

FINANCE**THINK**
OUT OF THE BOX

PROGRAM OF ACTIVITIES

2021 **FT**



This document presents the program of activities of the Economic Research & Policy Institute “Finance Think” Skopje for the calendar year 2021. The plan is structured around four pillars of Institute’s work:

research,

analytics,

**advocacy and
communication;**

**and capacity building and
networking.**

1. RESEARCH

Research activities for 2021 have been planned as follows:

1. FISCAST Network: Enhancing dialogue for higher municipal transparency, with focus on para-fiscal charges

The overall objective of the project is to strengthen FISCAST network's monitoring of and partnering with local stakeholders on LSGUs' financial transparency, with reference to para-fiscal charges. This overarching aim is broken down into specific objectives involving concrete interventions on four fronts:

- To enhance capacities of local CSOs and of the FISCAST Network to become active stakeholders in the municipal financial transparency processes;
- To improve municipal budget and para-fiscal charges transparency;
- To establish evidence-based, multi-stakeholder policy dialogue for monitoring of financial transparency and building effective municipal policies;
- To increase public awareness about the benefit that higher transparency, accountability and sustainability have for citizens and businesses, in their roles and capacities to act at the local level.

2. Interactive and multi-stakeholder mechanism for tracking fulfillment of economy-related political promises

The aim of the project is to promote monitoring and measurement of economic goals and results of political-government programs, by using evidence, findings and data and by encouraging multi-stakeholder engagement. The action will achieve the following results:

- A framework for measuring economic goals and results has been set, in the context of political and governmental programs, through the use of evidence, findings and data;
- Skills have been developed for stakeholders to critically analyze the possible and achieved results of political promises in the area of economics;
- Stakeholders enrich public discourse through critical, argumentative and lively debate on the feasibility, results and cost of political promises in the economy.

3. Budget for all: Citizen consultations to create a budget according to local needs

The aim of the project is to involve all residents of the municipality of Krushevo in the process of creating the local budget.

4. In-depth analysis of the multidimensional child poverty in North Macedonia

The overarching goal of the analysis is to generate an in-depth map about the various facets of child poverty and establish sound and thorough empirical evidence. More specifically:

- to portray child poverty in terms of demographic and geographic indicators, including a profile of the children who are most at risk of poverty and, consequently, of exclusion;
- to understand how child poverty relates to overall household poverty;
- to investigate non-income aspects of child poverty, primarily education—including early childhood education—and health and set the stage for its multidimensionality; and
- to use generated evidence for increasing the awareness of the public and decision makers on the issue, and for advocacy for tailoring well-targeted policies and measures to improve specific outcomes pertinent to children reducing child poverty in the country.

5. Response to the socio-economic effect of Covid-19 by supporting vulnerable groups of low-paid, informal and temporary workers

The main goal of the project is to reduce the socio-economic consequences of the crisis caused by Covid-19 on vulnerable categories of workers. Short-term goals of the project include:

- To measure the socio-economic effects of the Covid-19 crisis on vulnerable categories of workers;
- To examine the views and experiences of the target groups on the socio-economic effects of the crisis and the utilization of government measures and assistance,
- To help policymakers make informed decisions based on evidence, data and recommendations, i.e. new measures and interventions to mitigate the effects of the crisis on vulnerable categories of workers;
- To increase the representation capacities of the local associations, in order to timely and informed representation of the vulnerable categories of workers before the policymakers;
- To increase public awareness of the socio-economic effects of the crisis, the measures available to deal with it and the need to introduce new measures and policies aimed at these categories of workers.

6. Gender responsive budgeting in times of pandemic

The project aims to improve the position of women and reduce gender inequality in the labor market in the long run.

A detailed examination of the use of gender responsive budgeting in active employment measures will provide a basis for designing new measures and models to improve the position of women in the labor market and mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the crisis and / or recommendations for redesign of existing measures in order to design gender-responsive measures that best meet the needs and characteristics of women.

7. Rapid assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on selected local programs and support local planning and budgeting in response to the immediate socio-economic needs of women and men

The objective of this project is to provide support in the development of rapid assessment of the impact of COVID-19 on selected local programmes and support local planning and budgeting in response to the immediate socio-economic needs of women and men. The project will result in short gender budget policy analysis for each LSGU separately, with included assessment of the LSGUs response interventions from gender perspective, as well as policy and recommendations for improving the gender-budgeting process in the post-Covid-19 period.

8. Data analysis and report on Balkan barometer 2021

The objective of the project is to conduct a comprehensive data analysis and write up the underlying report on Balkan Barometer 2021.

9. Follow-up to the assessment of the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 on children in North Macedonia

The goal of the follow-up to the assessment of the social and economic impact of COVID-19 on children, is to generate scenarios and expanded policy proposals in a situation where it is certain that this will be a protracted crisis, both from a health and from a socio-economic perspective, and where we can verify the validity of the initial assumptions of its nature and duration.

10. Promoting evidence and dialogue for enhancing state aid's effect onto consumer welfare in North Macedonia

The objective of the action is to promote evidence and foster dialogue on the role of state aid for consumer welfare in North Macedonia. The specific objectives of the action include:

- To understand existing forms of state aid in North Macedonia (direct subsidies, tax exemptions, discounted

loans etc.) and their (mutual) consistency within the overall anti-trust legislation in the country;

- To produce robust evidence on whether state aid distorts competition on the market, with application on the paramount governmental program for subsidizing companies in North Macedonia and dwelling on the 'market economy operator' principle;
- To improve the dialogue among stakeholders, as well raise public awareness, on state aid, alignment with EU Acquis and consumer welfare.

11. Assessment of resource capabilities for implementation of the national development strategy

The purpose of the analysis is to identify the available and necessary resources to achieve the development goals of North Macedonia.

12. Reaping export-oriented companies' potential to contribute to post-Covid-19 recovery

The project aims to identify potentials of export oriented capacities including already existed foreign investors in the country to support economic recovery. Specific objectives include:

- To identify capacities to adapt and shift current production according to changed demand (new operation, components, complementary products, etc)
- To identify the potentials for regional re-positioning and utilization of global geographical allocation shifting and cost reduction strategy
- To identify potential for injections of capital that parent's company will make to affiliated companies in the country (to shift operations from other geographical locations, or to modify current production, etc.).
- To identify obstacles for export and growth
- To identify needs for economic measures that will maximize identified potentials

13. Employment diagnostics in the municipalities of North Macedonia

The aim of the project is to diagnose the labor market in nine municipalities in North Macedonia through extensive research on the labor supply and demand at local level.

TABLE PRESENTING STAGES AND DEADLINES

Activity	Stage	Planned tasks	Deadline
1. FISCAST Network: Enhancing dialogue for higher municipal transparency, with focus on para- fiscal charges	Selected 21 municipalities that will be part of the project	Building capacities of local stakeholders on issues related to financial transparency Collecting financial data for all municipalities in the country Collecting data on para- fiscal charges in the selected municipalities	July 2023
2. Interactive and multi-stakeholder mechanism for tracking fulfillment of economy- related political promises	A measurement framework with economic goals and results is built A Delphi questionnaire for economic consensus is conducted	Conducting training with stakeholders Mentoring economic program and texts Producing interactive tools Media participation on current economic issues	May 2022
3. Budget for all: Citizen consultations to create a budget according to local needs	Not started yet	Building capacities of the local citizens to participate at the budget creating process Increasing awareness and knowledge on the opportunities to involve in the process Organizing mutual meetings between local authorities and citizens to discuss the needs and priorities Analysing the effects of the mentioned activities	January 2022
4. In-depth analysis of the multidimensional child poverty in North Macedonia	Not started yet	Conducting analysis on the multidimensional poverty	September 2021

5.	Response to the socio-economic effect of Covid-19 by supporting vulnerable groups of low-paid, informal and temporary workers	<p>Prepared literature review on the socio-economic impact of the pandemic on the target group</p> <p>Collecting data from Labor Force Survey (LFS)</p> <p>Conducting focus groups with female agricultural workers on their experience about the pandemic impact</p>	<p>Estimating the socio-economic effect using LFS data</p> <p>Conducting econometric estimation using ordered probit</p> <p>Preparing policy study</p> <p>Preparing visual products to raise awareness</p>	June 2021
6.	Gender responsive budgeting in times of pandemic	<p>Analysed the women's position at the labor market</p> <p>Analysed the operational plan on ALMP's and categorization of the measures directed toward women</p>	<p>Conducting focus groups with women on their experience with using ALMPs</p> <p>Conducting interviews with representatives of Employment Service Agency on the creating of the ALMPs and OP</p> <p>Preparing policy brief and recommendations for improving women's position at the labor market</p>	May 2021
7.	Rapid assessment of the impact of Covid-19 on selected local programs and support local planning and budgeting in response to the immediate socio-economic needs of women and men	<p>Desk analysis of all local programs to categorize the activities directed toward improving gender equality at local level</p> <p>Interviews with local representatives of the Equal Opportunities Commission to understand the process of creating gender responsive activities</p>	<p>Focus groups with local citizens to understand their need and usage on the available local measures for increasing gender equality</p> <p>Preparing 5 policy studies</p> <p>Preparing 5 info-graphs for raising awareness</p>	April 2021

8.	Data analysis and report on Balkan barometer 2021	Not started yet	Preparing report	March 2021
9.	Follow-up to the assessment of the socio-economic impact of Covid-19 on children in North Macedonia	Analysed the impact of Covid-19 on children through several aspects: education, health and social services	Preparing policy study and brief	March 2021
10.	Promoting evidence and dialogue for enhancing state aid's effect onto consumer welfare in North Macedonia	<p>Mapped existing forms of state aid and connection to EU Acquis Chapter 8.</p> <p>Produced policy studies and briefs to gauge the causal effects of state aid onto market distortion</p> <p>Conducted consultative meetings with direct beneficiaries</p> <p>Produced dissemination and awareness rising tools</p>	<p>Conducting consultative meetings with direct beneficiaries</p> <p>Conducting workshop and capacity building activities for stakeholders</p> <p>Producing a set of dissemination and awareness-rising tools</p>	February 2021
11.	Assessment of resource capabilities for implementation of the national development strategy	Not started yet	Analysis of the resource capabilities	May 2021

12.	Reaping export-oriented companies' potential to contribute to post-Covid-19 recovery	Analysed capacities, potentials and obstacles of the companies through an extensive survey Prepared policy study and briefs with recommendations for using the potentials of the companies	Producing a set of dissemination and awareness-rising tools	March 2021
13.	Employment diagnostics in the municipalities of North Macedonia	Collected data sets on labor supply and demand in 9 municipalities	Preparing 9 policy brief on the labor market at local level	January 2021

2. ANALYTICS

The following analytical activities have been planned for 2021:

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 North 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 15 Info-graphs, 40 graphs and 3 Let's chat economics on 'hot' economic topics;

5. Producing at least one issue 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 2021
2. FT Comment	Ongoing	Devising at least 3 issues	Continuously over 2021
3. FT Opinion	Ongoing	Devising few issues	Continuously over 2021
4. Visual products	Ongoing	Devising at least 10 info-graphs, 40 graphs and 3 Let's chat economics	Continuously over 2021
5. Quality of life	Ongoing	Producing at least one issue	Continuously over 2021
6. Improving data-sets	Ongoing	Improving the datasets	Continuously over 2021

3. ADVOCACY AND COMMUNICATION

The following advocacy and communication activities have been planned for 2021:

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 five policy briefs on issues pertinent to the economic development in North 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. Production of videos on the state aid effect;

4. Organization of a closing events on the project “Promoting evidence and dialogue for enhancing state aid’s effect onto consumer welfare in North Macedonia” and “Socio economic effect of Covid-19 on vulnerable groups of workers”

5. Organization of economic forum about the potential of the export-oriented companies to participate at the economic recovery post-Covid-19;

6. Organizing interactive event to disseminate the publication prepared within the project on gender-responsive budgeting;

7. Conduction of five webinars on state aid;

8. 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 2021
2.	Policy briefs	Ongoing	Devising at least 3 issues	Continuously over 2021
3.	Video	Not started yet	Creating video	April 2021
4.	Closing events	Not started yet	Organization of final event to present the results of the project related to the state aid and socio-economic effects of Covid-19 on vulnerable workers	June 2021
5.	Economic forum	Not started yet	Organization of high-level economic forum	April 2021
6.	Interactive event	Not started yet	Organizing event to disseminate the publications	May 2021
7.	Webinars	Not started yet	Organization of five webinars on the issues related to state-aid	April 2021
8.	Media	Ongoing	Increasing the presence in media	Continuously over 2021

4. CAPACITY BUILDING AND NETWORKING

The following capacity building activities have been planned for 2021:

1. Participation in at least two international conferences to present results of ongoing projects and/or to build network with international researchers;
2. 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;
3. Participation on public consultation on tax reform, national budget and other relevant issues;

4. Participation at meeting with representatives of the government and NGOs from Berlin, within the Aspen Policy Hun on Western Balkan;

5. Networking with citizens, CSOs, business community, local government, mayors and media within the project on local fiscal transparency and para-fiscal charges;

6. Singing Memos of understanding with 21 municipalities involved in the project "FISCAS Network: Enhancing dialogue for higher financial transparency, with reference to the para-fiscal charges"

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

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

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

TABLE PRESENTING STAGES AND DEADLINES

	Activity	Stage	Planned tasks	Deadline
1.	International conference participation	Not started yet	Participate on at least two conferences	Continuously over 2021
2.	Domestic conference / round table participation	Not started yet	Participate on at least three events	Continuously over 2021
3.	Public consultations	Ongoing	Participate to public consultations on important economic issues	Continuously over 2021
4.	Meeting with organizations from Berlin	Ongoing	Meeting with representatives of the government and NGOs from Berlin	February 2021
5.	Networking with municipalities	Ongoing	Networking with citizens, business sector, CSOs, Mayor, local media	Continuously over 2021
6.	Trainings	Ongoing	Attend seminars for advocacy and research skills	Continuously over 2021
7.	Literature	Ongoing	Securing relevant literature	Continuously over 2021

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ЕКОНОМСКИ ФОРУМ

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