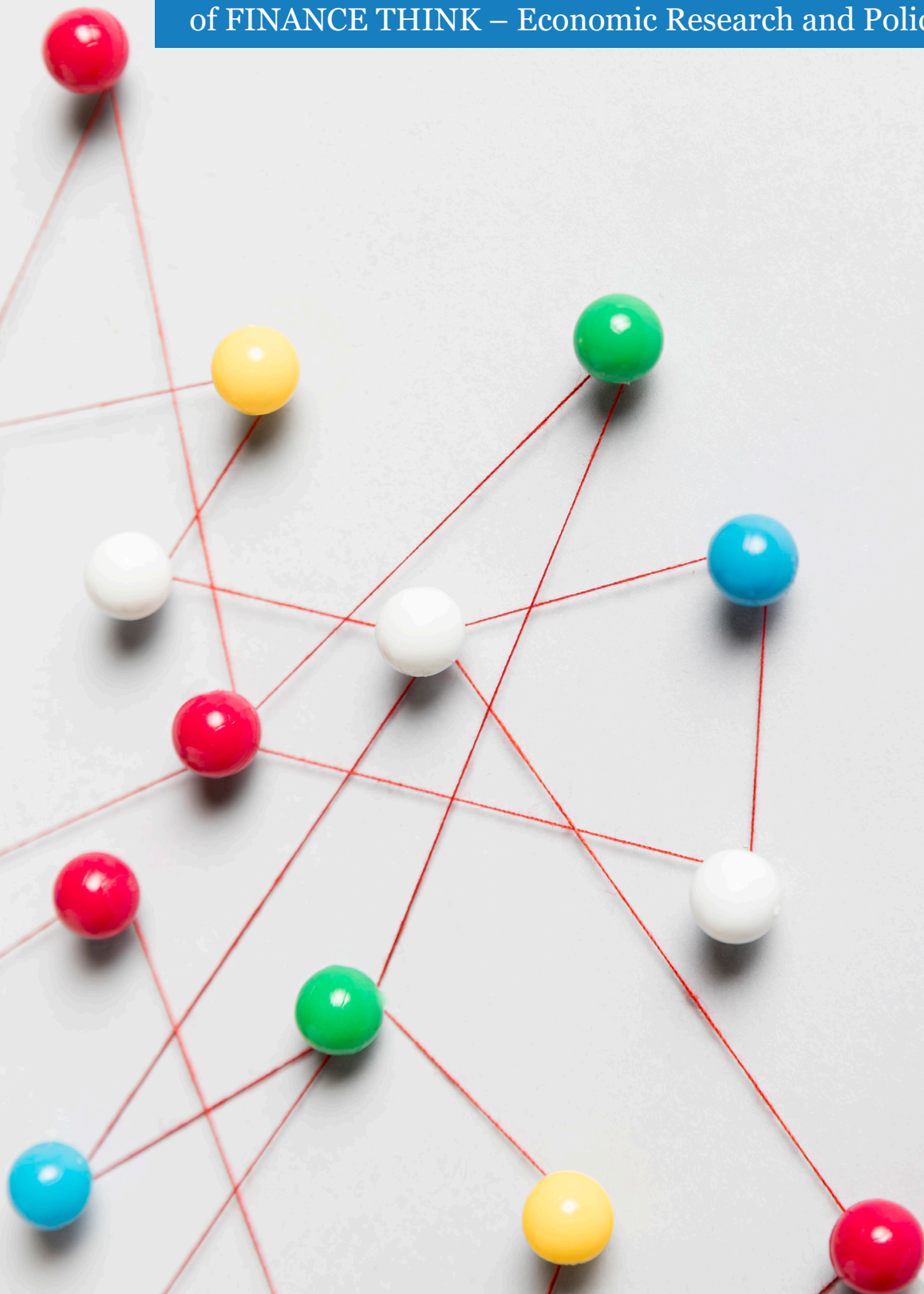


M&E STRATEGY

of FINANCE THINK – Economic Research and Policy Institute



INTRODUCTION

Finance Think is an independent and non-for-profit economic research and policy institute, founded in 2012. **The vision** of the institute is to steer economic thinking for increased wellbeing tomorrow, while its **mission** is to enhance the impact of economic, social and development trends and policies on citizens in North Macedonia and the Western Balkans, through economic research, evidence-based and data-driven advocacy, and steering critical debate on democratic and economic processes.

In order to make success in our vision and mission, it is critical that FINANCE THINK be monitored and evaluated on an ongoing basis, so that any lack of progress is detected early enough for corrective measures to be implemented and good strategies are documented.

The overall work of FINANCE THINK will be subject of an annual review. The M&E for the previous year will be conducted each January next year, and the results will be publicly published, within the Annual Report of the Institute. Upon request, a periodic monitoring and evaluation may be done.

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) Committee is responsible for conducting the MEL of FINANCE THINK.

This M&E Strategy gives support for the strategic management, given that its purpose is to *evaluate the actions in order to make better decisions on the strategic directions of the Institute.*

1. Objectives of Finance Think

FINANCE THINK is an economic think tank with primary objective to enhance the impact of economic, social and development trends and policies on citizens in North Macedonia and the Western Balkans, through research, evidence-based and data-driven advocacy, and steering critical debate on democratic and economic processes.

The research of Finance Think helps policymakers, policy advocates, opinion makers, journalists, and the public understand the issues affecting ordinary citizens.

Based on its articles of association, Finance Think strives to achieve three strategic directions. These are:

- **Producing evidence, based on economic research and driven by economic data.** Specifically, this strategic objective is founded on conducting first-class economic – empirical and policy-oriented – research, founded on sufficient theoretical basis and executed by the means of the state-of-the-art economic methods, while being relevant and beneficial for domestic and/or regional economic policymakers.
- **Enhancing the effect that Finance Think’s work exerts on economic policies, reforms and society.** Specifically, this strategic objective is founded on the premise that Finance Think’s work is done for the benefit of the society, channeled through influence onto the policy formulation and implementation process, through affecting the discourse of the public debate, and through direct impact onto the skills and work of immediate target groups.
- **Nurturing strong institutional capacity of Finance Think to impact economic reforms and to reinforce effects economic policies have for citizens; and enhancing own capacity for regional impact and leadership.** Specifically, this strategic objective is founded on the premise for a permanent investment in building capacities and networks, both organizational and individual, for the purpose of better research, increased domestic and international visibility and increased overall reputation. This strategic direction is also based on the inevitable process of regionalization of our work which started before the adoption of this Plan, as a vehicle to achieve our objectives also within the Western Balkans region

The M&E Framework is presented at Figure 1, as a matrix, where vertical components are the three main objectives while horizontal components are the inputs and expected outcomes.

Figure 1: M&E Matrix

Objectives	Inputs	Outcomes
Producing evidence, based on economic research and driven by economic data	Knowledge and skills to produce studies/analysis	Improved economic policies and reforms
Enhancing the effect that Finance Think's work exerts on economic policies, reforms and society	Advocacy efforts Dissemination tools Trainings and workshops Mentorship and direct work	Enhanced effect on target groups, economic policymaking and society
Nurturing strong institutional capacity of Finance Think to impact economic reforms and to reinforce effects economic policies have for citizens; and enhancing own capacity for regional impact and leadership	Trainings, workshops and conferences Networks and initiatives Partnering Retreats for team cohesion	Enhanced institutional capacity and regional impact



2. Policy influence levels and outputs

The main policy influence outputs are:

- Research and publication (policy studies, briefs, FT Comment, FT Opinion, Macro Monitor, Quality of Life, books, analytic reports, journal articles, and other publications)
- Visualizations (graphs, info-graphs, GIFs, videos and web platforms)
- Capacity building events (workshops, training, webinars)
- Events (round tables, economic forums, focus groups, interviews, town-hall meetings, info-sessions)
- Advocacy and communications (media, social networks, web-site, blog-platforms)
- Internal policies and documents (Annual Report, M&E report, Annual Program of Activities, strategies, rulebooks)

There are three levels of influence:

- Policymaking actors (individual policymakers, local authorities, Ministries and other governmental institutions)
- Specific target groups (women, marginalized persons, poor, unemployed persons, youth, Roma, etc.)
- General public

Figure 2 shows the connection between the policy influence levels and outputs.

Figure 2: Policy influence levels and outputs 3

Level	Outputs
Policies	Research outputs Publications (briefs, evaluations) Events (round tables, economic forums, town-hall meetings)
Target groups	Capacity building events (workshops, training, webinars) Events (focus groups, interviews, town-hall meetings) Direct interventions (programs)
Public	Visualizations Events (info-sessions) Media participation

3. Monitoring and Evaluation

Strategy of FINANCE THINK

3.1 Strategic direction 1: Producing evidence, based on economic research and driven by economic data

One of the Institute’s objectives is to conduct first-class economic – empirical and policy-oriented – research, founded on sufficient theoretical basis and executed by the means of the state-of-the-art economic methods, while being relevant and beneficial for domestic and/or regional economic policymakers. In order to fulfill this objective, the following process of changes should be followed:



Short-term changes:

- Increased number of publications and visualizations
- Increased number of external experts and journalists participating in FT projects
- Enhanced cooperation with think tanks



Long-term changes:

- Increased supply and quality of economic research, based on sound and state-of-the-art economic methods and techniques;
- Increased capacity of and support to target groups in conducting economic research;
- Increased confidence of economic experts in economic policies and reforms.



Ultimate change:

- Enhanced data- driven evidence, based on economic research that improves economic policies and reforms.

Table 1 gives detailed information on the outcomes, indicators, outputs and assumptions that will be monitor and evaluated in order to follow the progress in achieving this objective, and detect potential underachievement in their early stage.

Table 1: Monitoring and evaluation strategy for Objective 1

Objectives and out-comes	Objective	Indicator	Base-line (2023)	2024	2025	2026	Data source	Outputs	Assumptions
Objective 1.	Producing evidence, based on economic research and driven by economic data.								
Long term outcomes	1.1. Increased supply and quality of economic research	Number of key research results that could be articulated in a policy recommendation	5-6	5-6	5-6	6-7	Documentary analysis on research papers produced throughout the year Frequency: annually	Results presented in the M&E Report / Annual Report	Research results are used and taken up by respective policymakers.
	1.2 Increased capacity of and support to target groups in conducting economic research	Number of stakeholders affected Number of capacity-building activities (workshop, trainings, webinars) conducted	25 8	25 6-10	25 6-10	25 6-10	Evidence lists of the participants at capacity-building activities Pre/Post measurements of increased skills on workshops/seminars/trainings Frequency: Ad hoc	Capacity building events Networking/retreat meetings	FT conducts activity(ies) resulting in increased capacity of stakeholders to understand and/or conduct economic analysis and use economic data
	1.3 Increased confidence of economic experts in economic policies and reforms	Number of internal and external reviews conducted Number of citations at (inter)national documents	10 internal 5 external 3	11 5 2-5	11 5 2-5	11 6 2-5	Evidence lists (publications produced and if they went through internal or external peer-review, or both and/or if they were cited in other documents.) Frequency: Annual	Results presented in the M&E Report / Annual Report	In the long run, FT quality depends on the quality of the publications (and related products) produced. The quality of the publications (and, particularly, policy studies) will increase if they are exposed to internal and especially external verification. The increased quality should lead to (inter)national recognition and increased citation in other documents.

Short term outcomes	Increased number of FT research publications (policy studies, journal articles, analytic reports, books/manuals)	Number of research publications	9	8-10	8-10	8-10	Counting own publications	Research and materials	More decision-makers/ journalists/ other experts will be informed about recommendations made in the policy papers, and consequently will use them in their work.
	Increased number of the FT regular publications (Macro-monitor, FT Comments, FT Opinion, Briefs etc.)	Number of regular publications	25	20-25	20-25	20-25	Counting own regular publications	Regular publications	More publications help reach key audiences
	Increased number of the FT visual publications (graphs, info-graphs, GIFs, videos etc.)	Number of visual publications	85	70	70	70	Counting own visual products	Visual publications	More visualizations help reach general public and increase the awareness on certain topic
	Increased number of external experts, who participated in FT projects	Number of experts	7	8-12	8-12	8-12	Evidence lists (experts appear as authors, bloggers, trainers etc.) Frequency: Annual	Events (seminars, workshops, meetings) for experts	Increased cooperation on economic/ social issues will mean stronger capacity for producing credible research evidence and hence stronger capacity for impact
	Increased number of journalists, who participated in FT projects, writing about the local and/or regional economy	Number of journalists writing about economic/ social issues, based on FT's findings and products	15	10	10	10	Collection of journalistic stories	Events (seminars, trainings, media clubs) for journalists	More articles in media on economic/ social issues will lead to better awareness of people about current problems, and to a more active role in economic/ societal life.

	Enhanced cooperation between FT and think tanks, specifically on economic/social issues from other countries.	Number of think tanks from other countries with which FT cooperates in economic issues Number of think tanks with which FT cooperates intensively (e.g. on particular project)	20 6	15-20 5	15-20 5	15-20 5	Own counting and classification	MoUs Proposals / Policy documents, prepared together with foreign think tanks, study visits	The more FT cooperates with other prominent think tanks, the better recommendations they can develop for their governments and influence the decision-making process in the whole region.
	Generated new data	Number of data-collecting instruments applied (survey, focus-groups, interviews etc.)	10	8-12	8-12	8-12	Own information	Evidence lists (list of participants, photos, list of interviewees, audio recordings) of the conducted efforts.	FT conducts surveys in various occasions. These frequently contain new indicators. By so doing, the space for new research widens.
	Increased amount of web resources (data, evidence, research, regulations)	Number of web platforms maintained	9	9	9	9	List of hosted web-platforms.	Built and maintained web-platforms.	FT propagates its research through supplying to stakeholders and the public at large, web resources. This increases the base for doing economic research.

3.2 Strategic direction 2: Enhancing the effect that Finance Think's work exerts on economic policies, reforms and society

The second objective of the institute is to increase its effect on the target groups, economic policymaking and society, through the following short and long-term changes:



Short-term changes:

Increased work with target groups within the initiatives/projects of Finance Think

Established positive relationships with the policymakers, with multilateral and bilateral consultative and dialogue processes

Increased number of media appearances and social media activities

Increased number of opinion leaders participating in the FT's public events on economic issues



Long-term changes:

Increased take up of research results, findings and recommendations by policymakers;

Increased number of credible and evidence-based recommendations and advice;

Increased alignment of the reforms with the EU acquis and best practices;

Increased impact of FT's work, findings and recommendations on immediate target groups;

Increased, more structured and inclusive debate on economic policies and reforms



Ultimate change:

Increased effect that Finance Think's products (work) have on target groups, economic policymaking, reforms and society

Table 2 gives summary of the indicators, outcomes and outputs that will monitor and evaluate the fulfilment of this objective.

Table 2: Monitoring and evaluation strategy for Objective 2

Objectives and out-comes		Indicator	Baseline (2023)	2024	2025	2026	Data source	Outputs	Assumptions
Objective 2	Enhancing the effect that Finance Think’s work exerts on economic policies, reforms and society								
Long term outcomes	2.1. Increased uptake of re-search results, findings and recommenda-tions by policy-makers	Number of FT key policy recommen-dations put in the pipeline by the gov-ernment An issue is added on policymakers’ agendas An issue is dis-cussed, or framed differently due to the institute’s work	ecomendations relevant for the Anti-Crisis Package Measures, as well as related to the region-al economic inte-gration have been taken forward by the government were taken into account for further action.	Qualitative assessment of improve-ment	Qualitative assessment of improve-ment	Qualitative assessment of improve-ment	Documentary analysis of laws, regula-tions, govern-ment docu-ments. Qualitative tracking of the policy debate Qualitative tracking of policymakers statements and positioning Frequency: annually	M&E Report / Annual report	
	2.2 Increased impact of the FT’s research and materi-als on North Macedonia’s economy and economic pol-icies	Number of govern-ment moves in line with FT recommen-dations/ opinions/ advice	Same as the previous line. Additionally, many other moves of lesser importance were in line with the FT recommenda-tions.	Qualitative assessment of improve-ment	Qualitative assessment of improve-ment	Qualitative assessment of improve-ment	Watchdog of government moves versus FT opinions expressed in its advocacy instruments Frequency: annually	M&E Report / Annual report	

	2.3. Increased positive impact of FT's work on immediate target groups	% of immediate target groups who expressed satisfaction with the participation in FT activity (workshop, seminar, training, re-grant)	100%	75%	75%	75%	Questionnaires to immediate groups, pre/post event Frequency: ad hoc		
	2.4. Increased debate on economic policies and reforms	Number of media appearances and citations Number of events	374 66	250 25	250 25	250 25	Media reports, press clippings etc. Frequency: annually		
Short term outcomes	Growing confidence in and reach of the FT research and expert opinions on economic issues.	Number of views in social media of the FT's posts, number of FT Facebook and Twitter page followers, LinkedIn posts	FT followers, 23.515	24.000	24.500	25.000	Social media reports	Annual reports	
			Twitter followers, 449	460	480	500			
			FB post engagement, 28.000 monthly (average)	28.000	28.000	28.000			
			FB posts, 7 weekly	7-10	7-10	7-10			
			FB page views, 1.773 monthly (average)	1.500	1.500	1.500			
			LinkedIn posts, 3 per week	3	4	4			
	% of FT products published in popular media (even shortly)	88%	70%	70%	70%	Press clippings			

	The FT's public events on economic issues (economic forums, round tables, press coffees etc.) attended and positively responded by relevant government decision makers	Certain number and quality of feedbacks from decision-makers on FT`s events (e.g. letters from the government with promise to use FT recommendation / adopting any official document). % of FT's public events attended by government relevant decision makers	10 feedbacks from officials (feedback on policy briefs or inviting for cooperation)	5-10	5-10	5-10	Feedbacks received	Public events, closed meetings, study visits of foreign opinion leaders / delegations to North Macedonia.	More decision-makers will be informed about recommendations designed in the policy papers and discussed at FT events, and consequently will use them in their work.
	Increased number of media appearances	Number of media appearances (statements, interviews, expert opinions...)	72	60	60	60	Press clippings Frequency: Annual		More appearances/citations in media on economic issues, will lead to better awareness from people about current economic problems, and to a more active role in economic/societal life, it will also boost support of economic policy reforms
	Increased number of citation of research/ advocacy publications in media	Number of media citations	302	200	200	200			

	Growing number of opinion leaders participating in the FT's public events on economic issues.	Number of opinion leaders, who take part in FT`s events	FT events attract a lot of attention, both from the participants and the media. The main policy makers and influential people in public discourse participate in them, mainly as speakers.	Qualitative assessment	Qualitative assessment	Qualitative assessment	Attendees list	Public events	Public events like conferences, seminars held in Skopje as well as in the region can involve experts from the region. It will influence better support of economic policy as well as implementing of reforms.
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Strategic direction 3: Nurturing strong institutional capacity of Finance Think to impact economic reforms and to reinforce effects economic policies have for citizens; and enhancing own capacity for regional impact and leadership

The third objective that will be monitored and evaluated within this strategy is the institutional development of the Institute in order to have a stronger impact on economic reforms and the effects economic policies have for citizens. The achievement of this objective should follow this process of changes:



Short-term changes:

- Increased transparency and financial discipline
- Increased positive feedback from the government
- Improved procedures for strategic and operational planning and evaluation
- Increased skills of the FT's employees
- Strengthened cooperation within WebEcon Network
- Enhanced cooperation between FT and think tanks
- Increased exposure to the international academic and CSOs scene



Long-term changes:

- Sustained demand for FT research materials
- Increased capacity for regional leadership and impact
- Increased quality and credibility of research materials
- Increased financial sustainability
- Increased capacity for operational and strategic planning



Ultimate change:

- Developed institutional capacity and regional impact

The indicators, outputs and outcomes that will be evaluated within this process of changes are given in Table 3.

Table 3: Monitoring and evaluation strategy for Objective 3

Objectives and outcomes		Indicator	Baseline (2020)	2021	2022	2023	Data collected	Outputs	Assumptions
Objective 3	Nurturing strong institutional capacity of Finance Think to impact economic reforms and to reinforce effects economic policies have for citizens; and enhancing own capacity for regional impact and leadership.								
Long term outcomes	3.1 Sustained demand for FT research materials from the government, business and international community (increased relevance of these research materials)	Request for conducting research from the government , business and international community	12	5-7 requests	5-7 requests	6-8 requests	Analysis of work and impact		If research materials are more used by relevant stakeholders, the visibility and reputation of the think tanks increases
	3.2 Increased capacity for regional leadership and impact	Number of regional projects in which FT participates	3	2-5	2-5	2-5	Own records		If FT participates at regional projects, its impact widens
	3.3 Financial sustainability of FT	Improved financial sustainability (strengthened fundraising)	Application approval rate (42%)	>33%	>33%	>33%	Own records	Internal policies and documents; Accounting reports	Implementing of Auditor`s recommendations will also guarantee transparency of the organization (what is also good for fundraising) as well as generate evidence on financial risks
		Implementing auditor`s recommendations	100% of recommendations are implemented	100%	100%	100%			
	3.4 Increased quality and credibility of FT research	Number of citations in (inter)national documents	5	5	5	6	(Inter)national documents where FT's work is cited		

	3.5 Increased capacity for operational and strategic planning	All operational and strategic plans are designed, their fulfillment is monitored	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes			
Short term outcomes	Increased demand from the government for research materials of FT or feedback, implementing more projects together with the government	Feedbacks form the government	Most of feedbacks from the government are positive	Most of feedbacks from the government are positive	Most of feedbacks from the government are positive	Most of feedbacks from the government are positive	Formal and informal feedbacks gathered from government officials	Policy papers, public events, closed meetings with the authorities	Demand and positive feedback from the government on research materials of FT will mean better influence capacity of FT
	Increased transparency and financial discipline by improving accounting policies as well as through annual public reporting.	Fulfillment of Audit recommendations	Audit recommendations: 100% complete	100%	100%	100%		Trainings and courses, internal policies	Financial sustainability will guarantee the possibility of FT to plan and implement its activities. In such cases, FT will be one of the Macedonian think tanks that will be able to contribute to the implementation of economic reforms in North Macedonia.

	Implementing of procedures aimed at ensuring quality of research materials as well assurance sufficient number of qualified analysts	Increased confidence in the FT's research and materials	100% of research and materials are peer reviewed internally 100% of policy studies are peer-reviewed externally	100%	100%	100%		Trainings	Preparing policy papers in accordance with internal policies will ensure quality of the research, which will ensure the reputation of FT and its capacity to influence the decision-making process.
	Improved procedures for strategic and operational planning and evaluation	Participation of stakeholders in planning and evaluation	All internal stakeholders participated in such activities. Based on an Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment, conducted within a project, the donor provided suggestions for improving the operational planning.	100%	100%	100%		Staff retreats, meetings for strategic and operational planning, study visits to foreign think tanks, trainings	Strategic and operational planning as well as learning from the experience of foreign think tanks will ensure better capacity of FT for institutional stability and organizational development and therefore will guarantee increased influence of FT
	Increased skills in FT	Number of FT's employees who attended training/workshop Number of training/workshops attended by FT's employees	75% of FT's employees completed trainings and courses to upgrade their skills 7	75%	75%	75%		Evaluations of competences	By taking capacity building, hiring new people and adopting best practices of other think tanks we will ensure we have the right set of skills to strengthen FT's work and impact
		Number of new staff hired	0	1 new	1 new	1 new			

	Increased cooperation within regional WEBecon Network, and cultivating relationships with the Network's partner members	Number of common projects conducted by the network	2	2	3	3	Own records of the mutual projects	Regional policy studies	Network members work together on economic issues that refer to the Western Balkans countries
	Enhanced cooperation between FT and think tanks, specifically on economic/social issues from other countries.	Number of think tanks from other countries with which FT cooperates in economic issues	7	10	10	10		MoUs Proposals / Policy documents, prepared together with foreign think tanks, study visits	The more FT cooperates with other prominent think tanks, the better recommendations they can develop for their governments and influence the decision-making process in the whole region.
	Increased exposure to the international academic and CSO scenes, through participation at regional and international forums, conferences and networks.	Number of regional/ international forums/ conferences / similar events visited/ attended Number of memberships in international institutions/ platforms	9 8	8-10 8	8-10 8	8-10 9		Papers/ documents presented at such events	The more FT is exposed to the regional and international CSO scene the more credibility attains, which then is crucial for the positioning on the domestic CSO market

CONCLUSION

In order to achieve its mission “to enhance the impact on economic and social trends and policies on citizens in North Macedonia and the Western Balkans”, the Institute will use the given outputs (Column 4) that will cause immediate and intermediate changes directed toward fulfillment of the specific objectives:

IMPACT:			
INCREASED ECONOMIC THINKING AND WELLBEING.			
Objective	Intermediate outcomes	Immediate outcomes	Outputs
Producing evidence, based on economic research and driven by economic data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased supply and quality of economic research - Increased capacity among target groups for conduct of economic research - Increased confidence of economic experts in economic policies and reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased number of the FT publications - Increased number of external experts and journalists who participate in FT projects - Enhanced cooperation with think tanks - Increased cooperation between Finance Think and other think tanks, specifically on economic/social issues from other countries. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Research and publications - Visualizations - Internal policies and documents - Events - Capacity building events
Enhancing the effect that Finance Think’s work exerts on economic policies, reforms and society	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased take up of research results by policymakers - Increased number of reforms being in line with FT recommendations/ advice - Increased alignment of the reforms with the EU acquis and best practices - Increased positive impact of FT’s work on immediate target groups - Increased, more structured and inclusive debate on economic policies and reforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased work with target groups within the initiatives/projects of Finance Think - Established positive relationships with the policymakers, with multilateral and bilateral consultative and dialogue processes - Increased number of media appearances and social media activities - Increased number of opinion leaders participating in the FT’s public events on economic issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Advocacy and communications - Internal policy documents

<p>Nurturing strong institutional capacity of Finance Think to impact economic reforms and to reinforce effects economic policies have for citizens; and enhancing own capacity for regional impact and leadership</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased demand for FT research materials - Increasing capacity for regional leadership and impact - Increased quality of research materials - Safeguarding financial sustainability - Investing in recognized quality & credibility of entire FT output - Increased capacity for operational and strategic planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increased positive feedback from the government and other stakeholders - Increased transparency and financial discipline - Improved procedures for strategic and operational planning and evaluation - Increased skills of the FT's employees - Enhanced cooperation between FT and think tanks - Increased cooperation within WEBecon Network - Increased exposure to the international academic and CSO scene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Capacity building events - Internal policy documents - Research and publications
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