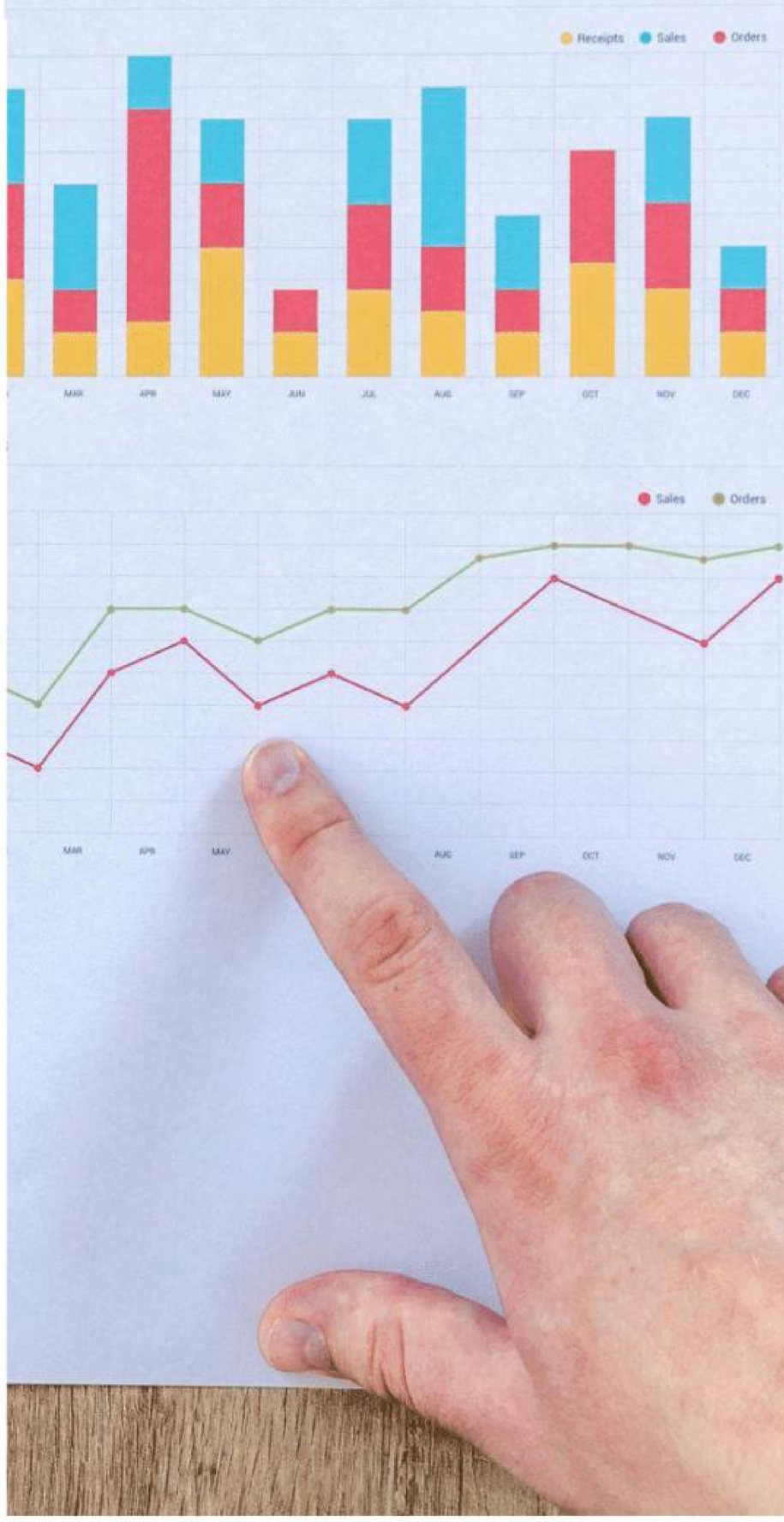
ANNUAL REPORT 2024



APRIL 2025

Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI

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Viktor Mitevski
Executive Director



FOREWORD

2024 was a special year for all of us at ZMAI, a year when we proudly celebrated a decade of our existence and operations. Ten years of growth, development and creating positive changes in our society through data, knowledge and innovation. For us, this anniversary was not only an occasion for celebration, but also a reminder of the vision that has guided us from the beginning, building a smart, sustainable and advanced society by creating and promoting public policies based on facts.

In these 10 years, we have worked with dedication to bring data closer to citizens, decision-makers and the general public, showing that the real power for change comes from a well-informed and engaged society. We are grateful to all our collaborators, partners, supporters and donors who have been part of this journey of ours and who have helped us realize the ambitious goals we have set for ourselves.

In the past year, more than ever, we have strengthened the foundations for new steps: from implementing innovative solutions for optimizing the education system, through promoting budget transparency in Macedonia and Africa, to launching new digital initiatives that reach the youngest and prepare them for the challenges of the digital age.

We see the coming year as a period in which we will continue to develop our capacities even more boldly and create impact through knowledge and collaboration. We will remain committed to advancing public policies, supporting young analysts and entrepreneurs, and deepening our international partnerships.

To all our collaborators and supporters, I say: believe in the power of knowledge and data, because they are what move the world forward. Thank you for being with us and for sharing our vision for a better, fairer, and more advanced future. We continue forward together, because we know that the best is yet to come!

With sincere gratitude,

Viktor Mitevski
Executive director of ZMAI

About ZMAI

The Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI was founded in 2014 and has been actively operating since then. Our mission is to serve as a central platform for supporting economic development through innovative solutions, knowledge sharing, and the establishment of national and international partnerships. Our vision is to position ourselves as a global catalyst and enabler of economic growth by developing cutting-edge solutions, tools, and platforms for knowledge exchange.

ZMAI's overarching goal is to contribute to societal improvement by creating and promoting effective public policies that foster good governance in both the public and business sectors, enhance the quality of education, cultivate a research-oriented mindset among young people, and advance economic and financial literacy.

The specific objectives of the Association are to:

• Establish and strengthen partnerships with local, national, and international organisations, businesses, and governments, in order to combine knowledge, expertise, and resources to support economic development initiatives.

• Produce analyses, disseminate data, and share knowledge through research to inform the public about economic development strategies grounded in evidence-based best practices.

• Enhance financial education and literacy through targeted programmes that equip individuals with the skills and knowledge necessary for sound financial decision-making, effective resource management, and active participation in economic life.

• Support and promote environmentally sustainable practices within economic development frameworks to ensure long-term ecological balance and resilience.

• Promote inclusive economic growth by addressing economic disparities and ensuring equal opportunities for all, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic background.

• Develop and advocate for evidence-based public policies in the fields of good governance, public finance, fiscal policy, and related areas.

• Stimulate, support, lobby for, manage, and implement independent initiatives led by young researchers and analysts.

• Promote and support the use of open data, as well as the principles of transparency and accountability in public institutions.



ZMAI's Team



VIKTOR MITEVSKI

- EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR -

Viktor Mitevski, Co-founder and Executive Director of ZMAI, has led a team of 23 researchers and managed over 25 projects in the past seven years, focusing on good governance, education, investment, startups, and financial literacy. He earned a Master's degree in Economics from Texas A&M University in 2016 and served as a Special Advisor to the Minister of Finance from 2017 to 2019. A Fulbright Scholar in 2015, Viktor brings a strong track record in programme and project management, with a particular emphasis on financial reform and entrepreneurship.



JOVANA NIKOLOVSKA

- PROJECT COORDINATOR, FINANCIAL AND MEDIA LITERACY EXPERT AND PUBLIC RELATIONS -

Jovana Nikolovska graduated from the Faculty of Economics in Skopje and has several years of experience as a journalist. From 2017 to 2019, she served as a Public Relations Officer at the Ministry of Finance. She currently works in the field of communications, with a particular focus on combating fake news and disinformation. Since 2022, she has been engaged as a project coordinator and expert in financial and media literacy, as well as public relations. Her previous experience includes work in marketing and communications, media editing, and project coordination for initiatives involving young analysts and researchers.



KSENIJA POPOVIKj KOCEVSKI

- CO-FOUNDER, RESEARCHER, TRAINER -

Ksenija holds a Master's degree in Economics with a specialisation in Statistics. She has six years of experience in the banking sector, where she worked as a Sales Manager, excelling in planning, coordination, supervision, and performance control. As one of the founders and researchers at ZMAI, Ksenija has participated in and coordinated numerous projects in the fields of research and analysis, including those focused on governance, investment, entrepreneurship, and education.

ZMAI's Team



MARIJA RADESKA GjUKIKj

- RESEARCHER AND COORDINATOR OF THE CENTER FOR ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND CREATIVITY -

Marija is a researcher and coordinator at the Centre for Entrepreneurship and Creativity at ZMAI. In this role, she supports the preparation of funding proposals and manages projects involving the organisation of events, workshops, competitions, and networking sessions. She is also responsible for designing and conducting online surveys, as well as organising and facilitating focus groups. Prior to this, she gained experience as an operations nurse in various healthcare facilities and worked as a project assistant at the Boris Trajkovski International Foundation, where she contributed to projects in education, youth activism, and media literacy.



ANASTAZIJA PANEVA-PISAREVA-NIKOLIKj

- FINANCIAL ADMINISTRATOR -

A graduate anthropologist, civic activist, and researcher specialising in good governance and democratic development, she brings over 20 years of experience in the civil society sector. Her work has focused on financial and project sustainability, organisational independence, and the development of internal and technical procedures within civil society organisations. Since 2023, she has been a member of the ZMAI team. Throughout her career, she has served as a financial assistant and anthropological researcher on various projects. She also has experience in leading activist initiatives and actively volunteers in the field of environmental protection.



MARIJA PACAROSKA STOJKOVIKj

- ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROJECT ASSISTANT -

Marija studied at the Faculty of Philosophy in Skopje, at the Department of Pedagogy, and has experience in marketing, research, and business administration. Over the course of her career, she has worked in several IT companies and at the marketing agency IPSOS, where she held various roles including field research controller, English teacher, and business and social media development specialist. Since 2021, she has been part of the ZMAI team as a Project and HR Assistant, responsible for administrative tasks related to project implementation and human resources management.

ZMAI Experts/Associates



NEVENA SPASOVSKA

- RESEARCHER -

Nevena Spasovska is one of the founders and a researcher at the Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI, where she has been active since its establishment in 2014. She currently works as a Software Support Specialist at MEDIAGENIX. Her strong interest in research and statistical data processing is reflected in her active involvement in ZMAI's project activities.



GORAN MOJANOSKI

- DATA SCIENTIST -

Goran Mojanoski is one of the founders of ZMAI Skopje. He has dedicated the majority of his research career to the fields of primary education, investment, and capital markets, with a particular specialisation in capital markets. In 2023, Goran was awarded a PhD in Statistical Methods for Business and Economics.



VIKTOR STOJKOSKI

- DATA SCIENTIST -

Viktor Stojkoski holds PhDs in Computer Science (2020) and Economics (2023) and is a multidisciplinary researcher with significant contributions in the fields of economic geography and economic mobility. His commitment to research earned him the national award for Best Young Social Scientist in 2022. Beyond academia, Viktor actively supports practitioners in designing policy interventions aimed at structural development and improving social conditions.

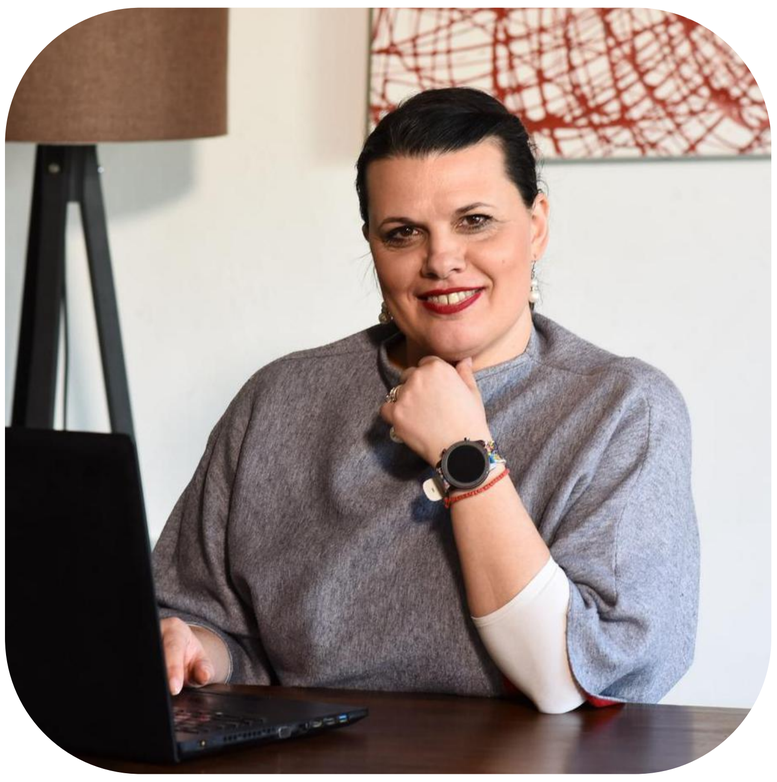
ZMAI Experts/Associates



DRAGAN TEVDOVSKI

- PUBLIC FINANCE EXPERT -

Dragan Tevdovski, a full professor at the Faculty of Economics in Skopje, is a highly experienced economist and academic with significant influence in both the Macedonian and international economic communities. He served as Minister of Finance from 2017 to 2019. His research focuses on applied econometrics, finance, and macroeconomic policy, with substantial contributions through publications in renowned international journals and the authorship of university textbooks and academic books.



NENA MANChEV

- RESEARCHER -

Nena Manchev is an external associate and researcher at ZMAI. She currently works as a Programme Manager for Leadership and Education at Macedonia2025. She holds a degree from the Faculty of Economics at UKIM. Her previous experience includes working in the Department for Administrative Support and Coordination at the Fund for Innovation and Technology Development (FITR), as well as serving as Head of the Cabinet of the Minister of Finance.



MARIJA KITANSKA CVETKOVSKA

- IT EXPERT -

A Network Administrator in the banking sector and advisor, formerly a System Administrator in the IT Department of the Ministry of Finance, with over 20 years of experience in the public finance sector managing digital transformation projects. Recognised for successfully delivering projects within set deadlines and budgets, coordinating international and multilingual teams, and leading complex business and digital transformation initiatives. Skilled in using strong communication and leadership abilities to effectively convey project expectations to team members.

ZMAI Experts/Associates



NATAShA ANGjELESKA

- EDUCATIONAL EXPERT -

Natasha Angjeleska holds a PhD in Pedagogical Sciences and has many years of experience in educational programmes and projects, particularly in the areas of teacher professional development and support for the education of marginalised groups. She has participated as an expert in working groups tasked with developing strategic documents for education and youth. Natasha is also a titular Assistant Professor at the American College in Skopje, in the Department of Psychology.



DUShAN BOSILjANOV

- LEGAL EXPERT -

Dushan Bosiljanov is a PhD student in Business Law at the Faculty of Law "Justinianus Primus". From 2013 to 2017, he was engaged as a teaching and research associate at the Faculty of Law "Justinianus Primus" in Skopje, University "Ss. Cyril and Methodius", in the Department of Commercial and Labour Law. He currently works for one of the leading start-up companies in Germany, operating in the IT and hospitality sectors. His work primarily focuses on researching and documenting legal and tax requirements across various jurisdictions.



STELA POPOVSKA

- DIGITAL MARKETING AND SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERT -

Stela Popovska is a seasoned professional with over ten years of experience in digital marketing, social media, and project management. She holds a Bachelor of Business Administration (E-Commerce) from the University of Ss. Cyril and Methodius and possesses advanced skills in digital tools and analytics. Throughout her career, she has successfully coordinated projects in the IT, healthcare, and corporate sectors, contributing to growth and optimisation for clients. As a Project Manager, she is skilled in planning, resource allocation, and budget monitoring. At OXO Production, she led the digital strategy, achieving a 20% increase in reach and engagement through Meta and Google Ads.

Improving cost efficiency in primary and secondary education

DONOR: UNICEF

Implementation period: January 2021 – present

DESCRIPTION:

The project focuses on optimising the organisation of schools in the Republic of North Macedonia to ensure sustainable and equitable access to education. Its main objective is to develop a comprehensive optimisation plan that considers the needs of students, teachers, and local communities. The study includes an analysis of existing standards and proposes changes to the allocation formula, establishing a foundation for more efficient planning based on real needs on the ground.

ACTIVITIES:

Field visits: The ZMAI team conducted visits to 10 municipalities to collect data and engage with local authorities on the applicability of the proposed models.

Training and support: The Bureau for Development of Education actively participated by training staff and organising visits to 23 municipalities to observe current practices and identify challenges.

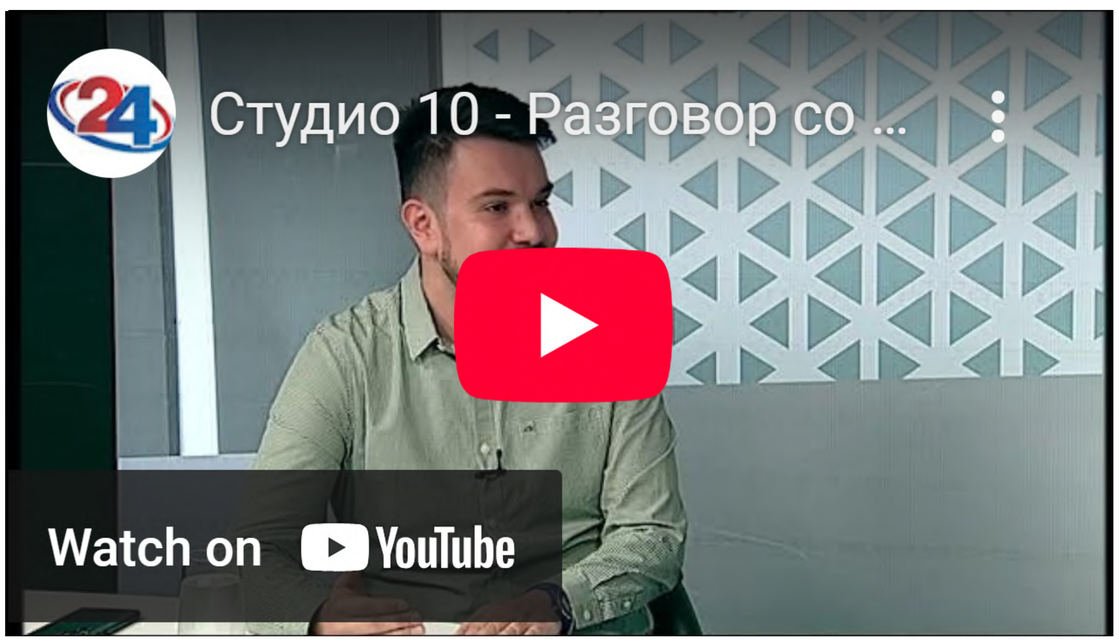
Budget cost analysis: The project examined the impact of inflation on school operating costs and student transportation, particularly in light of rising food and energy prices.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

Updated optimisation plans: A total of 80 optimisation plans were revised and adjusted using new data and field insights, ensuring their practical applicability.

Stakeholder communication: Continuous dialogue and consultation with municipal administrations, school principals, and other relevant stakeholders were maintained to support successful implementation of the proposed measures.

Improved budget transparency: Based on the analysis of budget expenditures, measures were proposed to mitigate the negative effects of inflation and establish a foundation for more targeted policies, such as subsidies for essential services.



Studio 10 – Conversation with Viktor Mitevski

Viktor Mitevski emphasised the importance of cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and UNICEF in developing quality and inclusive educational reforms. The main goal is to ensure that every student, regardless of location, receives equal access to quality education. Smart education is not only a priority—it is a necessity for the future of our children.



ZMAI AND UNICEF ORGANIZED A WORKSHOP FOR EDUCATIONAL INSPECTORS ON THE TOPIC OF IMPROVING THE MACEDONIAN SCHOOL NETWORK

by Zmai | Apr 11, 2024

The Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI and UNICEF with the support of the World Bank and the Ministry of Education and Science organized trainings for educational inspectors. At this training, the opportunities for improving school networks in the country were...

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ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for education
Education guided by the real needs of students

Within the framework of the project "Improving the Efficiency of Expenditures in Primary and Secondary Education," implemented by ZMAI with the support of UNICEF, an event titled "Education Driven by the Real Needs of Students" was held on 11 September 2024. The event was part of the programme marking the 10th anniversary of ZMAI and served as a key platform for expert dialogue and the exchange of views among relevant stakeholders on the modernisation of the education system in the Republic of North Macedonia.

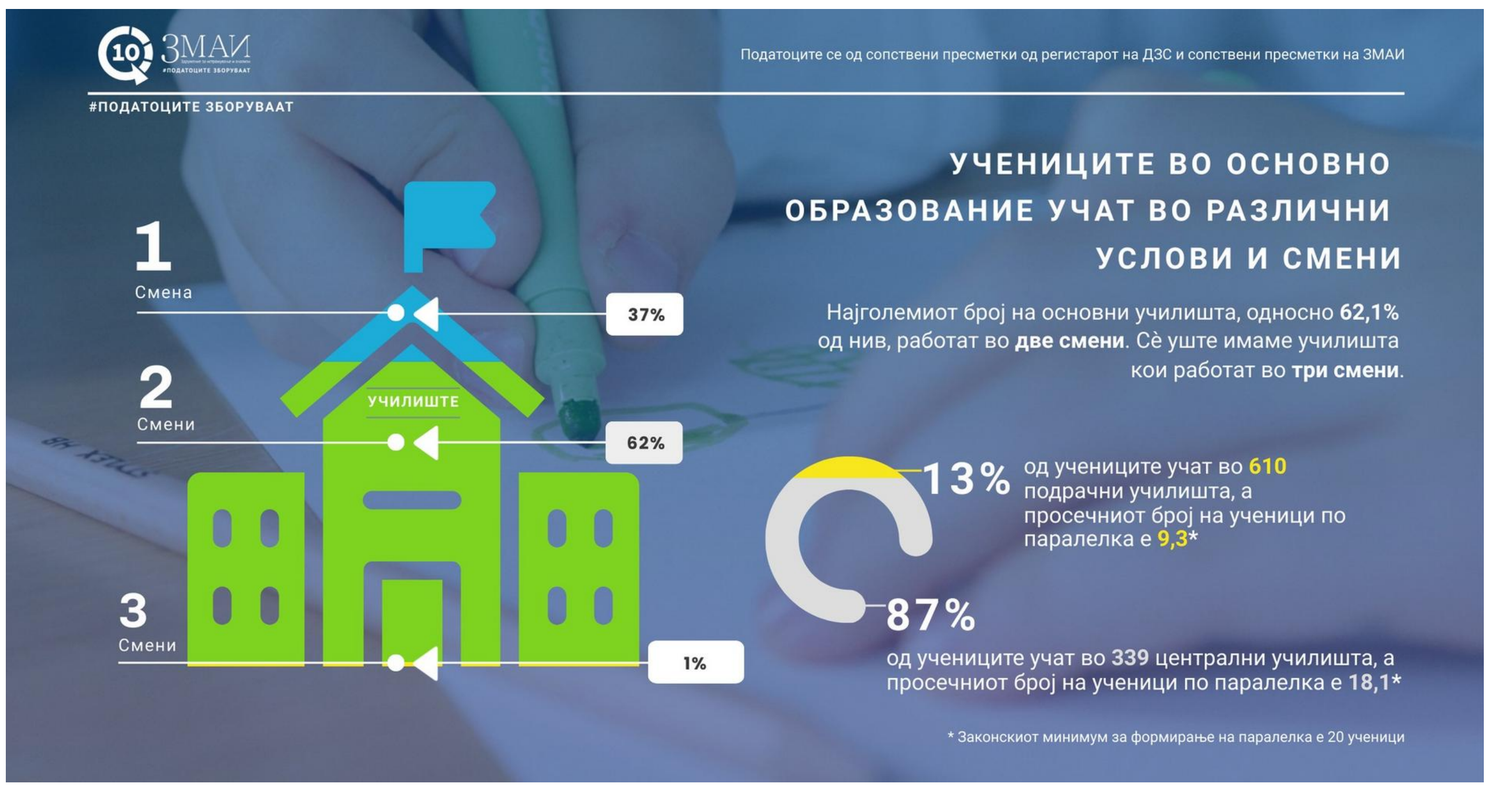
Introductory remarks were delivered by the Minister of Education, Vesna Janevska, the UNICEF Representative, Leslie Miller, and the Director of ZMAI, Viktor Mitevski. Among the attendees were representatives from the Ministry of Education and Science, ZELS, the academic community, and the civil sector. The discussion focused on cost rationalisation, equitable distribution of staff and infrastructure, and the introduction of a new financing model aligned with the real needs of students.



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click to watch the entire conference





HOW TO AN EDUCATION GUIDED BY THE REAL NEEDS OF STUDENTS THROUGH SMART INVESTMENT IN TEACHING STAFF AND INFRASTRUCTURE?

by Zmai | Sep 12, 2024

On September 11, an event took place on the theme: "Education from the real needs of students - smart investment in teaching staff and infrastructure". The event was opened by the Minister of Education and Science - Vesna Janevska, the representative of UNICEF in the...

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Through the presented analyses, ZMAI highlighted that **13% of students are enrolled in 610 school buildings**, while the remaining **87% are concentrated in just 339 buildings**. Additionally, **62% of teaching takes place in two shifts**. Projections indicate that **by 2029, there will be approximately 20,000 fewer students, implying a reduction of around 1,000 classes**. Consultations conducted in 10 municipalities—with parents, teachers, and principals—further confirmed the need for improved infrastructure, greater staff support, and better conditions to enhance the quality of learning time.

The event reaffirmed the shared commitment among all participants that education must be a strategic priority of the state. It was also emphasised that funding based on the number of students is a key mechanism for ensuring both equity and quality in education.

Open Municipalities Index 2023

Self-financing

Implementation period: March 2020 - annually

DESCRIPTION:

The Open Municipalities Index (OMI), continuously developed and implemented by the Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI, is a tool designed to measure transparency, accountability, fairness, and citizen involvement in local budgeting processes. The index aims to support the development of local governments that formulate policies aligned with the real needs and priorities of citizens. Methodologically, the index is based on standards for open municipalities and encompasses three core dimensions: transparency, inclusion and fairness, and accountability.

ACTIVITIES:

Methodological preparation: The methodology for measuring openness was developed and revised to reflect changes in the legal framework and the availability of municipal budget data.

Assessment: Independent researchers were engaged to assess the openness of all municipalities in North Macedonia by reviewing official municipal websites.

Report preparation: A comprehensive report was prepared, offering an analytical overview of the current state of municipal openness along with specific recommendations for improving transparency and citizen engagement.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

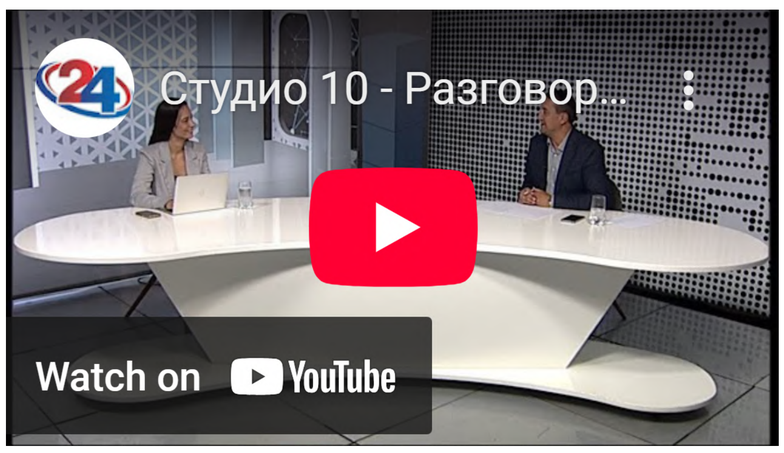
Index assessment for 2023: The average score of the OMI for 2023 is 37.4 out of a possible 100 points, indicating a low level of openness in municipal budget processes. The analysis confirms that most municipalities demonstrate minimal or insufficient openness.

Clearly identified weaknesses: The most significant shortcomings were found in the area of inclusion and fairness, where municipalities generally lack adequate mechanisms for involving citizens—especially marginalised groups—in the budgeting process.

Increased public awareness: Communication efforts and the publication of the index have sparked public debate on the need to enhance local transparency and accountability. In some municipalities, this has already led to concrete steps to improve access to budget information.



click to read the full **Report on the Openness of Budget Processes for 2023**



Studio 10 – Interview with Jovana Avramovska Nikolovska

The latest analysis by the ZMAI Research Association reveals that municipalities remain far from achieving adequate transparency and accountability in the use of public funds. The score for 2023 stands at 37 on a scale from 0 to 100.



click to read the **Reports for each municipality individually**, sorted from highest to lowest index score

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for transparency, accountability, inclusion, and fairness
Presentation of the Results of the Open Municipalities Index for 2023

For the fourth year in a row, ZMAI has been measuring the Open Municipalities Index (OMI) with the aim of supporting transparency, fairness, inclusion, and accountability in local budgeting processes. On 10 October 2024, the results of the OMI for 2023 were officially presented. The event, which formed part of the programme marking the 10th anniversary of ZMAI, served as a key moment for publicly promoting both the achievements and the challenges related to the openness of municipal budget practices.

The presentation was attended by representatives of local governments, the media, civil society organisations, and relevant institutions. During the event, the findings from the latest OMI analysis—covering 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje—were presented. The average score of 37.4 out of 100 indicates a minimal, yet still insufficient, level of municipal openness, particularly in the dimensions of inclusion and fairness. The municipality of Berovo drew particular attention, as it became the first to achieve comprehensive openness under the index methodology, scoring 88.1 points. Its mayor was formally recognised with a special certificate for this achievement.

As part of ZMAI's tenth anniversary, the event also served to stimulate public dialogue on the importance of citizen participation and the accessibility of budget information at the local level. It was additionally highlighted that, as of this year, the OMI methodology has been applied in several local governments in Africa—a testament to the analytical rigour and international relevance of the tool.

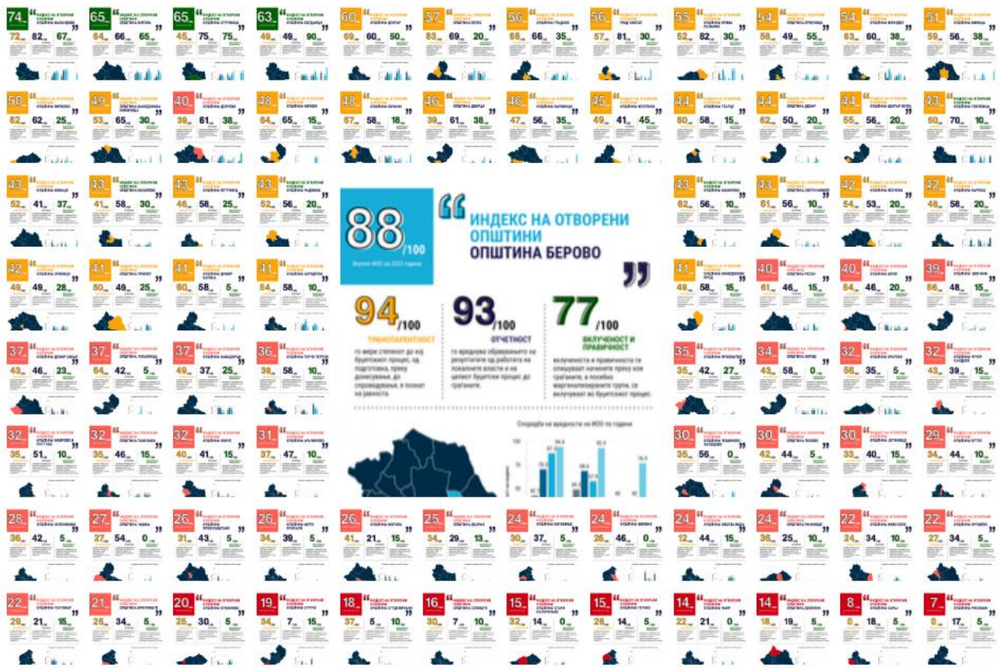


OMI: MUNICIPALITY OF BEROVO IS THE MOST SUCCESSFUL IN TERMS OF OPENNESS OF THE BUDGET PROCESS, 35 MUNICIPALITIES RANK WORSE THAN LAST YEAR

by Zmai | Oct 10, 2024

The Association ZMAI held a presentation of the Index for Openness of Municipalities for 2023, where the results were unveiled. This is the first year that one of the municipalities achieved comprehensive openness with 80 points, and that municipality is Berovo. Mayor...

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Formula for financing kindergartens through Block Grants

CLIENT: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

Implementation period: November 2022 – December 2024

DESCRIPTION:

The project involved a systemic analysis of the legal and financial framework governing public institutions for early childhood care—specifically kindergartens—with a particular focus on the mechanism of financing through block grants from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia. The objective was to assess the effectiveness of the existing model, with an emphasis on the distribution of budget funds through formulas based on the number of children and staff. The analysis identified key weaknesses in the current methodology and proposed specific improvements to ensure equitable and predictable access to preschool education services.

ACTIVITIES:

- The formula for the distribution of block grants was analysed in detail.
- Methodological values for annual financing per child enrolled in a kindergarten and per child included in an early childhood development centre were examined.
- Data on the number of enrolled children, number of employees, kindergarten capacities, and municipal distribution were systematised.
- A simulation of block grant distribution was conducted for five municipalities with varying demographic structures, revealing deviations of up to 40% compared to actual needs.
- An analysis of group overcrowding was included—showing that in 65% of public kindergartens, the number of children per group exceeds the legal maximum, which ranges from 8 to 25 children depending on age.

A policy document with seven specific recommendations was developed. These include the regular updating of the allocation formula, the introduction of indicators for spatial and staffing coverage, and the mandatory inclusion of actual costs for food, heating, and programme delivery.



ZMAI AND MLSP HELD WORKSHOPS TO IMPROVE THE SYSTEM OF FINANCING KINDERGARTENS

by Zmai | Jul 3, 2024

ZMAI and MLSP with the support of the World Bank held workshops to improve the system of financing kindergartens. Within the framework of the project "Formula for financing kindergartens through Block Grants", the team from the Association for Research and Analysis...

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ZMAI and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, with support from the World Bank, held workshops aimed at improving the kindergarten financing system.
As part of the project "Formula for Financing Kindergartens through Block Grants," the team from the Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI worked closely with staff from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to define the foundations of a new proposed formula and financing model—one that will be based on clearly established standards.
Because every child deserves quality preschool education and care! - ZMAI Facebook post

Formula for funding block grants for institutional accommodation and care for the elderly

CLIENT: Ministry of Labor and Social Policy

Implementation period: November 2023 – December 2024

DESCRIPTION:

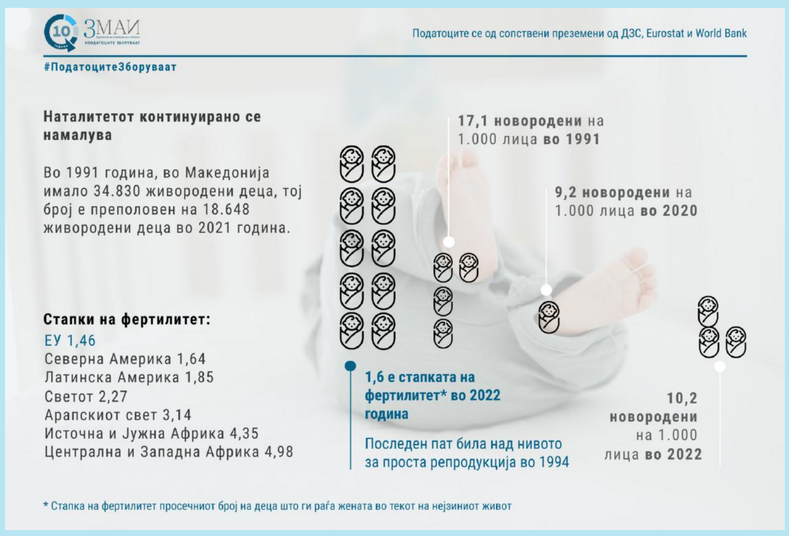
In light of current demographic trends and the projected ageing of the population, ZMAI conducted a comprehensive analysis of the institutional care system for the elderly in the Republic of North Macedonia. The research focused on the legal framework, historical costs, capacity utilisation, human resources, and potential financing models. The main objective of the project was to assess the actual capacities, financial challenges, and development needs of public residential care institutions for the elderly, in order to support the creation of a sustainable and equitable long-term care system. The analysis was based on official data from the Ministry of Finance and the State Statistical Office, as well as administrative data collected through a structured questionnaire administered to public institutions.

ACTIVITIES:

- Annual budgets of four public residential homes for the elderly were analysed for the period 2019–2023.
- A detailed financial analysis was conducted across more than 150 budget accounts, disaggregated by year, institution, and expenditure category.
- A capacity assessment was carried out.
- A mapping of the regional distribution of care capacities was conducted, along with projections of future needs by region.
- Three scenarios for alternative financing models were developed: a regional funding model, a co-financing model, and a public-private partnership (PPP) model.

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for demography
Presentation of a concept for nursing homes



The birth rate is continuously decreasing

In 1991, there were 34,830 live births in Macedonia, that number has halved to 18,648 live births in 2021.

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In Macedonia, there are currently 7 beds per 1000 inhabitants over 65 years of age (in state and private homes). The optimal level of beds according to the level of GDP per capita is 15. To reach this capacity, an additional 2500 beds are needed. These capacities are needed, especially in the context of the demographic aging of the population and the increasing demand for accommodation and care services for the elderly.

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Monitoring potential abuse of state resources during the elections in North Macedonia

DONOR: National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Implementation period: April 2024 - February 2025

DESCRIPTION:

The project aimed to provide systematic oversight of campaign financing and the potential misuse of public resources during the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections in the Republic of North Macedonia. By analysing financial flows, the legal framework, and the transparency of political entities, the project contributed to strengthening public trust and promoting fair electoral conditions. In addition, specific reforms were proposed, including an initiative to digitise the election financing reporting system within the framework of the Open Government Partnership (OGP) initiative.

ACTIVITIES:

- Separate and detailed analyses of campaign financing for the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections were conducted, covering a total of 24 political entities (17 for the parliamentary and 7 for the presidential elections).
- Financial data amounting to 248.3 million denars were analysed, with 141 million denars related to the parliamentary elections and 107.3 million denars to the presidential elections. All financial flows were cross-referenced with transaction account statements and reports submitted to the State Election Commission (SEC).
- A detailed analysis of the income structure of candidates and parties revealed that donations from individuals accounted for 43% of the income of parliamentary entities and 47% of the income of presidential candidates.
- The distribution of public funding through the paid political advertising model was examined, showing that state funds were the dominant source—1.76 times greater than all other sources combined in the parliamentary elections, and 3.3 times greater in the presidential elections.
- A high percentage of undefined or unspecified revenue was identified among several entities, comprising 11% of the total election revenues for parliamentary participants, indicating a potential risk of non-transparent financing.



THE ASSOCIATION ZMAI WITH THE SUPPORT OF NDI AND NED WILL MONITOR THE FINANCING OF POLITICAL PARTIES DURING THE ELECTION PROCESSES

by Zmai | May 22, 2024

The ZMAI team will work on monitoring the financing of political parties before, during and after the end of the election campaigns during the last three election cycles. By using publicly available databases and cross-referencing them, ZMAI will create a useful...

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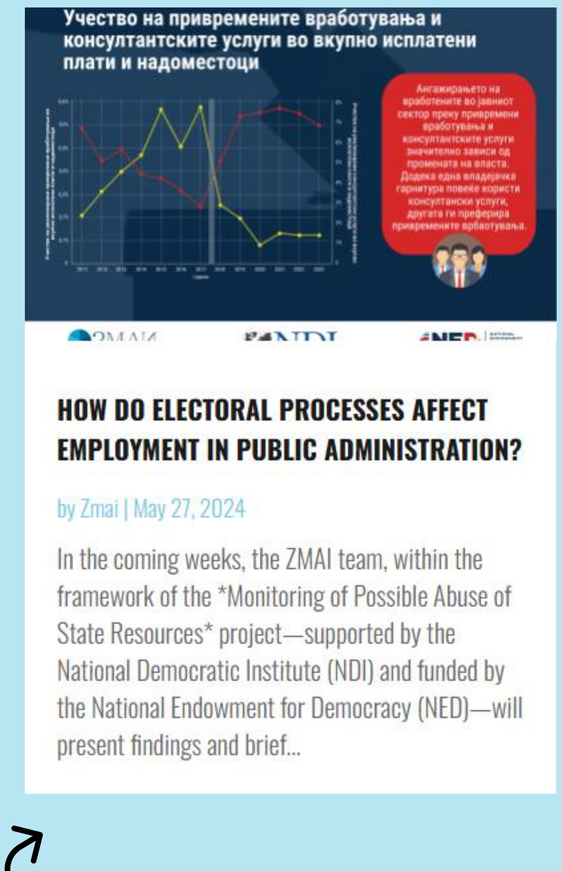


THE DYNAMICS OF REGULAR AND TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT IS STRONGLY INFLUENCED BY POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC PROCESSES

by Zmai | Jun 27, 2024

The team of ZMAI within the framework of the project for monitoring the possible misuse of state resources, supported by NDI, and financed by the National Foundation for Democracy (NED) presented the findings of the first short report part of the project "The use of...

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HOW DO ELECTORAL PROCESSES AFFECT EMPLOYMENT IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION?

by Zmai | May 27, 2024

In the coming weeks, the ZMAI team, within the framework of the *Monitoring of Possible Abuse of State Resources* project—supported by the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED)—will present findings and brief...

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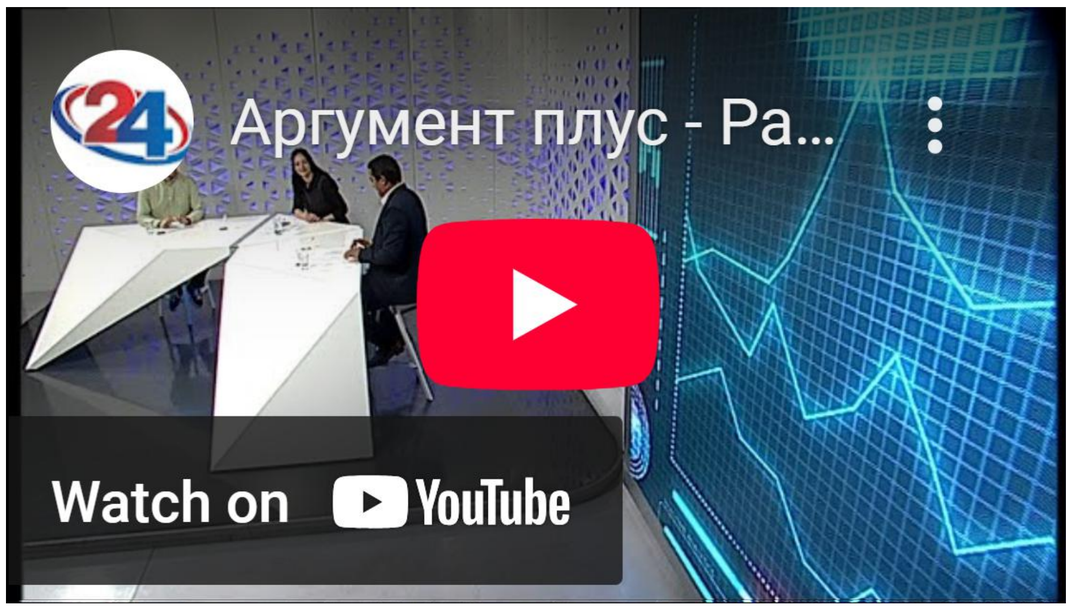
Monitoring potential abuse of state resources during the elections in North Macedonia

DONOR: National Democratic Institute (NDI)

Implementation period: April 2024 - February 2025

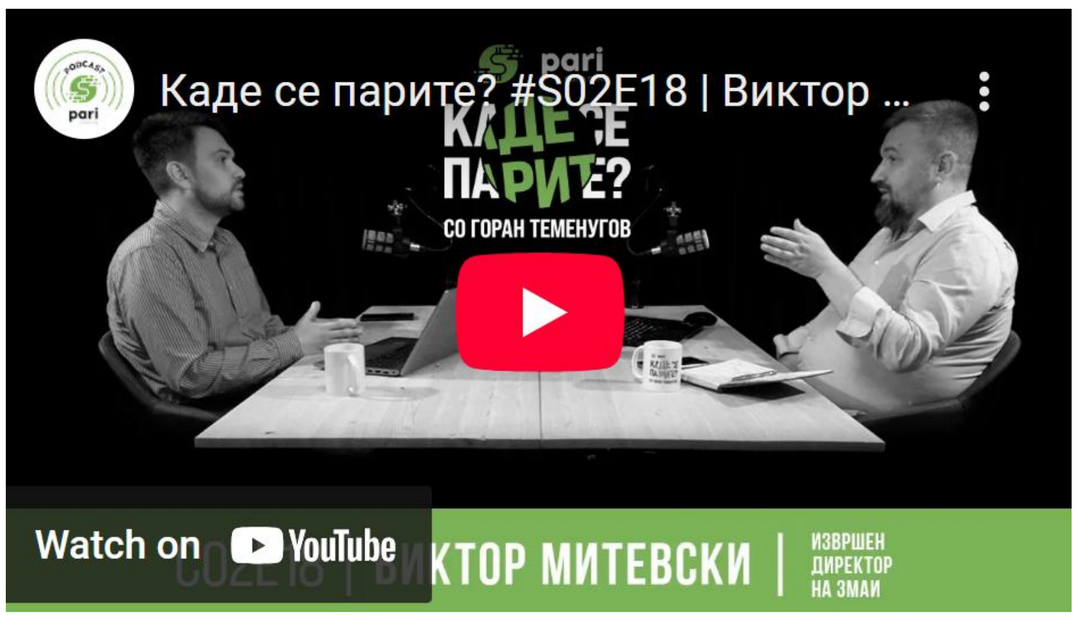


click to read the full analysis



Employment in State Administration and the Public Sector Before and After Elections

During the discussion, several findings from the first analysis conducted as part of the project "Monitoring Potential Abuse of State Resources During Elections in North Macedonia" were explained in greater detail.



Where is the Money? #S02E18 | Viktor Mitevski | ZMAI Research: Millions of Euros for Party Personnel

Viktor Mitevski from ZMAI was a guest on Goran Temenugov's podcast Where is the Money?, where he discussed party election financing, the optimisation of budget spending, and whether Macedonia can export not only goods but also services to Africa.



click to see the Facebook post

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for Macedonia
Presentation of a report on the financing of the 2024 elections

In cooperation with the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), ZMAI presented an analysis of the financing of the election campaigns for the presidential and parliamentary elections in the Republic of North Macedonia. The event was held at the SCPC premises and brought together representatives from institutions, the media, and civil society organisations.

The analysis revealed that total revenues for the parliamentary elections amounted to 141 million denars, of which 37% came from regular budget funding and 45% from individual donations. For the presidential elections, total revenues reached 107 million denars, with 44% from budget funds and 48% from individuals. Despite legal requirements, instances of insufficient transparency were identified—for some political entities, over 90% of revenues were not clearly classified. Moreover, advertising and propaganda expenditures dominated, accounting for 78% of total campaign spending.

The event contributed to opening a public debate on the transparency of election financing and highlighted the need to strengthen oversight and reporting mechanisms. The findings from the analysis will serve as a basis for developing recommendations aimed at more effective regulation and accountability in electoral processes.





Based on the presented reports and discussions, the following key areas for future activities were identified:

- Recommendation to initiate legislative amendments aimed at improving transparency and oversight in the financing of election campaigns;
- Encouraging cooperation between the SCPC, the State Election Commission, and other competent institutions to strengthen monitoring mechanisms;
- Development of educational programmes for candidates and political parties to promote compliance with legal regulations and ethical standards;
- Establishment of mechanisms for the periodic monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of new legal provisions;
- Strengthening the active role of civil society organisations in monitoring the electoral process and campaign financing.

Monitoring these activities will contribute to enhancing the integrity of and public trust in the electoral process in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Increasing Transparency in Local Government: Implementation and Evaluation of Citizen Budgets in Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe

DONOR: Swedish International Institute for Local Democracy (ICLD)

Implementation period: November 2023 – June 2024

Within the framework of its partnership with ICLD, the Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI implemented a project aimed at enhancing transparency, accountability, and citizen participation in budget processes in Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe. The project was conducted in two phases: a comparative analysis of the legal frameworks and budgeting practices, followed by the field implementation of citizen budgets in nine local governments. Desk research and field visits were conducted in all three countries, covering three budget cycles and focusing on two specific case studies—Muranga County and Entebbe Municipality. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with local authorities, civil society organisations, and citizens in the nine selected municipalities.

Three regional workshops were organised, with more than 75 participants in total, focused on budget literacy and participatory budgeting techniques.

As part of the project, a “toolbox” for citizen budgeting was developed and distributed to over 20 municipalities and organisations in the region. The project also established a comparative database of local budgets and identified good practices for citizen engagement. Notable examples include SMS-based consultation platforms in Uganda, interactive Facebook engagement in Kenya, and face-to-face community meetings in rural Zimbabwe. The project produced concrete recommendations for donors and governments to further strengthen local democracy and citizen participation.

The findings and tools developed through this project represent a valuable resource for monitoring, evaluating, and improving transparency in local budget processes.



THE ZMAI TEAM HAS STARTED ACTIVITIES IN KENYA, UGANDA AND ZIMBABWE: LOCAL AUTHORITIES AND NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS WILL REMAIN OUR COLLABORATORS AND PARTNERS

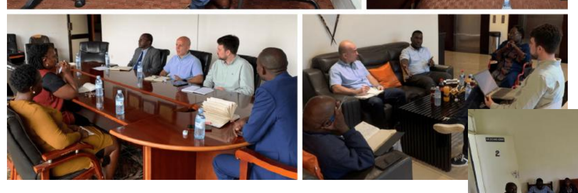
by Zmai | Feb 16, 2024

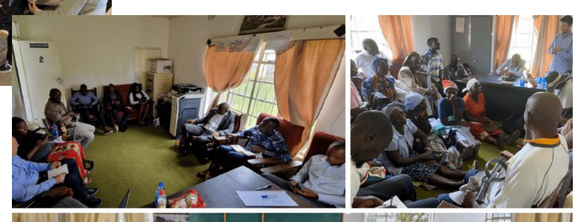
The Association of Research and Analysis ZMAI has begun its activities in Africa with the support of the International Center for Local Democracy from Sweden. Part of the ZMAI team spent the past three weeks visiting several municipalities in Kenya, Uganda, and...

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Uganda





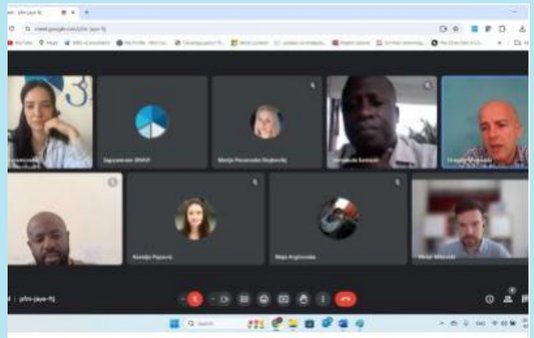
Zimbabwe





Kenya



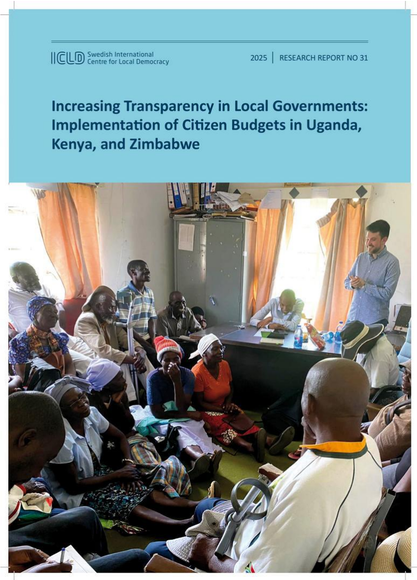


WORKSHOP WITHIN THE PROJECT “INCREASING TRANSPARENCY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS: IMPLEMENTATION AND EVALUATION OF CIVIL BUDGETS IN UGANDA, KENYA AND ZIMBABWE”

by Zmai | Apr 9, 2024

An online workshop was held today where the next steps in the project "Increasing transparency in local governments: implementation and evaluation of civil budgets in Uganda, Kenya and Zimbabwe" were presented, as well as a proposal for making a civil budget for the...

click to read the post



click to read the full report



click to read the entire "toolbox"

What makes the world go round?

PARTNERS: Makedonski Telekom, Pivara Skopje, Sparkasse Bank and the American Embassy

Implementation period: September 2023 – present

“What Makes the World Go Round?” is a digital educational platform developed by ZMAI, with a mission to promote media literacy, understanding of economic processes, and resilience to disinformation—particularly among younger audiences. The project employs a podcast format and interactive videos to make expert content accessible to a broader public through educational yet engaging communication (edutainment). In 2024, production of the second season began, with an increased focus on cybersecurity, critical thinking, and digital ethics. The project is implemented in partnership with media and technical professionals and benefits from stable corporate support.

As part of its activities, the first season of the podcast was successfully completed, featuring a total of 15 episodes that combine analytical content with expert interviews across various fields—economics, ICT, culture, the creative industries, and security. The groundwork for the second season has been laid, including the formation of an editorial team, topic and guest selection, and script development. Preparations are underway for 15 new educational episodes, 10 explanatory videos, and 2 interactive challenges focused on media literacy and cybersecurity. In parallel, 10 social media posts with strong visual engagement have been designed. ZMAI experts have also actively participated in television and radio debates, as well as public discussions on disinformation and critical journalism.

season 1 - 2024



watch season 1

A monitoring and evaluation system has been prepared to measure the effects, which tracks views, engagement and feedback from the audience. In addition, an analysis of the results of the YouThink survey was conducted, where 77% of respondents expressed the opinion that mechanisms to combat disinformation are lacking, which served as a basis for designing future content.

What makes the world go round?

Implementation period: September 2023 – present

The project achieved significant results: the total viewership on YouTube exceeded 800,000 views, with an average viewership per episode exceeding 50,000, and posts on Instagram and other networks reached over 500,000 users. Financial support from four renowned partners, including Makedonski Telekom and the US Embassy, has also been confirmed. “What Makes the World Go Round?” has been recognized as the most watched educational podcast from a think tank organization in North Macedonia and the only female-led project with such media reach. The platform built around the project has attracted a stable audience of young professionals, students and educators, with a high engagement rate and positive feedback. As a final activity for 2024, a sustainable strategy has been formulated for expanding the project through self-financing episodes, as well as developing new interactive formats such as video quizzes and educational games.

season 2 - 2024



watch season 2

Follow What makes the world go round?

Smart specialization for real development of the Pelagonia planning region

CLIENT: Ministry of Local Self-Government

Implementation period: November 2023 – April 2024

DESCRIPTION:

The project “Smart Specialization for Real Growth of the Pelagonija Region” is a comprehensive strategic initiative aimed at promoting sustainable and balanced development by identifying comparative advantages and formulating targeted economic policies. As part of the project, an in-depth analysis of the region's economic structure was conducted, accompanied by a consultative process involving over 100 stakeholders from the public, private, and civil sectors. The core approach is based on the concept of economic complexity and the application of methodologies related to indices of relatedness, production, and economic complexity. This enabled the identification of three alternative strategies for smart specialization: unrelated, balanced, and related.

ACTIVITIES:

- Three focus groups were conducted with a total of 38 participants from the youth population, workers, and entrepreneurs/academics from all municipalities in Pelagonija.
- A national survey was conducted with 1,203 respondents, providing insight into attitudes, motivations, and barriers to mobility and self-employment in the region.
- An economic analysis of 20 sectors was carried out using data from the Central Register, alongside a comparison of Economic Complexity Index (ECI) and Product Complexity Index (PCI) values.
- A methodology was developed to measure the success of the plan, including 18 indicators (input, output, and outcome-based), grouped into areas such as innovation, the innovation ecosystem, business competitiveness, human capital, and digital transformation.
- A two-day training was organised for representatives from nine municipalities in the region, focused on monitoring and implementing the action plan.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- For the first time at the regional level, the economic complexity methodology was applied to identify sectors with the highest growth potential.
- A structured action plan was developed, consisting of five priority areas, 14 objectives, and 35 measures, all with realistic and measurable targets.
- Survey findings revealed that:
  - 45% of respondents would change jobs for a higher salary
  - 22% would start their own business with state support
  - 48% would move to another city if offered a salary above 30,000 denars
- Focus group data indicate that economic factors are becoming less dominant, with young people increasingly emphasising quality of life, culture, and air quality as key factors influencing their decision[illegible]on.





PRESENTATION OF A SMART SPECIALIZATION ANALYSIS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PELAGONIA REGION

by Zmai | Dec 13, 2024

On December 12, at the Center for Entrepreneurship and Creativity of the Faculty of Economics in Prilep, the Association for Research and Analysis (ZMAI) presented an analysis of smart specialization with a focus on the real development of the Pelagonia Planning...

click to read the post

Combating illegal forestry activities

CLIENT: Regional Centre for Forestry and Rural Development (ReFoRD)

Implementation period: November 2023 – April 2024

DESCRIPTION:

Within the framework of the project “Fighting Illegal Forestry Activities”, ZMAI conducted a comprehensive survey on public and stakeholder perceptions of deviant practices in the forestry sector of the Republic of North Macedonia, with a particular focus on illegal logging. The survey aimed to gather data from various groups—citizens, forest owners, wood processors, civil society organisations, and local governments—to support the development of policies and measures for control and prevention. The research combined fieldwork and desk analysis, including data collection through surveys, focus groups, and requests for access to public information.

ACTIVITIES:

- A field survey was conducted with 385 households across 8 municipalities (one from each planning region), all of which use firewood for heating. This sample represents 27% of the total population using firewood for heating in the country.
- 100 private forest owners were surveyed, using a targeted approach with weighted geographical distribution in the same 8 municipalities.
- Two focus groups with 8–12 participants each were organised—one with owners of wood processing facilities, and another with representatives from civil society organisations working on anti-corruption, environmental protection, mountaineering, and the rule of law.
- Eight online questionnaires were sent to municipal administrations (one per planning region), focusing on their attitudes and available instruments for addressing illegal forestry activities.
- At least six requests for access to public information were submitted to the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management, PE National Forests, the Forest Police, the Forest Inspection Service, and four national parks: Mavrovo, Pelister, Shar Planina, and Galichica.

ACHIEVEMENTS:

- A comprehensive dataset of 493 respondents was created (385 households, 100 forest owners, 8 municipalities), representing the first such representative baseline for assessing public perceptions of corruption in the forestry sector.
- Qualitative insights from both focus groups were collected, mapping the economic, institutional, and legal consequences of illegal logging.
- Responses were received from public information requests, providing data on issued permits, initiated misdemeanour proceedings, and activities of the Forest Police.
- The collected data will be included in the final report, which will also contain statistical correlations, regional comparisons, and policy recommendations.



Field survey with 385 households in 8 municipalities



2 focus groups with 8-12 participants, representatives of civil society organizations and wood processors



100 private forest owners surveyed



8 online questionnaires submitted to municipal administrations

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for European Union
Memorandum of Cooperation signed with EMMK

The Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI and the European Movement of the Republic of North Macedonia (EMMK) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation, formalising their commitment to joint action in the areas of European integration, regional cooperation, and data-driven policymaking. The signing took place during the session of Working Group 6, "Anti-Corruption," of the National Convention for the EU, where the role of confidential data in combating corruption and building an efficient and transparent system was discussed. The document was symbolically signed on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of ZMAI's founding.

The President of EMMK, Prof. Dr. Mileva Gjurovska, highlighted the importance of the successful cooperation to date—particularly within the economic chapters of Cluster 1—as a contribution to accelerating the European integration process. ZMAI's Executive Director, Viktor Mitevski, emphasised that the joint mission of both organisations is to advance public policy through analytical approaches and inclusive dialogue. "The data speaks! Together, we will continue to strengthen the capacity of NCEU-MK and support the vision of a European, democratic, and just future," Mitevski stated.

The Memorandum provides a foundation for deepening future collaboration through joint initiatives, research, public debates, and participation in key processes related to the rule of law and economic governance. ZMAI and EMMK share the view that only through partnerships and a transparent approach can sustainable progress be achieved in North Macedonia's EU accession process.



MEMORANDUM OF COOPERATION SIGNED BETWEEN ZMAI AND EMMK

by Zmai | Sep 17, 2024

On September 10, 2024, the Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI signed a memorandum of cooperation with the European Movement of the Republic of North Macedonia. With this important document, ZMAI and EMMK officially confirmed their intentions for joint work on...

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With this important document, ZMAI and EMMK officially solidified their intentions to work together to promote European integration, regional cooperation, research and analysis.

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for youth
DataThon 2024

👥 5 teams
📝 13 datasets
⏳ 50 hours
🥇 1 winner

ZMAI, with support from the USAID Youth Opportunity Initiative, organised the first DataThon—a three-part competition for young people aged 21 to 29, focused on using public data to create innovative solutions. The challenge brought together five teams working on topics related to education and youth, using data published by ten public institutions.

Participants received mentoring support and follow-up training in data analysis, data-driven product development, and presentation skills. The winning team—**SingleTons**—developed an interactive platform for visualising data across key sectors and a model that predicts first-time school enrolments with over 90% accuracy. They were awarded a prize of 60,000 denars and the opportunity to further develop their solution with support from ZMAI.

Other solutions included platforms for intelligent data visualisation, analyses of the Youth Guarantee programme and post-programme salaries, and models for evaluating higher education institutions. The event was part of the celebration of ZMAI's 10th anniversary, within the framework of the *#DataTalks* initiative, which addresses 10 key societal issues. The DataThon demonstrated that young people have the capacity to develop meaningful, data-based solutions with real potential for social impact.



THE WINNERS OF THE FIRST DATATON HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED: SINGLETONS CREATED A DATA PLATFORM FOR EDUCATION IN JUST ONE WEEKEND!

by Zmai | Sep 30, 2024

The ZMAI association, with the support of the USAID activity for youth who actively create opportunities, organized the first DataTon. The challenge was to tell stories about youth and education, using large databases published by institutions. After three days of...

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We are celebrating the first day of #Datathon2024, where the five teams have begun developing their innovative ideas! The young participants are already working hard and putting in a huge effort to present their unique visualization by Sunday, which will tell an inspiring story about some of the most important topics for our society.

Facebook post by ZMAI

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

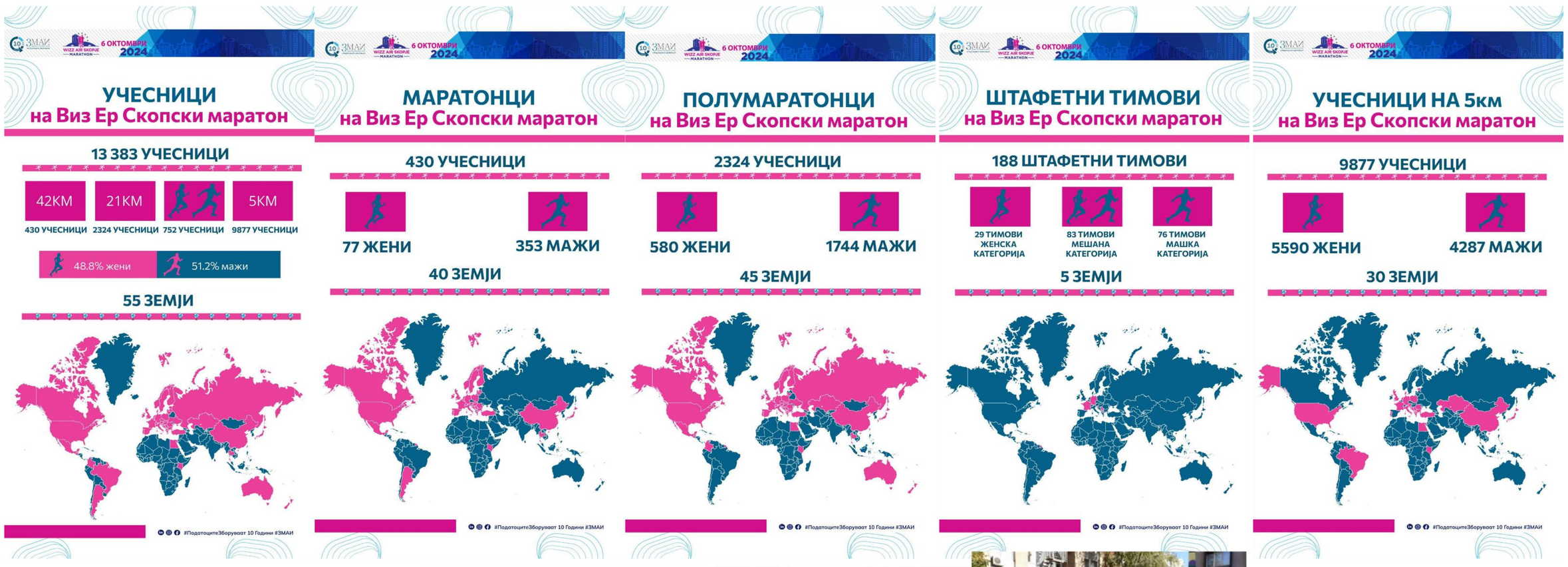
#DataTalks for Skopje Marathon

On October 6, 2024, the Wizz Air Skopje Marathon took place—one of the largest sporting events in the country—which this year brought together a total of 13,383 participants from 55 countries. The event featured four races: a marathon, a half marathon, a relay race, and a 5 km race, with data clearly reflecting the growing interest in participation and the international character of the event.

The marathon race (42 km) included 430 runners—77 women and 353 men—from 40 countries. The half marathon (21 km) attracted 2,324 participants, including 580 women and 1,744 men, representing 45 countries. The 5 km race drew as many as 9,877 participants, with a higher number of women (5,590) compared to men (4,287), from a total of 30 countries.

In the relay race, 188 teams competed, divided into 29 women's, 76 men's, and 83 mixed teams, from 5 different countries.

ZMAI participated with its own support station as part of the celebration of its 10th anniversary. The space attracted a large number of visitors who enjoyed the musical programme, socialising, and the promotion of healthy habits and an active lifestyle.



click to see the post



#DataTalks that 100% of Visitors to the ZMAI Station enjoyed the orchestra's performance

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for us
Party and competition

In the spirit of celebrating a decade of research and supporting data-driven public policies, the Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI organised a gala event to announce the winners of the **"Slavica Todorovska – Caci" Competition for Young Quantitative Minds**. The event took place on October 18, 2024, and served as the highlight of the organisation's 10th anniversary celebration, held during a week dedicated to research and statistics.

The competition, open to young people up to 35 years of age, attracted a total of 24 submissions, from which the two best papers were selected based on originality, quality of quantitative analysis, and social relevance.

🏆 First place:

Teodora Jolakoska – *"The Impact of Formal Education on Financial Literacy and Financial Behaviour: The Case of the Republic of North Macedonia"*

The paper explores the relationship between levels of formal education and financial skills among citizens, with a focus on practical implications for financial inclusion and economic stability.

🥈 Second place:

Matej Pop-Duchev – *"Cardiovascular (Ill)Health and Depression: A Cohort Study with Quantitative Analysis of Bias"*

This study uses health survey data to examine the links between cardiovascular conditions and mental health, applying methodologies for detecting and correcting statistical bias. The research highlights how complex health factors affect quality of life and underscores the need for integrated health and psychological support policies.

The prize fund of €1,500 was provided with the support of Stopanska Banka AD – Skopje, an institution with which ZMAI is building a strategic partnership to enhance youth capacity and foster innovative research.

Through this award, ZMAI honours the legacy of its colleague and friend Slavica Todorovska – Caci, whose work and values continue to inspire young researchers and analysts.



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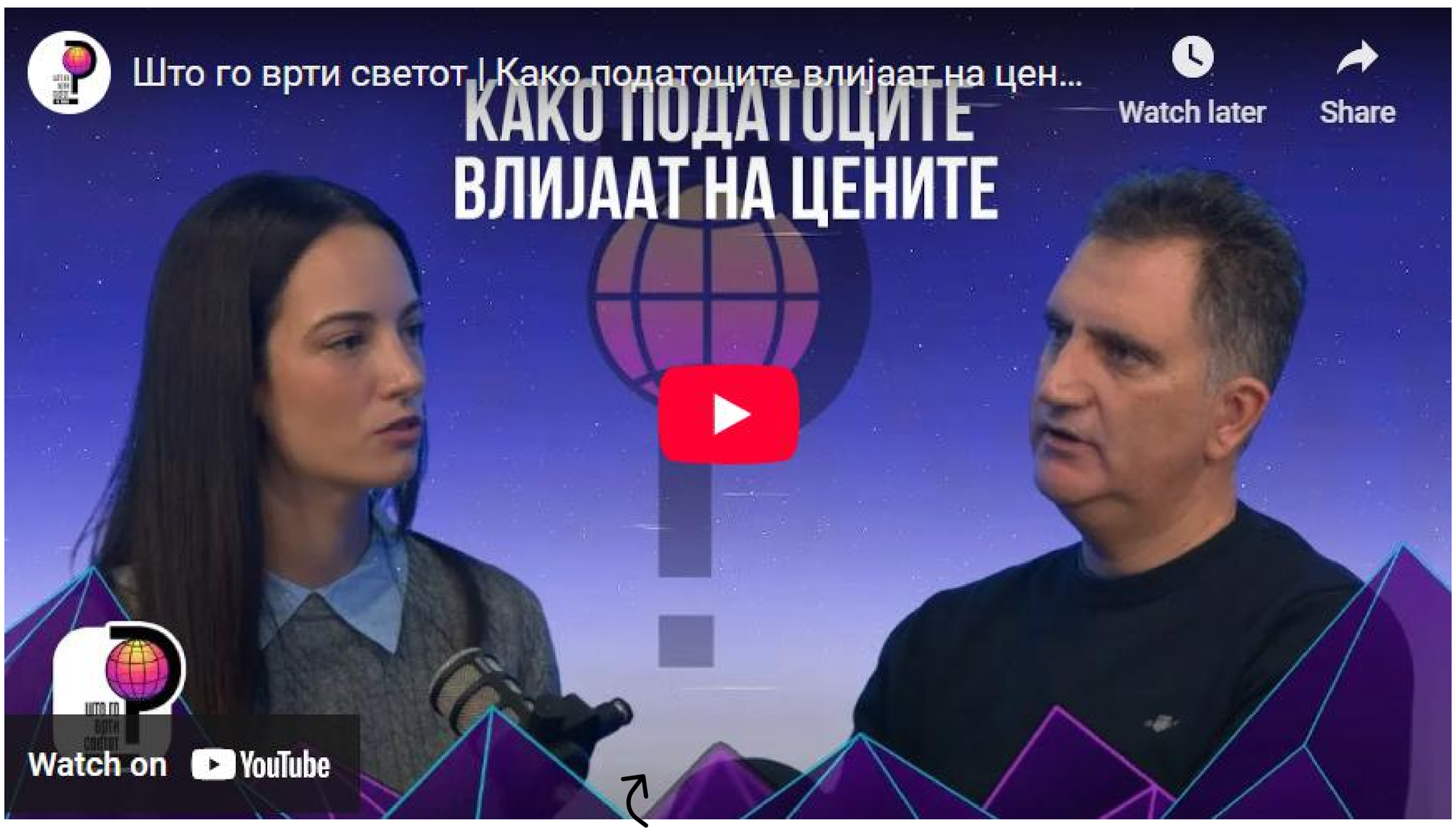
ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks for digital era
Digital era and the challenges of information misuse

At the thematic event dedicated to the digital age and the challenges of information misuse—held as part of the series "What Makes the World Go Round?"—the keynote speaker was Prof. Dr. Theodor Panagiotidis from the University of Thessaloniki, one of the leading experts in econometrics and the application of big data in the social sciences.

Professor Panagiotidis discussed how algorithms shape our habits and create "echo chambers" in which we are exposed only to information that reinforces our existing beliefs. According to him, the digital world is not only transforming how we communicate but is also redefining economic power—data is the new gold. He emphasised that contemporary research is unimaginable without access to large datasets, which, when used appropriately, can generate valuable insights and support evidence-based policymaking.

The conversation also addressed issues such as disinformation, the impact of social media on public discourse, and the urgent need to develop media literacy among young people. The event formed part of ZMAI's broader efforts to raise public awareness about the importance of verified information and critical thinking, and it served as a model for bridging the gap between academia and public debate.



watch full episode

The episode featured Prof. Theodor Panagiotidis, an economist and university professor from Thessaloniki who works with large databases. Much of his work is practical and talks about markets and investments and their movements. The topics covered are: ✔️ The rise in real estate prices in the region and how Airbnb is responding to this phenomenon ✔️ Investing in gold, other financial goods and/or stocks ✔️ How Google searches affect the price of oil

ZMAI's 10th Anniversary #DataTalks

#DataTalks of Entrepreneurship
A Data-Driven Future: Pioneering the Future with Data and Artificial Intelligence

On November 12, 2024, the Netaville space hosted the conference "Data-Driven Future: Pioneering the Future with Data and Artificial Intelligence", organised in honour of the 10th anniversary of StartUp Academy. The event brought together entrepreneurs, innovators, and professionals reflecting on the future of technology and the role of data and artificial intelligence in shaping modern societies.

The conference opened with a keynote address by Troy Stovall, CEO of TEDCO, who set the stage for further discussion by exploring the transformative power of digital technologies and their impact on the economy, innovation, and ethics. His presentation was followed by an interactive Q&A session with the audience, allowing for a dynamic exchange of ideas on the challenges and potential of the digital age.

The event continued with a series of short interviews featuring StartUp Academy alumni, who shared real-life entrepreneurial experiences and lessons learned across diverse industries. These included examples of data-driven growth, digital transformation practices, and the importance of mental resilience and team dynamics in the entrepreneurial journey. Speakers also highlighted how StartUp Academy played a key role in their professional development and ability to adapt to rapidly evolving market conditions.

The conference formed part of the broader celebration of ZMAI's 10th anniversary and underscored the organisation's sustained commitment to promoting knowledge, empowering young entrepreneurs, and advancing the use of data and technology for socially beneficial purposes. The event reaffirmed StartUp Academy's role as a platform for generating ideas, fostering innovation, and shaping resilient professionals prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.



watch full episode



CELEBRATING A DECADE OF INNOVATION

by Zmai | Nov 13, 2024

On 12 November 2024, Netaville came alive with the energy of innovation and celebration as StartUp Academy marked its 10th anniversary. The conference, themed "Data-Driven Future: Pioneering the Future with Data and Artificial Intelligence," brought together...

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Financial report

In thousand denars

Income	2023	2024
Income from membership fees, gifts, donations and income from other sources	9 074	10 099,5
Income from interest and positive exchange rate differences	8	0
Own income	3 353	0
Other income	0	3 929,5
Income from services	0	544
Carried over part of the surplus income from the previous year	4 463	2 356
TOTAL REVENUE	**16 898**	**16 929**

Expenses		
Material expenses, services and depreciation	2 522	1 932
Other expenses	8 833	4 591
Capital and other assets	0	143
Salaries and salary allowances	4191,5	5 385
Taxes and contributions that do not depend on the result	5	0
TOTAL EXPENSES	**15 551,5**	**12 051**

ANNUAL REPORT 2024



APRIL 2025

Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI

ЗМАИ
Здружение за истражување и анализи