

KEY ACHIVMENTS OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROGRAMME (AIP) FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2007

Following its mission – to promote the exercise of the right to information envisaged in Article 41 of the Bulgarian Constitution – Access to Information Program (AIP) Foundation is realizing its long-term objectives:

- To encourage individual and public demand for public information through civic education in the right-to-know area.
- To work for transparency of government at different levels, advocating a more active supply of information.

In 2007, AIP has worked in several directions to realize those long-term objectives:

1. Monitoring the regulations of the right of access to public information and its restrictions, as well as the relevant legislation.
2. Monitoring the practices of information provision.
3. Legal assistance in cases of information seeking and in cases of information refusals, including a representation in court.
4. Education and trainings on the Access to Public Information Act (APIA), the Personal Data Protection Act (PDPA), and the Protection of Classified Information Act (PCIA).
5. Participation in the public debate and raising awareness on access to information and freedom of expression issues.
6. Cooperation on national, regional and global level.

The main achievements in the above-mentioned directions are:

1. Monitoring the access to information legislation, its limitations and other related legislation

AIP has continued its advocacy work by:

- comments on the suggested amendments in the legislation;
- recommendations on changes in the texts of specific acts;
- comments on the existing legislation and recommendations for amendments.

In 2007, AIP held a public campaign against the draft for amendments in Access to Public Information Act.

On 28 of February 2008, on the basis of the European Directive, incorporated into Bulgarian legislation, three members of parliament – Jordan Mirchev (National Movement Simeon the Second), Radoslav Ilievski (Coalition for Bulgaria) and Rumens Angelov (Bulgarian National Union), introduced draft amendments to the Access to Public Information Act (APIA), which put under threat the decade of efforts of the civil society on setting forth the standards of free information in Bulgaria.

On 08.03.2007 AIP provided the Parliamentary Commission on civil society and media with the comment on the draft law which expressed concern in regard of the proposed amendments, dealing with the constitutional right, thus changing the essence

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and objective of the APIA itself. The statement was presented during the press conference in BTA press club on 14 of March 2007.

In the period from 9 - 14 of March 2007, 1000 people supported the statement over the introduced draft law.

The comments of the AIP and civil coalitions and associations against the proposed amendments to APIA were presented in the People Assembly during the round table held on 21 of March 2007.

The campaign of the AIP was supported by the representative of the free media in Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe, director of the rights oriented organization *Article 19* Toby Mendel and other 68 organizations and people members of the international community for freedom of information protection (<http://www.foiadvocates.net>).

Despite of the negative reaction, on 10 of May 2007, by 75 votes ‘for’ and 21 ‘against’, and 3 abstentions, the National Assembly of the republic of Bulgaria adopted first reading of the amendments in the Access to Public Information Act.

As a response, Access to Information Programme prepared the proposed amendments and additions to the Access to Public Information Act, the alternative to ones proposed by MPs Mirchev, Ilievski and Angelov. The suggestions worked out by AIP were put forward by Martin Dimitrov and the group of MPs from the Union of Democratic Forces and was directed to adequate institutionalization of directive 2003/98/EC on the re-usage of the information in the public sector, more comprehensive obligation on active publication, including in the internet, necessity to appoint the officials in charge of the law implementation, and introduction of more effective control mechanisms.

On 7 of June 2007, the Parliament during the second reading started a broad debate on the amendments to the Access to Public Information Act, which lasted for almost three month, but as a result of intensive public debate with participation of numerous Bulgarian and foreign and international non government and government organizations, Bulgarian media, journalists, public experts as well as cooperation of AIP and good will of several representatives of political force in the parliament, the amendments introduced to the law were significantly corrected.

The latest version of the law excluded the requirement contradicting to the Constitution, which set a necessity of the applicant to ground the interest in the requested information. Several positive and long required amendments to APIA were adopted, namely more serious sanctions imposed on the officials who failed to fulfill their obligations stipulated by the law or imposed by the court decision.

Despite of the afore mentioned achievements, there remained certain concerns regarding the future annex to the law, directed to clarify the broad notion of “information on the public sector” and stipulating the procedure of such information provision. A bitter taste of the non transparent introduction of amendments in February 2007 in the Parliament remained, lack of trust to the accumulated expertise in the civic sector and efforts to introduce incorrect amendments in the law directed to the benefit of the citizens.

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In 2007 AIP took an active part in the campaign for adopting European Convention on Access to Official Documents of the Council of Europe, which will be the first international treaty securing the right on access to information.

AIP supported a critical letter compiled by the nongovernment organizations (Access Info Europe, Article 19 and Legal Initiative of the Open Society). These organizations, took part in the work of the working group on the drafting the convention as the observers, securing that there will be no weak point in the text of the Convention in August 2007, and appealed to the group of experts engaged with the drafting of the text, to notice that most of the countries which adopted laws in the recent years have already given higher standards than the those in the Draft of the Convention. The open letter was also sent to the Bulgarian representative in the group of experts drafting the Convention, Ivailo Ivanov, to the representative of Bulgaria in the Human rights committee in the Council of Europe Andrey Tehov and to representatives of Bulgaria in the Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe.

After the Group of Experts refused to consider the suggested amendments to the future European Convention on Access to Official Documents in October 2007, civil society re appealed to the Coordination Human Rights Committee in the Council of Europe not to decide the suggested version. As a result of the joint efforts of civil campaign, Coordination Committee decided to delay the decision on the text in order to provide Expert Group with the opportunity to collect the statements of member countries on approving the text of the Convention.

In 2007 AIP prepared and disseminated another statement in regards to the draft regulation on condition and procedure of providing the data and references on the Project for the General Urban Plan of Sofia Municipality a letter to the Constitutional Court in regard to the constitutional case on, образувано по искане на Ombudsman of the Republic of Bulgaria in order to proclaim some provisions of the Administrative Procedure Code as breaching the Constitution, at the same time AIP supported the open letter of the Bulgarian lawyers and nongovernment organization regarding the national procedure of appointing the candidate judges in the European Court on Human Rights.

In 2007 the members of AIP team took part in the following activities:

- Discussion of the draft law on amending the Access to Public Information Act in the Commission on State Administration, Commission on Transport and Communication and Commission on Media in the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria – Gergana Jouleva, Alexander Kashumov and Kiril Terziyski.
- Round table regarding the draft law on amending the Access to Public Information Act in the representative office of the European Commission in Bulgaria – Gergana Jouleva and Alexander Kashumov.
- Presentation of “Green book”, prepared by the European Commission on Public Access to the Documents, kept by the institution of European Community. Access to Information Programme was a partner in the initiative on presenting it in the Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria and representative office of the European Commission in Bulgaria.
- Preparation and presentation of the independent report on the carried out monitoring of the legislation and institutional introduction of the probation

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in Bulgaria together with the “Fund for crime prevention – IGA“ – Darina Palova and Kiril Terziyski.

- Preparation of the guideline “How to preserve protected territories”, published by the Association of Parks in Bulgaria – Darina Palova, Kiril Terziyski.
- AIP made a public presentation of the concrete suggestions on amending normative regulation, regarding access to information within the court system, proposed amendments are included to the report “Access to Information in the court system”, which was published with the financial support of USAID, via Bulgarian Centre of Non Commercial Law.

All comments, recommendations and statements of the AIP are being the part of the public debate via media (See: Annex 1 – “Publications of the Access to Information Programme or the cooperation based on it – 2007, printed publications, internet” and Annex 2 – “Broadcasted information revealed by AIP in 2007 in electronic media – radio and TV”).

2. Supervision of the practice regarding freedom of information

In 2007 the supervision of the practices of information provision were carried out by means of:

- Systematization of the monthly reports of the AIP coordinators in regards to the practices of APIA implementation in certain regions of the Republic of Bulgaria. AIP coordinators are collecting the cases when the information was refused to be provided, and direct the cases to AIP for the comments and legal aid.
- Systematization of the cases when the legal aid was provided by the legal team of AIP. Amount of such cases in 2007 is 246, out of which in 221 cases legal consultation was provided. Statistic information contained in the data base is a useful indicator of APIA implementation and problems in the field of freedom of information. (See: Annex 3 - “Information contained in the data base of AIP”).
- There is an important source of information on APIA implementation in the educational institutions, organized by AIP with participation of the members of the AIP team in the trainings, workshops and discussions, organized by our partners (nongovernment organizations “Ecoobshtnost”, information network “Bluelink”, National movement “Ecoglastnost”, “Citizens for the European development of Bulgaria”, “RiskMonitor”). The problematic cases discussed there indicate basic challenges of the protecting work carried out by the team.
- In February 2007, AIP conducted a special assessment survey of the internet pages of the state institutions in Bulgaria, from the perspective of the Access to Public Information Act and the standards in the field of freedom of information.

The outcomes of the assessment of institutional internet pages from the perspective of APIA and minimal standards in the field of freedom of information were analyzed and published in the annual report of AIP „Condition of the access to information in Bulgaria 2006”. This is the traditional report which (overall six reports have been

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published since adoption of APIA in 2000) presents in the systematic view results of practices supervision in the last year, law amendments are also analyzed in the paper as well as the court practices on APIA implementation. The report also contains recommendations to the bodies of legislative and executive authorities in Bulgaria directed to improve the practices ensuring access to public information.

3. Legal aid in the cases connected with the requested information and in the cases when the information was refused to be provided, including the representation in the court.

3.1. Legal aid

Provision of the legal aid remains one of the basic priority activities of AIP. In some cases Access to Information Programme provides legal aid on the initial stage of information request, i.e. legal team of the AIP is consulting/preparing request for access to information. In other category of cases, it provides legal assistance after the refusal to provide the information was issued (See: Annex 3 – „Information contained in the data base of AIP– cases of information provision refusal”).

Significant part of the legal aid provided by the legal team of AIP was focused on helping in compiling the applications to the court and legal representation of the applicants which asked for the assistance of the organization.

Total amount of the cases on which legal aid was provided in the period from January to December 2007 is **246**. Of which **114** were referred to the organization via the AIP coordinators network in the country. In other cases the applicant requested for the legal aid either directly coming to the office or by e-mail and phone. Of that category **78** cases were connected with the consultations provided to citizens, other **18** – consultations for NGOs, and **22** cases were connected with the applications filed by the journalists working for central and local media. Habitually, we have applications from the representatives of the administration who asked for the consultations in order to overcome the difficulties in implementing APIA.

The information requested by the applicants is broad. Most cases reflect on practice the lack of certain obligations in the Access to Public Information Act, the others are dealing with the violations of the right to protection of the personal data and right to request, get and disseminate information in general. Statistically the high percent of cases are those when the information request is referred to the central administration after the institutions of the local authority – municipal authorities, court authorities and commercial organizations, subsidized of the state budget (See: Annex 3 – “Statistic data from the data base of AIP”).

In 2007 AIP provided pro bono legal aid:

- **Consultations in person for the cases connected with the access to information** – consultations in person for the cases connected with access to information are usually provided either by phone or in the office.
- **Written consultations in the following two categories:**
 - Written comments of the cases, referred by the journalists form the AIP Coordinators network– in 2007 we prepared **102** comments;

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- Written consultations on the cases referred by e-mail **28**.
- **Lodging complaints regarding access to information on behalf of citizens, journalists and NGOs when getting information was connected with difficulties** – in some cases it was necessary to send information request again, as for example when there was no response on the previous request. Sometimes, in order to get full information it was necessary to send requests to several institutions, which carry out joint activities in the certain field. Such is the case of Cvetan Todorov – editor in chief of “Naroden glas” in Lovech, who requested information from municipal council and municipality regarding amount of money spent by the administration of the Lovech city on publishing advertisements in mass media during the certain period. Different task is to write a clarification on the submitted information request when governmental institutions need it.
- **Compiling the appeal to the court** – In the period January – December 2007, AIP prepared 33 applications (letters of appeal) to enable people to go to courts and seek protection of their right to access to information. As it was already established through our practice, in some cases, submission of appeals is enough to persuade the public institution to release the denied information. Such a case was the one of Alexander Dunchev, *Environmental Association of the Parks in Bulgaria*, requested the Mayor of the Municipality of the town of Kocherinovo to provide information about the procedure of changing the status of arable lands, as well as information about the approval of the investment proposal for the construction of an industrial center for the production of construction materials in the town of Kocherinovo. The Mayor did not respond to the request within the legally prescribed time frames and a complaint was filed against the tacit refusal. As a result of the submission of the complaint, the Municipality of Kocherinovo provided all of the requested information. Another similar case was that of Ms. Evgenia Zayakova. A former high school teacher in music, Zayakova requested from the Ministry of Education and Science information about the number and distribution of one of the approved textbooks for first grade music classes during the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years. No response followed initially, but after the submission of a complaint against a tacit refusal, the ministry provided all of the requested information.

As a whole, the consultation provided by the legal team of AIP have lead to some important results: easier identification of the information sources; easier identification of the information holders; as a whole search for information is more extensive in cases of certain interest and in order to find the information, seekers use to file a number of requests to different state institutions.

3.2. Representation in the court

The Legal team of AIP continued to provide legal assistance to citizens, NGOs and journalists bringing cases of information refusal to the court. In 2007, AIP prepared **33 complaints** on behalf of citizens and organizations. Out of this number, the complaints submitted to a first instance court are 22 (Supreme Administrative Court - 3, Sofia City Court – 3, Administrative Court, Sofia City – 7, administrative courts in the country – 5); court appeals are 8 and the rest 3 are appeal against court rulings.

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In 2007, AIP has provided representation in court in 47 cases when provision of information had been refused. During that period, the Legal Team of AIP prepared **22 written defenses** for litigation supported by the organization.

During 2007, courts issued a total of **22 decisions and rulings** on litigation conducted by AIP. A considerable part of those decisions was again related to the interpretation of various restrictions to the right of access to information, and more particularly, to their scope and relevance in certain cases.

Legal team of AIP continues providing legal aid in the court to the citizens, NGOs and journalists regarding the cases when the access to information was refused. In 2007 AIP prepared overall amount of **33** complaints for citizens and organizations. Out of those 22 complaints to the Court of First Instance (Supreme Administrative Court – 7, Sofia City Court– 3, Administrative Court – Sofia city– 7, Regional Administrative Courts – 5); 8 cassation appeals, and 3 private appeals.

In 2007, the AIP lawyers represented cases in 47 court hearings. Besides, AIP prepared 22 written defenses for court cases supported by AIP.

Most of court cases in 2007 were against information refusals from state institutions motivated as the infringement of a third party's rights which grounds were based usually on "trade secrets" or "personal data".

For example, Government Information Service refused to provide journalist Pavlina Trifonova from “24 hours” newspaper with the information connected with the renovation works carried out in the prime-minister’s office. According to the director of the Government Information Service it is not necessary to provide the information on the price of the renovation works, or the bids of the participating firms as well as the price for anything bought to be used for the renovation works based on the defending the interests of a third party.

The Mayor of the Municipality of Lovech refused to provide information to the editor-in-chief of the local „Naroden glas“ newspaper about how much the local government spent on the publication of announcements and advertisements in media. During the court hearings it was revealed that the Municipality does not know exactly who are its partners and exactly who has received the public funds. However, here we should mention the efforts of the Administrative Court Lovech which held a number of sessions in order to clarify the question; even the final session made clear that the Municipality has not a signed contract with the four media which refused to provide information about the funds received from the Municipal Budget.

The „trade secret“ was used by the Bulgarian State Railways to motivate its refusal to provide information about cars bought from *Siemens* Company. According to the state company the confidentiality of the contract refer even to the technical characteristics.

In the reported period, the court has delivered 24 court decisions and rulings on litigation conducted by AIP.

In one of these decisions, a panel of the Sofia Civil Court rejected the appeal of Tsvetana Gocheva against the refusal of the Government Information Service Director

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to provide information about the official duties of a person holding a managerial position at the Council of Ministers related to the management of resort centers of the Council of Ministers. According to the court panel such information was not public under the regulations of the APIA, but constituted personal data. A cassation appeal against the court decision has been filed.

In another case the Sofia Civil Court repealed the refusal of the Director of the Government Information Service to provide information to Rosen Bosev, a journalist from the newspaper *Kapital*, connected to the conditions under which a contract was signed between former State Administration Minister Dimitar Kalchev and the company Microsoft concerning the rental software licenses for the needs of the state administration, as well as access to copies of the contracts themselves. The case became a metter of a great public interest after some publications in media which pointed the number of 48,000 software licenses set in the last signed contract on the total price of more than 27 millions USD.

In a court decision, the Sofia City Administrative Court repealed a refusal by the Social Support Agency to provide the Center for Independent Living with information about individuals who are authorized to establish violations and to impose penalties according to the Integration of People with Disabilities Act, as well as information about the number of issued protocols finding administrative violations and the total amount of sanctions imposed for the period 2005 and 2006. The Social Support Agency filed a cassation appeal against the court decision.

Most of the court cases under APIA were settled by the Supreme Administrative Court.

In a final decision of June 2007, a three-member panel of the Supreme Administrative Court upheld the right of the journalist from bTV, Genka Shikerova, to obtain access to the requested documents. The court upheld the decision of the Regional Court of Burgas. The court case was initiated against the refusal of the Mayor of the Municipality of Nessebar to provide access to the Mayor's orders issued to grant real estate and construction rights to the exceptionally needy.

In another decision of June 2007, a panel of the Supreme Administrative Court, Fifth Division, upheld the decision of the Sofia Civil Court which had repealed as unlawful the refusal of the Director of the National Intelligence Services, Gen. Kircho Kirov, to provide journalist Hristo Hristov from *Dnevnik* daily newspaper with access to documents related to the assassination of the Bulgarian writer Georgi Markov in United Kingdom.

In a decision from July 2007, a panel of the Supreme Administrative Court, Fifth Division, upheld the previous court decision to repeal the refusal of the Nuclear Regulatory Agency (NRA) to provide access to the annexes to the reports regarding the March 1, 2006 incident in the Nuclear Power Plant “Kozlodui”. The Nuclear Regulatory Agency provided its refusal on the ground that the annexes would harm the interests of the Nuclear Power Plant. After the refusal has being repealed at two court instances however, the Agency state a new refusal on the grounds of “official secret” which one also was appealed and new hearings of the case will be hold in 2008.

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A three member panel of the Supreme Administrative Court (SAC) repealed the refusal of the Minister of Interior to provide to a journalist from the *168 Chasa* weekly information regarding a lodging released for rent and then for sale by the housing department of the Ministry of Interior. Later on, the decision was upheld by a five member panel of the Supreme Administrative Court.

In 2007 Supreme Administrative Court ruled according to two appeals prepared by the legal team of AIP in regards to the ruling of the court of first instance on terminating cases on access to information. In both cases SAC cancelled the termination and referred the cases for continuation.

4. Clarification and trainings on the Access to Public Information Act (APIA), Personal data protection Act (PDPA) and Classified Data Protection Act (CDPA)

In 2007 members of AIP team took part in the lectures and presentation in 86 trainings, discussions, workshops, conferences and international events (See: Annex 4 - List of workshop, conferences and working meeting in which AIP members took part in 2007"). Number of people who took part in the trainings, discussions, workshops and conference during which the AIP team members were presenting the issues arousing in the access to information field in 2007 is 973 people.

In 2007 AIP organized training and working meetings on the issues arousing in the field of freedom of information for the state officials, NGOs and students.

Eighteen trainings and working meetings were conducted on the issues connected with the freedom of information. These trainings were organized by AIP, members of AIP team were providing lectures including on international legislation for 516 participants.

In January 2007, expert of AIP took part as lecturers in the training "Right to Access to Information and Information Protection" for the specialists of the administration „Administration Management" in South-West University «Neofit Rilski». In April 2007 Alexander Kashumov provided the lecture during the training „Future of Mass Media in Bulgaria“, organized by the students of American University in Blagoevgrad and other high education institutions in the country.

The success of the trainings, provided by lecturers of AIP, training materials worked out for the training sessions, analysis of the gained experience and results of the expert study of the team provided an opportunity to establish Resource Centre on Freedom of Information, as one of the strategies of the organizations.

4.1. Working meetings on the freedom of information organized for the officials of state administration

Within the framework of the project "Strengthening the transparency and reporting of the state administration via electronic access to information", implemented by the Access to Information Programme, with financial support of UNDP Bulgaria, AIP conducted six meetings devoted to "Electronic Access to Information " in Montana, Razgrad, Veliko Tirnovo, Varna, Plovdiv and Sliven. These meetings were organized especially for the municipal and regional administration in the regions of Montana, Vidin, Vraca, Veliko Tirnovo, Pleven, Gabrovo, Lovech, Razgrad, Ruse, Silistra,

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Tirgovishte, Varna, Shumen, Dobrich, Plovdiv, Pazarchik, Smolyan, Kirdjhali, Haskovo, Sliven, Burgas, Yambol and Stara Zagora, who are responsible for the implementation of Access to Public Information Act, as well as for the officials responsible for publishing public information on the web-page of the appropriate institution. 103 officials from the local administration took part in the six meetings.

The aim of the project was to increase transparency, reporting and quality of the services offered by the government agencies in Bulgaria via electronic access to information, and the results of the work to be reflected in the three models of web pages of institutions of central, regional and municipal authorities as well as special recommendations for the Access to Public Information Act implementation via effective utilization of informational communication technologies (ICT) as well as proposed appropriate amendments in APIA. In July 2007 the results of the discussion meetings in Montana, Veliko Tirnovo, Razgrad and Varna were presented to Maria Divizieva deputy minister, Yurii Alkalai, head of the “E-Government” agency and Yavor Rakovski, junior expert in the agency “Public relations and protocol” in the Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform.

4.2. Trainings for the non government organizations

Within the framework of the project „Capacity building of the non government organizations in the field of public information request“, funded by the PHARE programme of the European Union cooperation with the countries of Central and Western Europe, AIP conducted six discussion meetings with the representatives of non government organizations to discuss the problems connected with the management transparency and access to information. Meetings on the subject „Protection of the free access to information“ were conducted in Burgas, Veliko Tirnovo, Varna, Vidin, Plovdiv and Razgrad with 158 participants representatives of regional NGOs. General emphasis of the discussion was discussion of the national round table during which strategic direction of the protection activities of the NGOs working in the field of access to information were to be set forth, and that one of the opportunities to make the efforts of those organization more significant it is necessary to establish national network for protection of freedom of information.

By the invitation of the ecologic organizations members of AIP team were giving lectures in the training on how to access ecologic information. Training was organized by the partner organizations “Green Balkans” and „Ecoobschnost“.

Members of the AIP team took part in different events organized by the partner organizations such as workshops, conferences, etc (See: Annex 4 - “List of workshop, conferences and working meeting in which AIP members took part in 2007”).

4.3. Study tour of the delegation from Kosovo Autonomous Region

In September 2007 the delegation from the Kosovo autonomous region arrived with a study tour in Bulgaria, the tour was organized by the Access to Information Programme, funded by the United States Agency for International Development and managed by World Learning Kosovo. The objective of the study tour was „Freedom of Information and best practices“, studying Bulgarian experience in implementation of the Access to Public Information Act. The delegation of 12 people from Kosovo autonomous region was comprised of the representatives of non government

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organizations, mass media, local and central authority. During one week tour experts from the Kosovo autonomous region visited the following institutions: Parliament of the Republic of Bulgaria, Ministry of State Administration and Administrative Reform, State Commission on Information Security, Commission on the Personal Data Protection, City Municipality and City Municipal Council, Supreme Administrative Court etc. Significant part of the program was devoted to lectures and discussions regarding implementation of Access to Public Information Act and court practices according to the law, presentations made by experts from AIP and our colleagues and partners from the Institute on Market Economy, „For Earth“ and journalist from “Dnevnik” newspaper Hristo Hristov. Evaluation forms for the study tour, filled by the members of the delegation reflected high practical usefulness of the program and visit management.

5. Participation in the public debate on the issues related to the access to information and right to freedom of expression

Public debate related to the legislation on freedom of information

Last year AIP conducted a campaign against draft law on amendments to Access to Public Information Act and took an active part in the campaign directed to adoption of the European Convention on access to official documents of the Council of Europe.

In 2007 experts of AIP took part in preparation of the Independent report on the monitoring of the legislation and introduction of the probation in Bulgaria together with the „Crime Prevention Fund – IGA“.

Expert of AIP took part in preparation of the guideline on “How to safeguard protected territories”, published by the Association of Parks in Bulgaria.

In the beggining of 2007, in the frames of a project **Access to Information in the Judicial System** implemented together with the Bulgarian Center for Not-to-Profit Law, supported by USAID, AIP prepared and presented Report on the access to judicial information in Bulgaria and rrecommendations for amendments to the Regulation of the Minister of Justice for Court Administration in Regional, Local, Military, and Appeal Courts.

Publications in media and TV programs.

Participation of AIP in public debates on freedom of information legislation, court cases, supported by AIP and initiatives of the organization were covered in national and local media. Media campaign is a tool to promote the standards of the freedom of information. Campaign against the suggested amendments to the Access to Public Information Act initiated by AIP in 2007 was widely covered in media as well as the ceremony of the Right to Know Day on 28 of September.

Total amount of our publications and publications compiled with the help of the team and AIP coordinators for 2007 is 400 – in both central and local media (See: Annex 1 - “Publication of the Access to Information Programme, and publications compiled with its assistance – 2007, publications, Internet”).

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Monthly electronic bulletin

Since 2004 AIP started to publish and disseminate electronic Bulletin on Freedom of Information. 12 issues of monthly electronic bulletin containing analysis of the legislation, comments, recommendations, events organized by AIP as well as news from Bulgarian and the world, were disseminated during the period January – December 2007.

Every issue of the bulletin is published on the web page of AIP (See: http://www.aip-bg.org/bulletin_bg.htm in Bulgarian and <http://www.aip-bg.org/newsletter.htm> in English). Presently, there are 1195 addresses of NGOs. Mass media, citizens, state authorities and journalists subscribed to the bulletin.

In all 12 issues of the bulletin published throughout 2007 we published 42 provided by 10 authors. Every issue contains foreign materials on international best practices in the field of freedom of information, as well as positive and negative practices of APIA implementation in the regions of Bulgaria. Some of the publications from the bulletin are published by other media.

Publications of Access to Information Programme in 2007

In 2007 AIP compiled, published and disseminated Annual report on the condition of the access to information in Bulgaria in 2007. (1 000 copies were published in Bulgarian language and distributed among state institutions, members of parliament, NGOs and mass media).

In 2007 AIP had published the following: „10 years of Access to Information Programme “(a brochure, 500 issues printed in Bulgarian and 300 in English, as well as mini disk containing the text of the brochure and all publications of AIP in English and Bulgarian languages) and „Transparency and Silence. A research on law and practice on access to information in 14 countries “- a book by „Justice Initiative “ of „Open Society “, translated and published in Bulgarian language by AIP.

Web page of AIP

Web page of AIP is regularly updated. There we publish information on actual campaigns carried out AIP during the year, news and important court cases, court rulings, comments and recommendations, guidelines and supporting materials on APIA, information on events organized by AIP and other information. All our publications are available on the web page, immediately after they are finalized in Bulgarian and English languages.

The server which supports AIP web page provides an opportunity to get access to detailed statistics and data. In 2007 amount of people who visited the web page was average between 20,000 and 30,000.

International Right to Know Day

Since September 2003 AIP traditionally organizes the award ceremony of the Right to Know Day – 28 September. The aim of the ceremony is to promote the right to

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information. On this day activists in the field of freedom of information worldwide promote the idea of open and democratic society.

It is worth mentioning that the Right to Know Day is a part of initiative by International Network on Freedom of Information Advocacy (FOIANet <http://www.foiadvocates.net/>). And in 2007 organizations – members of the Network organized various events on 28 of September (see: <http://www.righttoknowday.net>).

AIP organized traditional annual award ceremony on 28 of September – the Right to Know Day. The ceremony was attended by almost 100 journalists, administrative officials, representatives of nongovernment organizations and citizens, and received wide media coverage. August and September issues of the AIP bulletin were dedicated to the 28 of September – the Right to Know Day and awardees of the ceremony in 2007.

5. Cooperation on national, regional and international level

Members of the AIP team took part in 11 regional and international workshops and conferences: in Armenia (conference “Freedom of Information”), in England (forum on “Obstacles and opportunities of Freedom of Expression” in Manchester and Annual Meeting of the Statewatch organization in London), Belgium (workshop on „Is Freedom of Information Law necessary for European Union?“ and civic forum „Agora“), Germany (international symposium „Public information in private sector – new regulation of re-usage of information in private sector “), Spain (round table on „Access to Information in the work of organizations on good governance and anticorruption “), Romania (Fourth meeting of the European Resource Bank), Montenegro (round table within the framework of the project on supervision and implementation of the Access to Information Law in Montenegro and retraining of the judges in Administrative Court).

In October 2007 Gergana Jouleva and Alexander Kashumov took part as lectors in the training programme on freedom of information for the delegation from Brazil on a study tour in Bulgaria “Transparency and Social Control” organized by the Ministry of Justice.

In November Gergana Jouleva took part in Fifth International Conference of the informational commissioners in Wellington, hosted by the Ombudsman of New Zealand.

Nikolay Marekov supported the web page of International Network for Protection of Freedom of Information (www.foiadvocates.net). Gergana Jouleva had become a member of the Managing Board of the Network.

11. Institutional Achievements

In 2007 Managing Board of AIP had two sessions.

In March 2007 Managing Board had approved the Annual Report of AIP, presented by the executive director of the organization and approved the budget for 2007.

**KEY ACHIVMENTS OF ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROGRAMME (AIP)
FOR THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2006**

During the meeting in November 2007 Managing Board of AIP discussed the current projects and basic directions of work for the organization for 2007-2008 and accepted the resignation of Ilan Mihov, member of the Managing Board.

For the time being there are 9 employees in AIP: executive director, accountant, four lawyers, coordinator of the local network, project coordinator and office manager. Zarangez Makhmudova, an intern from Tajikistan is undergoing internship in AIP until October 2008 according to the programme of “Open Society Institute”.

Every Monday the team is planning its activities on the basis of the operative monthly plan and currently implemented projects.

AIP continues to develop and support journalistic network of the coordinators in all 26 regions of Bulgaria. In 2007 AIP initiated two meetings of coordinators – in January and 28 September – the Right to Know Day.

Control over the legal aid provided by AIP foundation is carried out via the statistical reports contained in the data base.

AIP is managed by the Managing Board, the chairman of the board and executive director. Every year Managing Board is setting forth the priorities of the AIP foundation and twice a year inspects the work of organization.

Access to Information Programme as every year had undergone audit check and verification of the annual report of the organization.

Access to Information Programme provided its annual report to the Central Register of the legal persons with non commercial purposes under the Ministry of Justice.

13.02.2008

Sofia

Gergana Jouleva

Executive Director of AIP