

Activities in Bulgaria

The Open Society Institute (OSI) - Sofia organized a press conference at the National Press Club in Sofia on November 25, 2006. The presentation covered the major findings and comparative results of the IBP study, as well as specific issues related to Bulgaria. A question and answer session after the presentation lasted about 45 minutes. Most questions were related to Bulgarian-specific issues, a popular topic at the time given the submission of the 2007 budget to Parliament for approval.

The press conference was channeled live through the web-based facility of the Bulgarian Telegraph Agency. TV and radio teams were present, as well as about 30 journalists from the leading online and press media. All journalists received a package, including major findings of the international survey, the special report on Bulgaria, and links to IBP sites. After the press conference, the research team gave both press and radio interviews that were aired later that day. National TV networks arranged for several appearances covering budget transparency issues exclusively. Additionally, two major newspapers – *Dnevnik Daily* and *Capital Weekly* – requested special articles covering the topic and findings of the IBP survey to be written and published.

In preparation for the release of the Open Budget Index, the OSI research team in Sofia wrote a special report on fiscal transparency in Bulgaria. The report, which is available on OSI's website, was distributed to experts, NGOs, and the media. It was also reviewed by several economists working at NGOs, the central bank, the Ministry of Finance, the Agency for Economic Analyses, as well as by the deputy chairman of the Finance Committee in the Parliament.

According to Google, the search for “open budget” in Bulgarian (“отворен бюджет”) returns 222 occurrences, all of them connected to the release of the Open Budget Index 2006. In addition, the search for “budget transparency” returns 86 results, all of them related to the release of the Open Budget Index in Bulgaria.

The day that the Open Budget Index was launched in Washington, DC, the Prime Minister of Bulgaria stated that budget transparency was a very important issue. He also called for greater transparency and parliamentary oversight of state expenditures. In Parliament, one member asked a question about the Open Budget Index and Bulgaria's position. The Minister of Finance responded by saying that there were different methodologies to measure budget transparency and that the International Monetary Fund and the European Commission have no comment on Bulgaria's fiscal transparency.