

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

2018



This document presents the program of activities of FINANCE THINK - Economic Research & Policy Institute, Skopje for the calendar year 2018. The plan is structured around four pillars of Institute's work:

1. Research

2. Analytics

3. Advocacy and communication

4. Capacity building and networking

1. RESEARCH

Research activities for 2018 have been planned as follows:

1. Social pillar of the European integration of Western Balkans

This Project intends to initiate policy platform dealing with the welfare state issues to strengthen cohesion, stability and growth in the Western Balkans and its sustainable European perspectives. The specific objective is to support effective regional advocacy on issues of critical importance for the welfare state area, through long-term regional cooperation and learning from EU experience, as preconditions for inclusive evidence-based policy making.

2. Regulatory impact analysis: The effects of changing the minimum wage act

The overall goal of the project is an ex-post assessment of the impact of the changes in the Minimum Wage Act on the system (the economy) and the main stakeholders (workers and employers).

The specific objectives of the project are:

- 1. To assess the impact of the increased and equalized minimum wage on employment and living standards;*
- 2. To assess the impact of the increased and equalized minimum wage on the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia;*
- 3. To document the space and forms for (non) compliance with the Minimum Wage Act, as well as the difficulties in its implementation, and to qualitatively assess the repercussions;*
- 4. To encourage policy makers to make informed decisions based on appropriate evidence-based analysis and recommendations;*
- 5. To increase public awareness of the changes in the Minimum Wage Law, their impact and the need for their abiding;*
- 6. To educate workers about their labor rights in order to reduce the pressures and compromises they are subject to when paying the minimum wage.*

3. Active civic engagement in design and monitoring of local budgets and public procurements

The project aims at increasing the engagement of external stakeholders (citizens, civil society organizations and local media) in the design and monitoring of local budgets and public procurement. The main activities of the project include: 1) Analysis of the existing budget documents, practices and civic engagement; 2) Devising recommendations for policymakers; 3) Capacity building for implementation and monitoring of local procurement; and 4) Advocacy in public.

The planned activities are expected to result in: 1) Qualitative assessment of the design and transparency of local budgets in the three municipalities; 2) Familiarizing key stakeholders with the need to reform the process of drafting and publication of budget documents; 3) Building capacity of the civil society, local media and public administration for implementation and monitoring of public procurement; 4) Increased public awareness for the need of and the possibility for civil society participation in the process of devising local budgets and the way municipal money is spent.

4. Bridging the gaps between multinational companies and domestic SMEs in Macedonia

The overall objective of the Action is to establish and/or improve the linkages between domestic SMEs (dSMEs) – multinational companies (MNCs) operating in Macedonia, with the final goal to increase domestic business sector competitiveness.

This overarching aim is broken down into specific objectives:

- 1. To better match demand and supply between dSMEs and MNCs through addressing value chain supply barriers and mapping potential value chains;*
- 2. To upgrade capacity of dSMEs for skills foster "selling" themselves to the MNCs; identification of opportunities, building networks, and improving efficiency;*
- 3. To reduce the technological gap between*

dSMEs and MNCs by improving capacity and information for standardization and licencing, elevating innovation and R&D capacity, and fostering implementation of new technologies.

4. To spark networking between dSMEs and MNCs through knowledge transfer and mentoring, as well joint events.

The project will deliver the following outcomes:

- *Increased technological capacities of dSMEs, in terms of knowledge and capacity for standardization and licencing;*
- *Developed interface for supply and demand services and providers (entering the value chain of MNCs);*
- *Improved capacities of dSMEs for establishing effective communication with and presentation of their 'offer' to MNCs;*
- *Established and upgraded partnerships between the two;*
- *Produced policy briefs/studies with addressed value chain supply barriers and recommendations;*

5. FISCAST+: Fiscal transparency and accountability improves policies in quality of life, education and health

The objective of the project is to address efficiency and quality of selected policies in quality of life, education and health through public debate and policy options derived from data and evidence.

The project is expected to bring the following changes:

- *Changed general understanding of the importance of specific policies and measures within the QEH areas*
- *Increased availability of data in the specific areas set base for evidence-based policymaking*
- *Steered public debate and increased public awareness about the issues*
- *Increased pressure on policymakers for better and more efficient public policies and measures in the QEH areas*
- *Improved research capacity, networking and sharing of expertise*

The project will deliver the following outputs:

- *Mapping and selection of policies per year in three areas (QEH)*
- *Research and production of results*
- *Links with media outlets and development of outreach products (comms strategy)*
- *Capacity building for teams and media for use of data, cost benefit analysis and policy options*

6. Analysis of youth underemployment in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia

The primary objectives of the proposal are:

- 1. To investigate the interaction between underemployment and personal, household and community characteristics, in rigorous econometric manner by considering potential selectivity bias into underemployment;*
- 2. To investigate the effect of underemployment on personal wellbeing, in rigorous econometric manner by considering their potential simultaneity and wellbeing way of measuring through self-perception; As well the following secondary objectives:*
- 3. To portray the issue of youth underemployment in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia, through simple statistics and charts, as such information has been lacking so far;*
- 4. To reveal the importance of gender differences in characterizing underemployment and its effect on worker's welfare;*
- 5. To devise credible recommendations to policymakers in the form of specific instruments to tackle underemployment.*

7. "My money, my responsibility": Participative budgeting in the municipalities in Macedonia

The overall purpose of the project is to enhance local-stakeholders' practice and participation in the local budgeting process and to increase the effectiveness of the municipal-money spending.

The particular objectives/tasks of the project include:

- 1. To increase participation of local stakeholders – civil society, business*

community, citizens, local media - in the municipal-budgeting processes;

2. To increase awareness of local citizens for how spending of municipal money affects their quality of life;

3. To increase the credibility and effectiveness of local governments' decisions related to the spending of public money, as well raise awareness for the (need for) transparency related to it.

8. Advocacy for evidence-based economic policymaking and ignition of the critical economic debate in Macedonia

The overall objective of the project is to further strengthen the organizational capacity of the Institute in supporting the economic policy decision makers to deliver credible policy decisions based on research findings, as well in igniting the debate in the society about economic processes and reforms.

9. Instigating evidence-based and data-driven economic debate in Macedonia

The general objective of this action is to produce positive societal change by strengthening the economic debate in Macedonia, based on evidence from conducted research and driven by economic data. The specific objective is to train FT constituents to engage in robust economic debate and offer a range of ways to encourage and steer critical and argued economic debate.

The action aims to achieve the following results:

- The constituents of FT have acquired skills and knowledge for engagement in and steering of the economic debate, and skills for including data and evidence in their common causes;
- The economic debate in Macedonia becomes more critical, analytical, more lively and diverse, and increasingly includes CSOs and other civil society actors; and
- The awareness of CSOs and the public in the economic debate becomes updated, multi-faceted and thematically diverse.



TABLE PRESENTING STAGES AND DEADLINES

	Activity	Stage	Planned tasks	Deadline
1.	Social pillar of the European integration of Western Balkans	Analysis of the European Pillar of Social Rights	Preparing policy study Organizing panel debate	December 2018
2.	Regulatory impact analysis: The effects of changing the minimum wage act	Not started yet	Desk analysis of the changes in the minimum wage act implementation Quantitative analysis using MK-MOD Micro-simulation model 2 focus groups with employees 4 interviews with employers 1 information session for employees working rights Advocacy activities (graphometrix, infographs, closing event, participation in media)	December 2018
3.	Active civic engagement in design and monitoring of local budgets and public procurements	Desk analysis of local budgets conducted 3 focus groups with citizens of Prilep, Krushevo and Krivogashtani conducted 2 interviews in municipality of Krushevo and Krivogashtani conducted 2 training sessions on Public procurements organized	Interview with representative of municipality of Prilep Preparing policy brief 2 meetings with local governments to present the recommendations of the study Preparing blog and infograph Organizing closing event to present final findings	May 2018
4.	Bridging the gaps between multinational companies and domestic SMEs in Macedonia	Project work plan prepared	Meetings with stakeholders to map the potential value chains Conducting semi-structured questionnaire Conducting 5 interviews with key stakeholders Conducting focus group with representatives of domestic SMEs Developing an interface web platform Design and delivery of training for soft skills development Design of visibility materials	December 2019

5.	FISCAST+: Fiscal transparency and accountability improves policies in quality of life, education and health	<p>policies are selected and related studies are prepared</p> <p>3 workshops on building synergies in economic analysis and identification of mutual interest conducted</p> <p>2 focus groups with citizens of Skopje and Prilep are conducted</p> <p>2 round tables are organized</p> <p>Several graphs and infographs are prepared and disseminated</p>	<p>Visualization/animation of the collected data through graphs and info-graphs</p> <p>Participation in the media with short statements, interviews and expert opinions (FT Staff)</p> <p>Video production</p> <p>Organization of an economic forum to present the final findings and outputs</p>	March 2018
6.	Analysis of youth underemployment in Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia	<p>Literature review</p> <p>Descriptive analysis</p> <p>Establishing econometric model</p> <p>Comparative analysis</p>	<p>Finalizing the study</p> <p>Advocacy in front of the policymakers</p>	September 2018
7.	“My money, my responsibility”: Participative budgeting in the municipalities in Macedonia	<p>A Call for submitting personal stories was opened</p>	<p>Processing the stories and production of at least 5 leaflets</p>	February-May 2017
8.	Advocacy for evidence-based economic policymaking and ignition of the critical economic debate in Macedonia	<p>A training on Delphi method was conducted</p> <p>A visual designer was employed</p> <p>Two graphometrix, two FT comments and few FT opinions were published</p> <p>A retreat meeting of the team was organized</p> <p>A study visit of the Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies for knowledge transfer on administrative management of a think tank</p> <p>Supervisory Board and Policy Council were established</p> <p>A study visit at Western institute for transfer of know-how related to the M&E strategy was conducted</p> <p>An internal M&E strategy was devised</p> <p>A policy for internal knowledge sharing and dissemination was introduced</p>	<p>Devising FT comments, FT opinions, graphometrix and other publications</p> <p>Regular publication at Facebook and Twitter</p> <p>Participation as quest speakers at universities in Macedonia</p> <p>Elevating the web platform www.doznaki.mk</p> <p>Strengthening the flexi-work policy with provisions for fathers</p> <p>Devising a compendium / practice of the research formats usually used by FT</p>	August 2018

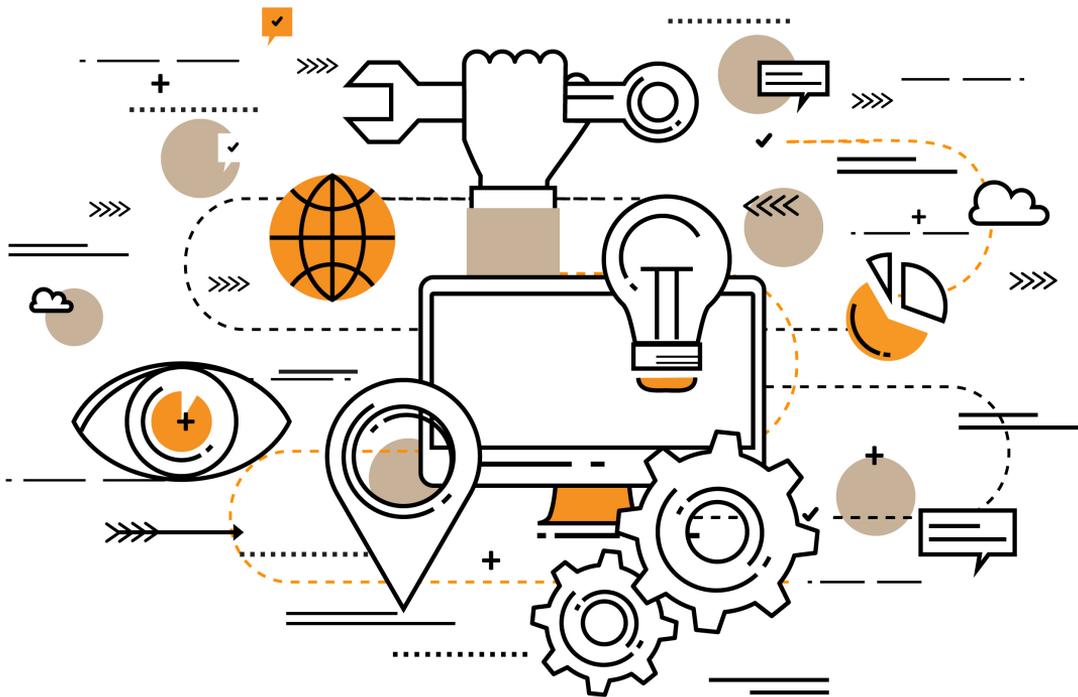
9.

Instigating evidence-based and data-driven economic debate in Macedonia

3 workshops on data analysis conducted
Call for essay for young economists published
Several short videos prepared
Annual panel debate organized
Several graphs, infographs and GIFs prepared

Manual for economic data analysis
Workshop for economic data analysis

May 2018



2. ANALYTICS

The following analytical activities have been planned for 2018:

1. Delivering 4 issues of the Macro-monitor – the macro-observer of the national economy with a forward looking elements;

2. Delivering at least 3 FT Comments – a commentary of important national and international documents, reports, strategies and so on, concerning Macedonia;

3. Delivering few issues of FT Opinion – a condensed and swift reaction to the

moves of the daily economic policy and trends;

4. Producing visual products: at least 10 Info-graphs, 5 GIFs and 3 Let's chat economics on 'hot' economic topics;

5. Producing at least 2 issues of "Quality of life" publication

6. Improving the economic datasets to be available for analysis purposes by the other NGOs and other interested parties, and presenting those data in an easily understandable format for non-economists;

TABLE PRESENTING STAGES AND DEADLINES

	Activity	Stage	Planned tasks	Deadline
1.	Macro-monitor	Ongoing	Devising 4 issues	Continuously over 2018
2.	FT Comment	Ongoing	Devising at least 3 issues	Continuously over 2018
3.	FT Opinion	Ongoing	Devising few issues	Continuously over 2018
4.	Visual products	Ongoing	Devising at least 10 info-graphs, 5 GIFs and 3 Let's chat economics	Continuously over 2018
5.	Quality of life	Ongoing	Producing at least 2 issues	Continuously over 2018
6.	Improving data-sets	Ongoing	Improving the datasets	Continuously over 2018



3. ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

The following advocacy and communication activities have been planned for 2016:

1. Continuous publication of research results and findings in form of articles in international peer-reviewed journals; monographs; chapters in books and so on;

2. Devising at least three policy briefs on issues pertinent to the economic development in Macedonia and stemming out of current research – so as to advocate for innovative solutions and to educate citizens on their potential contribution in solving the problems;

3. Devising a book with the studies produced within FISCAS+ project;

4. Updating the resource center for public spending www.fiscast.mk with large data base;

5. Production of journalistic stories;

6. Production of Manual on economic data analysis;

7. Production of videos on the topics of health, education and/or quality of life;

8. Organization of a panel discussion focused on the collaboration between multinational companies and domestic SMEs;

9. Organization of a closing event within the project “Active civic engagement in design and monitoring of local budgets and public procurements”;

10. Organization of an informative session for employees working rights;

11. Organization of a closing event within the project “Regulatory impact analysis: The effects of changing the minimum wage act”;

12. Organization of an economic forum to present the results of the project “FISCAS+: Fiscal transparency and accountability improves policies in quality of life, education and health”;

13. Organization of “Coffee with journalists” few times per year, to secure friendly and intense communication with the journalists, so as to be able to affect the discourse of the public economic debate;

14. Organization of Annual Panel Debate on “hot” topic with prominent speakers, at the end of the year;

15. Advocating (“fighting for”) for more space for economic news in the media by stronger links with them.



TABLE PRESENTING STAGES AND DEADLINES

	Activity	Stage	Planned tasks	Deadline
1.	International publications	Ongoing	Articles, monographs, chapters in books	Continuously over 2018
2.	Policy briefs	Ongoing	Devising at least 3 issues	Continuously over 2018
3.	Resource center www.fiscast.mk	Built	Upgrading with large data set	Continuously over 2018
4.	Videos on QEH topics	4 videos on quality of life topic was produced	Production of at least 2 more videos	Continuously over 2018
5.	Journalistic stories	Not started yet	Production of journalistic stories	January - March 2018
6.	Book	Not started	Producing book with 6 studies	March 2018
7.	Economic forum - FISCAST+	Not started yet	Organizing an economic forum to present the final results and the book within the FISCAST+ project	March 2018
8.	Manual on economic data analysis	First part of the manual is prepared	Finalizing the manual	April 2018
9.	Closing event	Not started yet	Organization of final event to present the results of EU Weber project	May 2018
10.	Informative session	Not started yet	Organization of informative session on employees' rights	October 2018
11.	Panel discussion	Not started yet	Organization of a panel discussion on topics related to MNC and dSMEs	November 2018
12.	Closing event	Not started yet	Organization of final event to present the results of the project related to RIA	December 2018
13.	Annual Panel Debate	Not started yet	Conduct of a debate on hot topic	December 2018
14.	Coffee with journalists	Organized 2 meetings	Organizing at least 1 more	Throughout 2018
16.	Media	Ongoing	Increasing the presence in media	Continuously over 2018

4. CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

The following capacity building activities have been planned for 2018:

1. Study visit at the University of Laval, Canada;

2. Participation at the final conference of the Partnership for economic policies in India;

3. Participation in at least two international conferences to present results of ongoing projects and/or to build network with international researchers;

4. Participation at domestic conference, round tables, forums and other similar events, so as to present ongoing research and build networks with domestic researchers, other NGOs, government representatives and media;

5. Networking with citizens, CSOs, business community, local government, Mayor and media within the project "My money, my responsibilities";

6. Initiating cooperation (leading to Memos of understanding) with reputed domestic institutions and other NGOs conducting similar or complementary activities;

7. Participation at seminars for equipping with advocacy skills and research methods;

8. Securing a referent literature, mainly research methods and econometrics.

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	Activity	Stage	Planned tasks	Deadline
10.	Study visit	Not started yet	Conduct study visit at University of Laval, Canada	March 2018
11.	Final conference	Not started yet	Participating at the final conference of PEP in India	June 2018
12.	International conference participation	Not started yet	Participate on at least two conferences	Continuously over 2018
13.	Domestic conference / round table participation	Not started yet	Participate on at least three events	Continuously over 2018
14.	Networking with	Ongoing	Networking with citizens, business sector, CSOs, Mayor, local media	Continuously over 2018
15.	Trainings	Not started yet	Attend seminars for advocacy and research skills	Continuously over 2018
16.	Literature	Ongoing	Securing relevant literature	Continuously over 2018

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