ideas are critical to the advancement of knowledge, economic opportunity and human potential. Key media outlets implementing activities of theMetamorphosis Media for Democracy programme are Meta.mk, Portalb.mk and Vistinomer.mk.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS IN 2021

- In 2021 Truthmeter published over 1000 articles, of which **400 were fact-checks on the topic of COVID 19 and vaccines** available in Macedonian, Albanian and English language. Commited debunking of infodemic contributed significantly to raising awareness among the general public about dangerous disinformation spread via social media in particular.

- In cooperation with the Cabinet of the Prime Minister, Metamorphosis initiated the creation of Rapid Communication System instant messaging groups including journalists and government representatives, expediting the communication of fact-checkers and institutions to combat disinformation more effectively. Availability of official information seedier fact-checking of dubiuous contents and prevention of their viral dissemination.

- Portalb.mk published a series of investigative stories, in the framework of the Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda Initiative. These investigative stoies resulted with the issuing of a deision by the Office for Management of Registers which notes that the institution will no longer request citizens to submit birth certificates 'not older than six months' as has previously been the practice. This decision was a direct consequence of Portalb's research, which gave light to multiple testimonies from citizens and expert opinions and also requested explanations from the respective institutions.

- Metamorphosis media outlets continued to exert pressure on public authorities to address relevant issues, that are often left unattended. An examples of such work is addressing of the issue of the lack of monitors for painless measurement of glycemia in North Macedonia, making children with diabetes in the country deal with needles and pain on a daily basis. After the publishing of this article on Meta.mk, the Minister of Health invited the high-school student Mia to a meeting [promising](#) procurement of monitors for diabetes that will be free for all patients.

- Environment is also a major area that Metamorphosis' media outlets follow with commitment. Meta.mk was the first media to bring attention to the large amounts of lindane dumped in the area of a non-functioning former factory. It has followed the problem consistently until other media picked it up and the government began to react to the pressure. In April 2021 [the Government approved the plan for the cleaning of the lindane landfill](#) and Meta.mk considers this as a success it has contributed to by consistently keeping the public attention on the issue.

Meta.mk - Independent News Agency

The general project goal is to enhance freedom of expression and access to information by supporting an independent news agency implementing the highest standards of professional journalism.

The Meta.mk News Agency officially started working in 3 languages (English, Macedonian and Albanian) in November 2014 and established a solid reputation of a reliable source of objective news on current events, whose contents is republished by over thirty domestic and foreign media outlets.

Meta.mk provides professional news service, and its reporting is used as a reference both by media and decision makers, including the highest representatives of international community. Meta.mk employed innovative use of social media to engage citizens and promote its contents. Foreign news agencies and key decision makers at EU level have been frequently using and re-distributing contents from the English version.

www.meta.mk

Portalb.mk – News Portal in Albanian Language

The news portal Portalb.mk was developed in April 2012, and over the years grew into one of the leading and most credible sources of information in Albanian language from Macedonia.

Its dedication to strict implementation of journalistic standards makes Portalb the attention to audience According to research by rating agency Gemius, Portalb is the most influential Albanian-language online media outlet in Macedonia, in terms of audience reception, and its original production also serves as a beacon of professional journalism and increases the pluralism in this segment of the media scene in Macedonia and the region.

In a very segregated media environment, Portalb contributes to increasing the social cohesion by providing an important linguistic bridge towards the Albanian-speaking communities by reporting on issues affecting citizens of all ethnicities in the country and translating contents produced in Macedonian.

Its reputation as relevant and serious source of information is compounded by high popularity thanks to innovative use of new technologies media. It introduced consistent use of live video streaming via social networks which further increased its popularity.

portalb.mk

Promoting the Accountability of Elected Officials by using New Technologies – the Truthmeter

The TruthMeter is a political fact-checking website that contributes to better citizen education and information about the elections and other

democratic processes; contributes to greater government openness and accountability of public officials.

The general goal of the project is to contribute to greater government openness and accountability through providing online tools to increase access to public information and foster accountability of public officials. As key public watchdog it promotes fact-based evaluation of the public discourse in North Macedonia, thus inciting independent analyses and investigative journalism.

The public education contents cater to a growing community of readers, primarily engaged via the social networks, represented by a Facebook fan page with over 20 thousand fans, a newly launched Youtube channel, as well as a network of media that reuse/republish the articles.

During 2021, Truthmeter's focus has shifted to disinformation around the COVID 19 pandemic based on objective verification of claims by media, public actors from the political as well as medical sphere and beyond – always relying on strict and consistent implementation of the established and transparent Methodology put in place since 2011.

vistinomer.mk
vertetmates.mk
truthmeter.mk

glasomer.mk
politichkispektar.mk

Key Media Program projects in 2021

Critical Thinking for Mediawise Citizens – CriThink.mk

CriThink Action, implemented by Metamorphosis and Eurothink with support from European Union (EU) promoted media literacy as basis for safeguarding the right of citizens to hold diverse opinions, via stimulating a culture of critical thinking, pluralism of opinion and democratic values. It developed a robust infrastructure for conducting the planned activities, enabling creation of educational contents and tools by establishing the online resource centre CriThink.mk, and engaging a diverse team of relevant experts, as well as fostering relations of cooperation with key stakeholder: state institutions, media outlets and civil society organizations. This enabled implementation of capacity building activities, supporting partnerships between local/grassroots CSOs and local/national media through 17 small grants and a tailored training and mentorship program. CriThink contributed to the strengthening of the national Media Literacy Network, establishing synergies with its members and other media literacy projects supported by the EU, in line with the other networking activities in coordination with the Delegation of the European Union in Skopje.

The general public and in particular social networks users benefited from the production and online dissemination of educational contents in Macedonian and Albanian languages, addressing daily issues of confronting media manipulations and disinformation, through the prism of informal education on media literacy and application of principles of critical thinking.

crithink.mk

Period:
01.01.2018 – 30.06.2021

Partner:
- Centre for European Strategies – EUROTHINK

Donor:
- European Union

This proved particularly important during periods of increased political tensions and in the context of COVID-19 pandemic, as CriThink infrastructure and established relations of cooperation with independent media proved crucial in providing capacities for fact-checking and debunking disinformation. Research activities assessing the habits and positions three target groups—university students, journalists and other media workers, and the general public—provided basis for advocacy activities leading to mainstreaming media literacy within the formal education system, building upon the cooperation with state institutions and contributing to policymaking processes in the area of human rights, media development and education. The website and its social media accounts remain important education resources for media literacy with content in Macedonian and Albanian language.	
Upholding democratic values and change in society through journalism The project was continued in April 2019 with the goal to empower Macedonian citizens to make informed decisions on current affairs that affect their lives, via data journalism and direct engagement with citizens through new media channels. The increased media capacity to provide sustained coverage of issues affecting the lives of citizens and use of innovative methods of networking and multimedia production (online videos, data visualisations) resulted in increased level of public awareness about democratic values through practical application of professional journalism standards and critical thinking. The project also gives a voice and engages Generation Z in important social processes and events. The project incited response by relevant institutions, based on increased demand for accountability by informed citizens, on the following topics: pollution (lindane in Skopje, mines in Eastern Macedonia), public health - immunization (incl. debunking of antivaxing propaganda), prehospital system (emergency aid), infrastructure issues at local as well as the national level (public transportation, railways and highways). The project has also managed to engage youth successfully by cooperating with social media influencers and by utilizing media widely used by them to raise important discussions regarding corruption, climate change, public transportation, menstrual hygiene and cyber security.	Implemented through synergy of Meta.mk News Agency and Portalb.mk news portal. Period: 01.09.2018 – 31.03.2021 Donor: UK Embassy in Skopje
Credible News for Empowered Youth The project aims to increase youth engagement in public life empowering them to demand resolution of policy issues that affect their lives. It broadcasts the weekly news show for youth Shortcut – which summarizes the most important events of the week in a format attractive and of interest to youth. In this way it engages youth in being more informed about matters	Period 06.2021 – 03.2022 Donor UK Embassy in Skopje

that affect them directly, while also providing a platform for them to engage and directly seek accountability from public officials. Its content are widely read and disseminated and it is becoming an important initiative trusted and used by youth.	
Counter-spin TV This six-months intervention aimed to amplify the distribution of content produced by Truthmeter, with particular attention to youth and senior citizens – targeting them with video production and distribution on social media and TV stations. In addition to production of counter-spin stories and videos, the project also conducted networking meetings with engaged journalists as well as trainings to increase understanding of the fact-checking methodology and its importance.	Period: 15.10.2020 – 15.04.2021 Donor: International Fact Checking Network
Region Through the Facts This cooperation with Faktoje, supported by the Balkan Trust for Democracy has addressed issues affecting citizens on both sides of the border on a daily basis. Metamorphosis' media outlet Portalb, successfully affected the intervention of the authorities in changing the traffic signs leading to the border crossing point to Albania, which still reads People's Republic of Albania although the name of the country has changed since 1991. Additionally, during the heavy snowfall in January, the road toward the border crossing remained stuck in snow, until Portalb began seeking accountability from the authorities. In addition, this project trains young journalists from both sides of the border on the methodology of fact-checking as well as on data journalism.	Partners: Faktoje, Albania Period: 30.07.2020 – 30.07.2021 Donor: Balkan Trust for Democracy
Promoting the Accountability and Transparency of Public Reforms The project aims to promote the accountability of public officials and institutions on important policy areas with a particular focus on public administration, judicial system – rule of law, fundamental rights, and freedom of expression. The project produces various journalistic content – including fact-checking and analytical articles addressing issues raised in European Commission reports on the progress of Republic of North Macedonia in implementation of reforms needed to join the European Union, explaining the issues and institutional responsibilities for the general public by directly relating responsibilities for increasing quality of life of the citizens. In addition, quarterly monitoring reports following a pre-defined methodology, assess and highlight the degree to which promises and initiated policies were put to practice. The project developed the capacities of partner local media to conduct fact checking and sustain the objectives of the project. At the same time, local partners were engaged in wide dissemination of project content. Established Rapid Communication System (RCS) enables speedy communication between journalists and representatives of state institutions via messaging apps in order to debunk disinformation related to	Period 01.07.2021-30.06.2022 Donor: National Endowment for Democracy - NED Partners (local media network): Apla.mk Drnka.mk Kumanovonews.mk Flaka.com.mk

their competences, as well as increased promotion of the verified information via public Viber group.	
Rapid Response to Vaccine Disinformation Rapid Response to Vaccine Disinformation project addresses the COVID-19 vaccine distrust in North Macedonia through fact-checking and networking activities. It adopts a combined approach of (1) increased production and dissemination of verified and educational media contents (targeting media professionals and general audience); (2) seeking transparency from the authorities and facilitating cooperation with media and civil society; (3) enabling direct cooperation between journalists, medical professionals and other stakeholders. In the framework of the project important content that raised awareness about the risk of the COVID 19 disinformation were produced and disseminated widely with the support of seven local media partners, and in synergy with the Established Rapid Communication System (RCS).	Period: 01.06. 2021 – 31.01.2022 Donor: Balkan Trust for Democracy Partners (media network): Aberdzija.mk Apla.mk Drnka.mk Duma.mk Tvm.mk Kumanovonews.mk Nistori.com
Western Balkans Anti-Disinformation Hub: Exposing Malign Influences through Watchdog Journalism The main goal of the project is exposing foreign malign influence in Western Balkans by debunking and mapping the flow of disinformation, misinformation and propaganda affecting development of democracy, originating from external actors trough the region. Project activities include: • Development of regional early-warning data-driven infrastructure that will serve to prevent harmful impact in the region from disinformation campaigns originating from foreign actors. • Watchdog journalism – production of high-quality journalistic contents in the primary formats of debunking articles, in-depth stories and investigative reporting stories. • Research focused on mapping, documenting and explaining the venues of malign foreign influence in each country and the WB region as whole. Data collection and analysis resulting in creation of data-driven early warning infrastructure centered around the knowledge hub (database). • Public outreach and Advocacy – engagement of general audiences and increasing awareness via promotional campaign for public education and social media outreach; contributing to policy change via advocacy consultations and public events gathering relevant stakeholders to increase their awareness and engagement in the public debate on malign foreign influences.	Period: 01.11. 2021 – 30.04.2025 Donor: Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands Partners: ISAC – International and Security Affairs Centre, Serbia Zašto ne (Why Not), Bosnia and Herzegovina Center for Democratic Transition, Montenegro Faktoje, Albania Sbunker, Kosovo

# Media Fact-Checking Service The Media Fact-Checking Service counters propaganda and media manipulations by providing fact-checking of Macedonian media contents. The Service increases citizen demand for fact-based, objective and professional news and information, through practical implementation of standards of ethical journalism so they can hold media accountable and demand higher quality of media production. The production in three languages (Macedonian, Albanian, and English), reflects the needs of the diverse audiences. The online application Time Machine, maintains an online archive of media contents enabling comparisons over time. It automatically harvests articles from key media websites in Macedonia and also enables citizens to save individual articles within its database. It compares the stored articles using advanced algorithm and graphically represents the similarities.	Media Fact-Checking Service proverkanafakti.mk verifikimiifakteve.mk factchecking.mk The Time Machine vremeplov.vistinomer.mk makinaekohes.vertetmates.mk timemachine.truthmeter.mk
# Media Reforms Observatory The Media Reforms Observatory contributes to, and assess the level of, the achievement of the Urgent Reform Priorities, as a condition for the RM to join the EU, through identifying and removing the obstacles for democratic development of the media sector. The website informs the citizens about the reform priorities implementation process in a comprehensible manner, adjusted to a non-expert audience, to make the citizens come to the realization why the reform priorities are so important and how implementation thereof will contribute to enhancing their life. At the same time, the project provides the citizens and civil society organizations with opportunities for contributing to the public debate, through creating mechanisms and channels for their connection with the media and decision-makers.	ПСЕРВАТОРИЈА НА МЕДИУМСКИ РЕФОРМИ www.mediaobservatorium.mk

Social Accountability

Social accountability is the key approach to address governance issues. It enables information related to the concerns and the priorities of the citizens to be presented directly to government officials who have the capacity and mandate to act and make change happen. The Metamorphosis approach promotes the principles of citizen-centric good governance at local, national and regional levels.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS IN 2021

- We monitored the openness of a total of 132 institutions via the Openness Index at the local and central level and disseminated evidence-based recommendations via one-on-one meetings as well as public events.
- For the purpose of promoting openness and transparency we also monitored the implementation of Government's Strategy for Transparency semi-annually, assessing the degree to which the respective Strategy is implemented by the Government. These 'shadow-reports' based on the monitoring were used as advocacy tools in meetings with government officials and donors to push for more ambitious reforms in the area of transparency and good governance. These reports provide the only available information about the progress of implementation as the government is lagging behind with this Strategy and has not published any reports about it for over a year.
- During 2021, Metamorphosis trained and mentored 27 institutions at the local and central government to create and improve their open data policies as practices. Over 270 essential datasets were prepared, releasing important data about the work of institutions as well as the registers that they hold.

In 2021 Metamorphosis continued to enhance its watchdog role in order to increase the levels of transparency and accountability of state institutions, local authorities and the private sector. Metamorphosis contributed to strengthening citizens' voices and supported the capacity of civil society and state institutions to respond effectively to their needs, thus producing a constructive engagement between governments and civil society.

Openness Index	
The Openness Index is a composite index measuring the openness of institutions. It was initially developed as part of the regional ACTION SEE project and network aiming to compare the openness of institutions and governments across the region. This research is a strategic activity of the Social Accountability Programme monitoring institutions at the local and central level, including the Assembly.	01.01.2016 – ongoing
In 2021 this research project has been supported by USAIDs Civic Engagement Project and the National Endowment for Democracy.	Donors: European Union National Endowment for Democracy USAID
To deepen the knowledge generated by the research on the openness of institutions at the local level we amended the methodology of the	

local component of the Index, now observing the executive as well as the legislative (city council) and the public enterprises separately. The new methodology will be applied in the research in 2021 for the first time.

The research results of the Openness Index inform Metamorphosis' advocacy activities and the coaching we provide to support institutions to open up their data and processes.

Civic Engagement Project – CEP The Civic Engagement Project strengthens the constructive engagement by CSOs on policies and issues of public concern, and increase and sustain youth involvement in public life in North Macedonia. In the framework of CEP, in 2021 Metamorphosis has provided significant support to institutions in improving their openness. We monitored the openness of 81 municipalities and 51 central level institutions, in addition to monitoring the implementation of the Strategy for Transparency. The findings of the research informed our advocacy meetings and public events where we presented the concept of open cities among municipality staff and CSO representatives. We also trained and coached 27 institutions on how to open up their data, who released more than 270 datasets as a direct result of this intervention. CEP also gave significant contribution to OGP processes in North Macedonia in 2021 by participating in the consultation processes and taking the responsibility to implement important activities of the Action Plan that will contribute toward the principles of OGP.	Period: 17.08.2016 – 17.08.2021 Donor: - USAID, through East West Management Institute (EWMI) Partners: - Metamorphosis - Association for Democratic Initiatives (ADI) - Foundation for Open Society in Macedonia (FOSM) - National Youth Council of Macedonia
Increasing Civic Engagement in the Digital Agenda - ICEDA The project is in its second year of implementation and it strives towards increasing the engagement of CSOs in shaping and implementing the Digital Agenda in the Western Balkans by providing multiple networking and capacity building opportunities. This year, the ICEDA network has been joined by 15 more CSOs/ sub-grantees in partnership with 19 media, working on advocating on specific issues related to the Digital Agenda in their respective countries. The 20 CSOs from the first cycle of the ICEDA Grants Scheme have continued on assisting the community in using specific public e-services and increasing their digital literacy through a variety of activities within their 15 e-government support centers, managing to support around	Partners: Metamorphosis Foundation Center for Democratic Transition, Montenegro Center for Research, Transparency and Accountability, Serbia, e-Governance Academy Estonia, Levizja Mjaft! (Albania), NGO 35 mm, Montenegro, Open Data Kosovo (Kosovo) Period: 01.01.2020 – 31.12.2022 Donor:

20.000 citizens. In two years the project has provided 38 capacity building opportunities for civil servants, CSOs, media workers and the total number of participants from the whole region that have benefited from these opportunities is 3222. The ICEDA network has also produced a number of educational and informative e-content (investigative articles, videos, animations, infographics and visualizations, Digital Agenda Observatory Country reports and Cumulative report on Digital Agenda advancement, etc.) which can be found [here]().	European Union
Using New Media to Promote Government Transparency Using the Openness Index the project generates comparative data about the openness of institutions in the region and allows for them to compare and learn from each others' experiences. It generates targeted recommendations for governments and institutions to improve their performance and score better according to the Openness Index. It has also made efforts to raise interest in institutions to adapt the Openness Index as an internal mechanism of self-assessment. It serves a reputable mechanism that institutions reference very often in their public announcements and appearances of their representatives at conferences and public events.	Partners Center for Democratic Transition, Montenegro CRTA, Serbia, Zasto Ne, Bosnia and Herzegovina Period 01.10.2021 – 30.09.2022 Donor: National Endowment for Democracy

Public Record Resources

Follow the Money Online Service

Metamorphosis continues to maintian the Follow the Money online service, started with funding from IRI in 2013, and continued to work with Metamorphosis support, promoting transparency and accountability related to spending of municipal budgets and presenting them through interactive visualizations.

The work of the service was initially based on use of open data obtained through collaboration with other NGOs such as Finance Think through implementation of Freedom of Information Act. The citizens could compare spending of various budget items between municipalities and obtain knowledge about the fiscal processes.

Now the website is used as a resource where public servants, researchers and interested citizens can convert municipal budgets into machine readable formats or have direct access to the database that saves all converted budgets. This tool has been repurposed according to the winning idea of the first open data Hackathon that took place in the framework of the Civic Engagement Project in May 2021.

sledigiparite.mk

Education for Innovation

Metamorphosis recognizes that citizens today, in all their multiple capacities, require education that will provide them a set of skills that are essential to navigate the complexities of modern life in competent manner. Activities within this programme will contribute to achieving the aims of the European Commissions' Digital Agenda for the Western Balkans and that is to support the transition of the region into a digital economy and bring the benefits of the digital transformation, such as faster economic growth, more jobs, and better services.

PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS IN 2021

- In 2021 we organized two open data hackathons with the goal of stimulating the use of public sector open datasets, which resulted with the development of two interesting applications. The first application enables the converting of the municipal budgets into machine-readable formats that can be further compared and visualized. The second application will map and compare data about the working conditions and infrastructure of primary and secondary schools in North Macedonia.
- 30 out of the 40 CSOs that were supported with the re-granting schemes in 2021 are actively working to promote the Digital Agenda in the Western Balkans while the rest are working on social accountability, transparency, anti-corruption and media literacy. The CSOs were also supported in various areas of knowledge so they can strengthen their capacities and serve their missions with commitment.
- 15 local support centers for e-services were established with the support of the re-granting scheme of ICEDA and over 18 000 citizens have been supported so far in using concrete e-services effectively.
- 16 CSOs from North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania were supported with a total of 187 software donations, and in this way we directly addressed the security challenge that most organizations face working with unlicensed software, particularly during the complete shift that occured due to the pandemic.
- The 17th edition of the e-society.mk conference gathered 631 participants from 27 countries and an additional 7644 people followed the conference via Facebook livestream. It featured panel discussions, trainings and a hackathon, emphasizing the open culture and providing many opportunities to learn for all participants.

Projects

Techsoup North Maceedonia, Albania, Kosovo Continuing the support for CSOs in North Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania, started in 2014, Metamorphosis has been implementing the TechSoup software donation programme. The program offers a wide range of software products for non-profit organizations and public libraries, and they are only required to pay an administrative fee. These donations are available for organizations with the status of non-profit	**techsoup** СЕВЕРНА МАКЕДОНИЈА www.techsoupnorthmacedonia.org

according to their respective country regulations (North Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo). Until June 2019, the program was implemented within Techsoup Balkans platform, which was run together with our Bosnian partner Mashta. Since September 2019, Metamorphosis manages the platforms for North Macedonia, Albania and Kosovo. During 2021, 16 new NGOs registered in all three platforms while there were 187 new orders for software donations.	**techsoup** **KOSOVA** www.techsoupkosovo.org **techsoup** **SHQIPËRIA** www.techsoupalbania.org Period: 2014- ongoing Partners: - Techsoup Global Donors: - Microsoft - BitDefender - NortonLifeLock - Okta - Symantec - Tableau - Clever Reach - AutoDesk
Open Educational Resources Initiative The overall project goal is to contribute to the development of critical thinking and democratization in North Macedonia through the constructive use of new technologies as tools to increase the quantity and quality of educational, scientific and academic e-content. In 2021 this action contributed to raising public awareness about the Open Educational Resources (OER), expanding the Alliance for Open Educational Resources and lobbying for the OER initiative in schools and among teachers teaching in the minority languages used in North Macedonia. These activities will contribute to closing the gap between the quality and quantity of available OER in all the languages in the country.	ОТВОРЕНИ РЕСУРСИ ОБРАЗОВНИ [oer.mk](oer.mk) Period: 01.12.2015 – 01.12.2017 01.10.2019 – 01.10.2020 10.10.2020 – 10.06.2021 Donor: Foundation Open Society - Macedonia
Strengthening the Civil Sector through Training and Education The general objective of this Erasmus+ project is to develop the training and educational capacities of the engaged partners so that their programmes are more effective, impactful, relevant to current trends and technology. The project trained over 72 NGO trainers on (1) building effective NGO communication strategy, (2) guiding NGOs on the digital transformation journey; (3) how to develop training methodology, (4) how to combat shrinking civil space and the	Partners: Fundacja Techsoup, Poland NIOK Foundation, Hungary Workshop for Civic Initiatives Foundation WCIF, Bulgaria Solidatech, France Fundraising Verband Austria, Austria Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, North Macedonia SocialTechno, Italy Asociata Romania

effect of disinformation on civil society and (5) how to create effective campaigns through storytelling and creation of positive narratives.	Civil Society Development Center (STGM), Turkey Period: 01.11.2019 – 30.09.2021 Donor: European Union

Empowering Civil Society through Digital Transformation
 	
The general objective of this Erasmus+ project is to strengthen the ompetencies of our team as adult educators and trainers around online and innovative learning tools and approaches. The project was initiated in December 2021 but will be carried out throughout 2022. Metamorphosis staff will attend trainings in the following topics:
   1. Cloud solutions for capacity building of CSOs
   2. How to support CSOs in their Digital Transformation
   3. Digital communication and marketing skills for the Social Sector
   4. Building an Online Education Programme
	Period:
	31.12.2021 – 31.12.2022
	
	Donor:
	European Commission, Erasmus+ Programme

Itop.mk

The Itop.mk platform was created with the purpose of empowering local touristic entities to advance their presence in the digital world and in this way improve their promotion. The STEP network members are the initial entities that began using the itop platform. It has been promoted broadly among touristic entities in the region and beyond since the close of the project, however, unfortunately, it has been affected severely by the COVID 19 restrictions, which caused many of the members to seize their activities.

Nevertheless, the STEP network members have proven as enormous support to one another at these difficult times, seeking opportunities to improve cross-border tourism and in this way support small businesses on both sides of the border.

Human Rights Online

Metamorphosis has been at the forefront of the promotion of human rights online - helping communities face the enormous changes that stem from the increased impact of new technologies and countering the malign anti-democratic tendencies that exploit fissures across societies.

> **PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS IN 2021**
>
> - Trainings on digital skills, privacy protection, combating hate speech and media literacy were intensified in 2021 to support civil society, journalists, teachers, parents and youth to strive in their work and education online as it became the only available operating space.

Metamorphosis is committed to the development of democracy and improvement of the quality of life through innovative application and dissemination of knowledge, and supports the use of new technologies for creating new spaces enabling a public debate and exchange of objective information, in parallel with the efforts for increasing digital literacy and fighting hate speech.

Privacy by Design – building an inclusive digital ecosystem The project aims to promote the enforcement of the Law on Personal Data Protection in the designing and use of digital services in order to make them safer and more accessible to all citizens, especially members of marginalized groups affected by digital divides. It provides tailored training to civil society, journalists and public servants hand in hand with researching the degree to which institutions comply with the respective law, in particular when developing new digital services. The project also aims to develop communities of practice by organizing a series of events called Privacy Talks and producing journalistic and social media content to raise awareness about threats to privacy and means to protect it. It also carries our advocacy activities with institutions to ensure sustainability of the activities carried out.	Period: 1.11.2021-31.08.2022 Donor: American Bar Association – Rule of Law Initiative
Internet Freedom in Macedonia During 2021 Metamorphosis continued to work on promotion of human rights online through cooperation with international networks, particularly highlighting the threats and challenges that uncovered with the pandemic. On 30 November – 3 December 2021 Metamorphosis Foundation organized the 17th edition of the traditional annual international conference e-Society, this year with a focus on the topic "**Democracy in the Digital Age: Challenges and Opportunities**." The conference was held in a hybrid environment – a combination of online and face-to-face participation and it managed to gather 631 participants and	 e-society.mk

speaker from around the world – sharing experiences and recommendations on how delivery of public services can improve, along with overall governance, by utilizing the internet and technology responsibly. An additional 7644 have followed the multiple events of the conference via Facebook livestreaming. Metamorphosis cooperated with international human rights networks like Global Voices, IFEX, EDRI, APC and ACTION SEE; as well as initiatives like Freedom Not Fear, to enable spreading of information about North Macedonia abroad, and incite freedom of expression advocacy.	kauza.mk ping.mk ping.mk

Networks

During 2021, Metamorphosis participated in the work of the following networks and coalitions:

International Freedom of Expression Exchange - IFEX Metamorphosis became a member of IFEX in June 2014, contributing to alerting the global public, civil society and relevant institutions regarding the overall situation in Macedonia and particular cases of endangering freedom of expression, as well as breaches of professional standards of journalism. Other IFEX members include well known international organizations fighting for freedom of expression such as: Article 19, Freedom House, Reporters without Borders, Human Rights Watch, Index on Censorship, the International PEN Center, etc.	ifex www.ifex.org
Association for Progressive Communications - APC APC's mission is to empower and support organisations, social movements and individuals in and through the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to build strategic communities and initiatives for the purpose of making meaningful contributions to equitable human development, social justice, participatory political processes and environmental sustainability. APC is both a network and an organisation. APC has 50 members in 35 countries - groups working in their own countries to advance the same mission as APC.	APC ASSOCIATION FOR PROGRESSIVE COMMUNICATIONS www.apc.org
European Digital Rights – EDRi EDRi is an international advocacy group headquartered in Brussels, with an objective to promote, protect and uphold civil rights in the field of information and communication technology. Founded in June 2002 as a result of a growing awareness of the importance of European policy making in the digital environment, it includes 35 privacy and civil rights organisations from 21 different countries in Europe.	EUROPEAN DIGITAL RIGHTS edri.org

Global Voices in Macedonian and Albanian Metamorphosis is managing the Macedonian and Albanian versions of the international network of bloggers and citizens journalists Global Voices Online, enabling worldwide distribution of news and views related to social change, activism, and citizen journalism. Global Voices is a borderless, largely volunteer community of more than 1200 writers, analysts, online media experts and translators, reporting from 167 countries and translating into up to 30 languages.	mk.globalvoicesonline.org sq.globalvoicesonline.org
World Summit Award The WSA is a global initiative to promote the world's best in mobile content and innovative applications within the framework ofthe United Nations' World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS), in collaboration with UNESCO, UNIDO and UN GAID.	wsa.org.mk
Creative Commons Europe CC Europe is the central online platform of the European Creative Commons Jurisdiction Projects, composed of CC leads from European countries. CC Europe is the channel for communication with interested stakeholders and in particular the European-level policy makers.	europe.creativecommons.org cc.org.mk
COMMUNIA International Association on the Public Domain COMMUNIA is a network of researchers and practitioners from universities, NGOs and SME with a mission to foster, strengthen and enrich the Public Domain. It raises awareness in, educate about, advocate for, and research about the Public Domain in the digital age within society and with policy-makers. It has WIPO observer status.	communia-association.org
ACTION SEE - Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in South-East Europe ACTION SEE network that resulted from the cooperation between leading ICT and human rights-oriented organizations from Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. Members use new technologies for empowering citizens and increasing public institutions' accountability via Truthmeter projects, annual POINT conferences on new technologies and political accountability, and developing the regional Index of Transparency.	www.actionsee.org
TransparenCEE - Technology for Transparency in CEE and Eurasia TransparenCEE is a network of Central Eastern European and Euroasian NGOs interested in using technology in transparency and accountability work. It documents, catalogues and scales local solutions regionally. The objective of the network is to ultimately make the technology for transparency work more transparent and easier to both finance and implement.	transparencee.org

Internet Freedom Platform The Internet Freedom Platform of Eastern and Central Europe and Eurasia is established by civil society organizations in these regions, that work on fostering of the freedom of expression, association and flow of information on internet.	internetfreedom.blog
Platform of Civic Organizations for Fight Against Corruption The Platform for Fight Against Corruption founded in 2014 unites the leading anti-corruption NGOs from Macedonia through collaborative projects based on monitoring the legal framework and the ongoing public policies, initiating legal changes through joint initiatives.	ПЛАТФОРМА на граѓански организации за борба против корупцијата antikorupcija.mk
Platform Against Hate Speech Founded by leading human rights or media development CSOs in Macedonia, the Platform coordinates efforts against hate speech, hate crimes and discrimination in the media and beyond.	
Anti-Disinformation Network for the Balkans (AND-Balkans) The network serves as the basis of a cooperation between civil society organizations, media outlets, educational institutions and all other relevant stakeholders with a goal of forming a wide front on countering disinformation through affirmation of the highest standards of fact-checking and all other ethical principles of professional journalism, as well as promoting media literacy and critical thinking. Its members adhere to the Declaration that re-affirms the freedom of expression in its various forms, stressing that the situation in the Balkans requires an added focus on countering the problem of disinformation at regional level, especially cross-border disinformation, as well as empowerment of citizens through education and putting their actual needs as priority in the work of the media. ADN-Balkans developed gradually through bilateral and multilateral cooperation of its founding members which had intensified since 2018 in response to increasing level of disinformation in the region.	antidisinfo.net
SEE Digital Rights Network The platform aims to advance the protection of digital rights in Southeast Europe. It brings together 19 organisations from Southeast Europe who are dedicated to the protection and promotion of human rights, both online and offline.	

Metamorphosis Team

Executive Board

Metamorphosis Executive Board is consisting of five members:

- Ms Radmila Živanovikj, Board Chair
- Mr Zoran Cali
- Mr Zoran Janevski
- Mr Vladimir Lazovski
- Ms Biljana Radonjanin

During 2021, Metamorphosis staff consisted of the following employees:

Management

- Mr Bardhyl Jashari, Executive Director
- Mr Filip Stojanovski, Partnership and Resource Development Director
- Ms Qëndresa Sulejmani, Director of Programme
- Ms Marija Panchevska, Finance and Administration Director

Program Staff

- Ms Mila Josifovska Danilovska, Programme Manager, Social Accountability and Human Rights Online
- Mr Goran Rizaov, Programme Manager, Media for Democracy and Education for Innovation
- Ms Elena Stojanovska, PR and Communications Specialist
- Ms Marijana Janceska, Project Lead
- Ms Vesna Radinovska, Project Lead
- Ms Marija Nikoloska Arsovska, Project Lead
- Ms Violeta Joncevska, Social Media Specialist
- Ms Vaska Cvetanoska Panova, M&E Specialist
- Mr Goce Arsovski, Programme Support Officer
- Ms Elida Zylbeari, project lead
- Mr Vladimir Petreski, project lead
- Ms Violeta Gligoroska, project lead
- Mr Florent Bajrami, project lead
- Ms Olivera Vojnovska, journalist
- Mr Teofil Blazhevski, journalist
- Mr Drilon Saliu, journalist
- Ms Silvana Zhezhova Stankovska, journalist
- Mr Sasho Spasoski, journalist
- Mr Bojan Blazevski, journalist
- Ms Maja Tomic, journalist
  Ms Bjanka Stankovic, journalist

- Mr Suad Bajrami, journalist
- Ms Teuta Buçi, journalist
- Mr Ardit Ramadani, journalist

Administration and Finance staff

- Ms Anita Milanovska, HR and Administration Manager
- Ms Emilija Georgievska, Finance Assistant
- Ms Elena Stojanova, Finance Assistant

Operations Support Staff

- Mr Filip Neshkoski, Team lead
- Mr Miron Cali, IT assistant
- Igor Krstevski, IT assistant
- Ms Frosina Georgieva, translator
- Mr Valon Abdiu, translator