

# Macedonia

by Marija Risteska

*Capital:* Skopje  
*Population:* 2.1 million  
*GNI/capita, PPP:* US\$12,600

Source: The data above are drawn from the World Bank's *World Development Indicators 2015*.

## Nations in Transit Ratings and Averaged Scores

	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Electoral Process	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50
Civil Society	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50
Independent Media	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.75	4.75	5.00	5.00
National Democratic Governance	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25
Local Democratic Governance	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75
Judicial Framework and Independence	3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25
Corruption	4.75	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25
Democracy Score	3.82	3.82	3.86	3.86	3.79	3.82	3.89	3.93	4.00	4.07

NOTE: The ratings reflect the consensus of Freedom House, its academic advisers, and the author(s) of this report. The opinions expressed in this report are those of the author(s). The ratings are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest level of democratic progress and 7 the lowest. The Democracy Score is an average of ratings for the categories tracked in a given year.

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

---

Macedonia held presidential and early parliamentary elections in April 2014. Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski of the ruling Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) won a third consecutive term, while President Gjorge Ivanov—also of VMRO-DPMNE—won his second.

Election monitors expressed concern over the accuracy of the voter registry, the inadequate separation between the ruling party and the state prior to the elections, and overwhelming media bias in favor of VMRO-DPMNE and its presidential candidate during the campaign. Opposition parties, led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), accused the winners of massive fraud and demanded new elections. An opposition legislative boycott ensued and was ongoing at year's end, despite mediation efforts by the European Union (EU).

At the end of June, a Skopje court convicted six ethnic Albanians of murdering five Macedonian fishermen in 2012. Ethnic Albanians took to the streets to protest the convictions, which they denounced as unfair and motivated by Islamophobia. The July demonstrations led to violent clashes with police officers.

A bitter dispute with Greece over Macedonia's name continues to hamper the country's bids to join the EU and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In February, the European Parliament passed a resolution calling upon the Council of the European Union to confirm the date for the launch of Macedonia's accession negotiations. It was the sixth time the body had made this recommendation. In its October progress report, the European Commission similarly repeated its recommendation that accession talks begin, though it noted regression in areas including judicial independence and freedom of expression.

**National Democratic Governance.** The government drafted a number of new laws in 2014, including seven constitutional amendments. Throughout the year, citizens used demonstrations, petitions, and open letters to express their demands and opinions in response to the legislative proposals. Interethnic tensions led to protests and violence in July but did not become a priority for the government, which remained focused on economic recovery. At year's end, EU and NATO accession negotiations were still blocked by the name dispute with Greece. *Macedonia's national democratic governance rating remains unchanged at 4.25.*

**Electoral Process.** Presidential and early parliamentary elections in April 2014 were peaceful and efficiently administered. However, international election monitors expressed serious concerns over the misuse of state resources, credible reports of voter intimidation, and heavy media bias in favor of the ruling party and

its presidential candidate. The election results were contested by the opposition, which demanded new elections and eventually withdrew from the parliament. Due to the problematic election process and ensuing political crisis, *Macedonia's electoral process rating declines from 3.25 to 3.50.*

**Civil Society.** Members of the public launched citizen initiatives and protest movements throughout the year, demonstrating more civic engagement and unity than in previous years. The government's lack of engagement with these actors—as well as its largely pro forma work with existing civil society organizations—contributed to the perception that policymaking in Macedonia excludes independent civil society. Ties between civil society organizations and political parties continued to discredit the sector. Even in a year of extraordinary popular activism, government engagement with civil society remained limited. Because of this state resistance to public consultation and input, *Macedonia's civil society rating declines from 3.25 to 3.50.*

**Independent Media.** Media outlets in Macedonia depend heavily on government advertising for financial support, contributing to their growing politicization and loss of credibility and readership. Election monitors noted heavy progovernment media bias in the run-up to the April 2014 elections. In January, the parliament voted to amend a few of the more controversial provisions of the government's December 2013 media legislation. In September, an appellate court upheld a ruling against a reporter and the editor of the independent weekly newsmagazine *Fokus* for their alleged defamation of the head of the Security and Counterintelligence Administration in 2013. However, the number of new defamation cases against journalists decreased during the year. *Macedonia's independent media rating remains unchanged at 5.00.*

**Local Democratic Governance.** Many municipalities lack the capacity to collect taxes that would supplement capital grants from the central government, which are often described as insufficient to carry out municipal responsibilities. Municipalities are working to improve their administrative capacity and absorption of EU funds, but mismanagement of education funds transferred from the central government remained a problem during 2014. Meanwhile, civil society became more active in assessing the quality of governance and prevalence of corruption at the local level. *Macedonia's local democratic governance rating remains unchanged at 3.75.*

**Judicial Framework and Independence.** Lawmakers drafted seven constitutional amendments in 2014, including one that would expand the authority of the Constitutional Court to examine complaints from individuals about human rights violations. Other proposed amendments were highly controversial and divergent from EU legislative norms. The changes were still blocked in the parliament at year's end. Separately, while some court decisions during the year demonstrated judges' capacity to implement antidiscrimination laws, the country's justice

system continued to suffer from challenges including selective enforcement and the perception of political influence, particularly in high-profile cases. *Macedonia's rating for judicial framework and independence remains unchanged at 4.25.*

**Corruption.** Although nearly every government in independent Macedonia's history has claimed to prioritize the fight against corruption, graft remains widespread. Transparency is lacking in both party finances and general public expenditures. Lawmakers proposed a new provision on whistleblower protections in April that had not yet been adopted at year's end. A number of significant corruption cases came to light during the year, with the opposition, the media, and civil society playing an important watchdog role, but serious weaknesses persisted with respect to political will and institutional capacity for enforcement. *Macedonia's corruption rating remains unchanged at 4.25.*

**Outlook for 2015.** Informal, issue-focused movements will continue to seek a more active voice in policymaking in 2015. The opposition's parliamentary boycott will persist, as allegations of electoral fraud by the ruling party remain unaddressed. If adopted, some of the constitutional amendments proposed in 2014 will align Macedonian law with EU norms, while others—including one that would create an international tax haven in the country—will do the opposite. A proposed amendment on the definition of a marriage is also at odds with the more socially liberal position many EU member states take on this issue.

# MAIN REPORT

---

## National Democratic Governance

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25

The center-right Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization–Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) has won every parliamentary election since 2006, ruling in coalition with different parties, some of which represent ethnic minorities. The left-leaning Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), which governed through much of the 1990s and early 2000s, is currently the country’s leading opposition party. Nationwide elections in April 2014 yielded a renewed mandate for Prime Minister Nikola Gruevski and VMRO-DPMNE, as well as a second term for President Gjorge Ivanov. Claiming election fraud, the SDSM and other opposition parties demanded new elections and withdrew from the parliament in May. The boycott was ongoing at year’s end.

As the presidential election approached, the parties of the ruling coalition clashed over the nomination of a joint candidate. The ethnic Albanian Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), VMRO-DPMNE’s junior coalition partner, advocated replacing direct presidential elections with a system in which a “consensus candidate” would be elected in the parliament following an agreement between the strongest parties in the Macedonian and Albanian blocs. Instead, VMRO-DPMNE decided via an internal party procedure to renominate the incumbent. Given the rift between the governing parties, lawmakers voted in March to dissolve the parliament, clearing the way for early parliamentary elections in April. The first round of presidential elections was held on 13 April, with a runoff on 27 April.

The VMRO-DPMNE–led bloc won 61 out of 123 parliamentary seats, followed by SDSM with 34 seats and DUI with 19. The Albanian Democratic Party (DPA) won 7 seats, and the ethnic Albanian National Democratic Rebirth (NDR) and Citizen Option for Macedonia (GROM) parties secured one seat each. Calling the elections “stolen,” SDSM rejected the official results, and all but three of the deputies in its bloc submitted their resignations on 28 May. An envoy of the European Union (EU) enlargement commissioner participated in ensuing negotiations between the two sides, but at year’s end the ruling party still refused to hold new, internationally administered elections, as demanded by SDSM.

Under the parliamentary rules of procedure, deputies forfeit their mandates if they are absent from duty for over six months, but an attempt to enforce this provision failed in December due to insufficient votes.

The dispute between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI over Ivanov’s nomination continued after the elections, and DUI was noticeably absent from Ivanov’s inauguration. Separately, in December, VMRO-DPMNE officials proposed replacing Macedonia’s coat of arms, which had barely been altered since the fall

of communism, with a red lion against a yellow shield and crown. The image was somewhat reminiscent of the VMRO-DPMNE party emblem. The opposition DPA called the proposed new coat of arms an “anti-Albanian project” and denounced DUI for submitting to the will of its coalition partner. SDSM criticized the change as an attempt by the government to distract public attention from more serious issues.<sup>1</sup> In the end, two influential DUI deputies and the minister of justice, also from DUI, did speak out against the proposal, and it was dropped.<sup>2</sup>

DPA did not join the postelection parliamentary boycott, but the party did withdraw from the legislature from August to October after DPA deputy Orhan Ibrahim and DUI deputy Rexhail Ismaili came to blows at a parliamentary committee session. DUI proposed the formation of a commission to investigate the brawl, which drew in deputies from several other parties and had to be broken up by security personnel, but at year’s end DPA had not yet agreed to participate.

Despite the absence of a meaningful SDSM presence in the legislature, the new parliament adopted many pieces of legislation during the year. The European Commission’s October 2014 progress report observed that the opposition’s absence “raises concerns about the inclusive nature of parliament’s work” and hampers the body’s “ability to provide the necessary checks and balances on the activities of government.”<sup>3</sup> Some of the new laws were adopted via expedited procedure, further limiting opportunities for democratic deliberation.<sup>4</sup> Deputies from a few of the smaller parties of the ruling coalition, including the Democratic Union and the Democratic Renewal of Macedonia, did take a stand against government-backed legislative proposals, especially a series of proposed constitutional amendments.

Most of the new legislation proposed during the year focused on strengthening Macedonia’s economy, which is burdened by high income inequality and the second-highest unemployment rate in Europe (around 28 percent). Seven of the 26 ministers in the new government have no portfolio and are primarily tasked with attracting foreign direct investment to create new jobs.

The government put forward a total of seven draft constitutional amendments during the year. One widely praised proposal seeks to reduce political influence over the courts by removing the justice minister from the council responsible for appointing judges. Another would expand the “constitutional complaint” mechanism through which people or institutions can file complaints against the authorities.

A draft constitutional amendment to establish an “international financial zone” came under heavy criticism during the year. The government argued that the creation of a Macedonian tax haven would attract wealthy companies and high-quality jobs to the country,<sup>5</sup> but critics warned that it might also turn Macedonia into an offshore destination for illegal funds.<sup>6</sup>

An amendment put forward by the government in August aimed to limit the public debt to 60 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) and the budget deficit to 3 percent of GDP, in accordance with EU standards. This proposal came under fire from several former politicians, activists, and academics who called it a manipulation of perception.<sup>7</sup> They pointed out that public debt is actually rising

rapidly as a result of major infrastructure development projects backed by loans from international financial institutions.<sup>8</sup>

The most controversial of the constitutional amendments proposed in 2014 would define marriage as a union between a man and a woman. Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) denounced the measure as discriminatory and a step toward rendering same-sex relationships illegal. At least one ruling coalition deputy opposed the amendment.<sup>9</sup>

Constitutional amendments must be initiated by a two-thirds parliamentary majority, and then the drafts must be confirmed by a simple majority before being submitted for public debate and finally adopted with another two-thirds vote. The package of amendments put forth in 2014 passed through its initial approval in July, but the next vote stalled as DUI demanded other legislation favoring ethnic Albanians in return for its support. In September, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe offered an official opinion on the proposed amendments that was critical of both the international financial zone and the definition of marriage.<sup>10</sup> The commission also strongly advised Macedonia not to adopt any of the constitutional changes under discussion while the country's opposition deputies remained absent from the parliament.<sup>11</sup>

In December, the government introduced mandatory contributions to state retirement and health funds via a new tax on contract workers. As of January 2015, the tax will be applied to earnings for freelance work and will be added to other personal income taxes. Several thousand journalists, translators, NGO employees, and other freelancers took to the streets of Skopje on 22 December in protest.<sup>12</sup>

Also during the year, the government sought to reduce tax evasion by introducing an online system to monitor cash payments nationwide. The first published survey of Macedonia's hidden economy revealed that 16 percent of workers are employed informally; over 50 percent of those doing additional work do not declare it or pay taxes on the resulting income.<sup>13</sup> Additional reforms adopted in 2014 seek to formalize undeclared work and increase employment by introducing licenses for caretakers and other service providers.

Long-standing tensions between ethnic Albanians and Macedonians flared up several times in 2014, exposing the lack of trust between the two communities. In May, protests erupted after a recent high school graduate in the Skopje suburb of Gjoŕče Petrov was allegedly stabbed to death by an ethnic Albanian who had attempted to steal his bicycle. Police special forces were deployed to quell the demonstrations and prevent ethnic Macedonian protesters from marching into a neighboring Albanian-majority area.<sup>14</sup> At the end of June, a Skopje court convicted six ethnic Albanians of murdering five Macedonian fishermen in 2012. Ethnic Albanians took to the streets in July to protest the convictions, which they denounced as unfair and motivated by Islamophobia. The demonstrations led to violent clashes with police officers, resulting in numerous injuries and dozens of arrests.<sup>15</sup>

The internationally backed Ohrid Framework Agreement, which ended fighting between Albanian separatists and Macedonian security forces in 2001, grants Albanian-majority areas the right to education in their native tongue and

provides guarantees of multiethnic participation in government. The 2014 EU progress report noted that recruitment of ethnic minorities to the civil service occurs “without specified defined posts or job descriptions, often at the expense of the principle of merit.”<sup>16</sup> The parliamentary committee for interethnic relations was inactive in 2014, and local government committees for interethnic relations remained unfunded.

Besa (Oath), a new ethnic Albanian party, emerged in November, to the displeasure of DPA, which said there was no room for another party in the ethnic Albanian political bloc.<sup>17</sup> Besa’s platform promises to offer “genuine debate on important topics [pertaining to] politics, economy, culture, education, health,” and to “articulate a new political thought which will be based on universal human values,” rather than the standard power-sharing demands of the established ethnic Albanian parties.

The name dispute between Macedonia and Greece, which dates to the former’s independence from Yugoslavia in 1991, has stalled Macedonia’s progress toward North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and EU membership for several years. Greece believes “Macedonia” should refer solely to its own region of the same name and has pushed Skopje to adopt “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” as its international moniker. In May, NATO secretary general Anders Fogh Rasmussen told Macedonian leaders that the key condition for joining the alliance was solving the dispute with Greece.<sup>18</sup> In its 2014 progress report, the EU also made it clear that without a resolution of the dispute, “the EU accession process for Macedonia is at an impasse.”<sup>19</sup>

### Electoral Process

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50

Parliamentary elections were called one year ahead of schedule after VMRO-DPMNE rejected DUI’s demand for a “consensus” presidential nominee. The April 2014 presidential and snap parliamentary elections were peaceful and efficiently administered, but marred by biased media coverage and unfair use of state resources by ruling party candidates, according to monitors from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). SDSM and other opposition parties accused VMRO-DPMNE of fraud and withdrew most of their deputies from the parliament for the rest of the year.

Incumbent president Gjorge Ivanov faced three challengers: Stevo Pendarovski, supported by SDSM; Iljaz Halimi from the ethnic Albanian opposition party DPA; and Zoran Popovski of GROM, a fairly new party whose founder left SDSM before its planned boycott of the 2013 local elections. Following the dispute over Ivanov’s nomination, DUI boycotted the presidential election and campaigned to stop ethnic Albanians from voting. Turnout in ethnic Albanian areas was significantly lower than in ethnic Macedonian areas.



Ivanov's reelection campaign was closely synchronized with the ruling party's parliamentary campaign, focusing on the accomplishments of VMRO-DPMNE rule and promising to stand by the "double name formula" as the country's official position in the dispute with Greece.<sup>20</sup> By contrast, Pendarovski's campaign before the first round of presidential voting was quite separate from SDSM's, and he gave no clear commitment to a strategy on the Greece dispute. VMRO-DPMNE used this lack of a strong position on the name issue to smear Pendarovski and SDSM as traitors.<sup>21</sup>

In the first round of the presidential polls on 13 April, none of the candidates won the support of 50 percent of all registered voters, as required for an outright victory.<sup>22</sup> The second round contest between the top two candidates was held concurrently with the parliamentary polls on 27 April. Ivanov won with 55.28 percent of the vote.

Fourteen political parties and coalitions registered candidate lists for the parliamentary elections. Many smaller parties, including those representing Macedonia's less populous ethnic minorities, joined electoral blocs led by VMRO-DPMNE, SDSM, or GROM.

Both parties of the incumbent ruling coalition appealed to their respective ethnic communities to give them a stronger mandate and thus more leverage in future negotiations on forming the government. Prime Minister Gruevski repeatedly called on ethnic Macedonian voters to grant VMRO-DPMNE a clear majority of at least 62 seats to avoid the kind of DUI "blackmail" that had prompted the early elections. Notwithstanding its boycott of the presidential vote, DUI also urged Albanians to turn out in large numbers for the parliamentary polls to improve its negotiating position. Both sides employed ethnic nationalist rhetoric and a certain amount of mudslinging to mobilize voters, but the parties rejoined forces fairly quickly once the elections were over.

In its parliamentary campaign, VMRO-DPMNE pledged to deliver stronger economic growth and an improved standard of living. It emphasized the government's recent successes, particularly in attracting investments. SDSM's campaign promised to "restore the middle class" by reimbursing value-added tax (VAT) to citizens, reducing the overall tax burden, and increasing social benefits. Much as it had in 2011, DUI campaigned on promises related to the expansion of the Ohrid agreement, such as making Albanian Macedonia's second official language, ensuring equal representation of Albanians in the highest offices in government, and securing a greater voice for Albanian interests in the distribution of the budget.

The OSCE described the elections as "efficiently administered" but expressed grave concern over a number of shortcomings in the campaign environment. The observers criticized the government for inadequately separating ruling party and state activities, and noted that the "significant advantage in resources and therefore in political advertising meant that the governing party and its presidential candidate dominated both campaigns."<sup>23</sup> According to OSCE media monitors, the majority of media showed significant bias in favor of VMRO-DPMNE and Ivanov, and

against SDSM and Pendarovski. The OSCE also noted that Albanian-language media favored DUI over the other ethnic Albanian contestants.

The European Commission endorsed the OSCE report and echoed its concerns regarding “biased media coverage and the lack of separation between state and party activities, which are covered by the Copenhagen political criteria.”<sup>24</sup> The Council of Europe made a similar statement.<sup>25</sup> Domestic observers from Macedonian NGOs registered cases of group and family voting in towns and villages across the country, as well as political propaganda at polling stations and voting by minors.<sup>26</sup>

Gruevski declared the elections a “big, huge, and strong victory” for the VMRO-DPMNE bloc.<sup>27</sup> Its 61 seats, combined with the 19 secured by DUI, gave the incumbent coalition a comfortable 80-seat majority in the 123-seat parliament. The SDSM announced that it would not recognize the results of either the parliamentary or the presidential elections, with party leader Zoran Zaev citing “threats and blackmail and massive buying of voters” and accusing the ruling party of “abusing the entire state system.”<sup>28</sup> SDSM demanded the formation of a caretaker government to organize internationally monitored elections.

Macedonia’s electoral code was amended most recently in January 2014, based on OSCE recommendations and following successful negotiations between opposition and governing parties. Among other changes, the new legislation sought to improve separation of state and governing party activities during campaign seasons with a moratorium on new state-financed construction projects. The amendments also attempted to decrease corruption by obliging the Ministry of Finance to publish all payments made during the election period, and to prevent voter fraud by marking voters’ fingers with indelible ink. To address long-standing accusations by SDSM that voter lists are inaccurate, the Ministry of Interior is now required to check and update electoral lists four times a year, and political parties have the right to request corrections to the lists.

Notwithstanding these improvements, the OSCE report issued after the elections identified problematic inconsistencies and ambiguities in the electoral law, “including a lack of clarity in the definition of campaigning, the length of the campaign, and the misuse of state resources during the campaign, as well as undue restrictions on the right to file complaints.”<sup>29</sup> The OSCE also expressed concern over the accuracy of voter lists, “particularly large numbers of voters residing at the same address.”<sup>30</sup> According to the OSCE, the new legal provisions allowing political parties to challenge entries in the voter lists were not properly implemented during the 2014 elections because they “are vague and do not clearly specify which agency is responsible for conducting an investigation.” There were numerous cases in which 50 or more voters were registered at the same address.

The revised electoral code did not provide strict deadlines for courts to resolve election-related cases, and voters had limited rights to legal redress. Political party financing, regulated by the electoral code and the Law on Financing of Political Parties, lacks transparency in practice. The 2014 EU progress report pointed out that about 85 percent of the targeted budget deficit in 2014 was spent in the first half of the year, mostly in the preelection period.<sup>31</sup>

Although allowed by law, no independent candidate lists were submitted ahead of the 2014 polls. Political parties observed gender quotas on their candidate lists, and women were also well represented in election administration bodies. However, the OSCE-led International Election Observation Mission’s preliminary findings reported that “women were underrepresented in rallies,” and that “gender issues were not raised in campaign programmes.”<sup>32</sup> Biljana Vankovska, a professor of political science at the University of Skopje, was the only woman to seek candidacy for the presidential elections but she was unable to collect the 10,000 signatures required.

#### Civil Society

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.25	3.50

Civil society groups and spontaneous popular movements were very active in 2014, pushing back against a number of government-backed legislative measures. Although pro forma government engagement with civil society actors has increased under the official Second Strategy for Cooperation with the Civil Society Sector, there is little evidence that independent nongovernmental groups have a meaningful impact on government policy. Protests throughout the year and the authorities’ failure to respond to public demands highlighted the gap between policy and practice regarding inclusion of civil society in policymaking.

Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA), a joint initiative of the EU and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), notes that civil society organizations face “three consistent obstacles to meaningful participation in policy making.” These include a low awareness of electronic channels of consultation, a lack of confidence that information or perspectives submitted will be considered, and the actual speed with which policy is made.<sup>33</sup>

Over the last few years, the government has made a point of creating more consultative bodies and opening more legislative ideas to nongovernmental input. Critics stress that the resulting debates are usually brief, and that not all relevant civil society groups are invited to participate. A multicountry study published by the Polish Institute for International Affairs (PISM) in October 2014 reported that although Macedonia’s legislative process has become somewhat more open to consultation, laws ultimately adopted by the parliament fail to reflect input provided by civil society advisers.<sup>34</sup> The PISM assessment also noted that bylaws, which can have an enormous impact on the implementation of laws, remain “a grey area” when it comes to civil society–government consultations. In 2014, the Macedonian parliament’s Committee on EU Affairs invited academic and civil society organizations to participate in its review of 19 laws related to the National Programme for the Adoption of the *Acquis Communautaire* and an evaluation of the use of Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) funds.

The government has developed three electronic platforms for engaging civil society in the policymaking process. e-Demokratija.mk shares data on final and draft strategic documents and hosts forum-based debates and blog content from associations and foundations, chambers of commerce, trade unions, and companies.<sup>35</sup> The platform ENER is a national registry of regulations and draft legislation. The third site, Nvosorobotka.gov.mk, offers information on the regulatory environment for NGOs and available funding. So far, very few civil society organizations appear interested in using these platforms. A study of ENER between November 2013 and October 2014 showed that such groups made only 28 comments on 15 of the 201 draft laws published and opened for consultation. Moreover, government ministries provided inadequate feedback to comments submitted via online platforms.<sup>36</sup>

An anticorruption initiative funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) launched a special bulletin called *Government Mirror* in mid-2013 to disseminate information about new legislation prepared by the government and increase civil society organizations' participation in public consultations.<sup>37</sup> Among other indicators, the bulletin documents just how frequently laws are adopted via expedited procedures.<sup>38</sup>

Business associations have been more successful than NGOs in influencing government policy. In 2014, they were consulted on major changes to most laws that might affect the business environment in Macedonia—including those adopted with no broader public discussion, such as the Law on Labor Relations.

Civil society remains largely excluded from the central government's budget-making process. The state does not publish a pre-budget statement to facilitate public debate, and the period for budget discussion by the parliament is short. At the local level, the Community Budget Forum instrument, implemented in 52 of Macedonia's 80 municipalities, gives civil society and the general public more opportunity to offer input on the allocation of municipal funds.

In April 2014, around 70 civil society organizations, together with ministries and independent regulatory and oversight bodies, contributed to the development of the 2014–2016 National Action Plan for Open Government.<sup>39</sup> Under the plan, civil society organizations will not only recommend measures for the government to implement, but also partner with the government to implement some of them directly.<sup>40</sup> Only one joint meeting between the parties had taken place by year's end.

Throughout the year, civil society organizations monitored and disseminated information on social and political developments. Useful projects initiated or completed during 2014 included a study of transparency and accountability of central budget users, a study of corruption in local government,<sup>41</sup> a project monitoring the work of the parliament and media coverage of its activities,<sup>42</sup> and a new "platform" of anticorruption experts who will meet regularly.<sup>43</sup>

Skopje-based civil society organizations continue to have more capacity and success in winning and implementing projects than their counterparts in other towns and cities.

Politically active citizens and organizations were especially vocal in opposing government-initiated legislation in 2014. In October, the Ministry of Education

and Science invited representatives of Macedonia's universities to consult on a package of reforms to higher education. Students and academic professionals almost unanimously rejected the proposals, particularly a state exam in the second and fourth years of university study that would be administered by the National Board for Accreditation and Evaluation, rather than by professors, and the introduction of new criteria for university faculty seeking promotions.<sup>44</sup> Critics argued that these changes would diminish the independence of universities, which is protected by the constitution.<sup>45</sup> In addition to sending feedback through formal channels, students and professors formed "plenums" to organize protests, petitions, and open letters to voice their dissatisfaction with the proposed reforms and pressure the government to abandon them. Small demonstrations took place throughout the country in October and November, and over 12,000 students attended a mass protest in Skopje on 10 December. Nevertheless, an unimproved version of the reform package came before the parliament for discussion in December. It had yet to be voted upon at year's end.

NGOs and other civil society actors in Macedonia tend to be very politicized and polarized, which further undermines their advocacy and oversight roles. Likeminded organizations can support completely different measures depending on their relationship with the key parties in the country.

As public criticism of government policies escalated, particularly in the third quarter of 2014, both the government and the political opposition attempted to use public demonstrations to their advantage. Leaders of the opposition SDSM took part in the protests and spoke at them as though they were addressing their constituents, while progovernment media dismissed protesters as "sorosoidi"<sup>46</sup>—a reference to U.S.-based philanthropist George Soros's Open Society Foundations, which have underwritten NGO activities in Macedonia for nearly two decades.<sup>47</sup> "Plenum" leaders effectively withstood outside attempts to rebrand their movements along political or ethnic lines, and the demonstrations did not become political rallies. However, 200 professors formed what the media termed a "contra plenum" in support of the state-administered university exams.<sup>48</sup>

A few outspoken civil society activists did join SDSM party commissions during the year. The general public distrusts "transitions" from civil society to politics, and the progovernment media were quick to exploit the former activists' involvement with SDSM to discredit both the party itself and the civil society organizations where they had previously worked.<sup>49</sup>

Throughout 2014, but especially in the preelection season, institutes linked to specific political parties conducted opinion polls and disseminated data designed to win public support for their affiliated factions. Two notable examples are VMRO-DPMNE's Pavel Shatev Institute and the SDSM-affiliated institute Progres.<sup>50</sup>

Current legislation provides few tax breaks for NGOs and sets administrative hurdles to accepting donations. The only progress on this front in 2014 was the introduction of a new and less burdensome way of invoicing for projects that are VAT exempt. State funding of civil society organizations has not yet been fully regulated, leaving the sector largely dependent on donor funding.

Foreign funds remain the main source of financing for Macedonia's NGOs, although many foreign donors have left the country since the country obtained EU candidate status, and some have replaced their country presence with regional offices elsewhere in the Balkans. Donors frequently take a top-down approach, offering funding to local organizations only if their programs and projects match priorities established in Washington or Brussels, and are sometimes not sensitive to local situations and needs. Local organizations without the administrative capacity to bid for large foreign-funded projects remain dependent on funds provided by the local self-government units. The small size of these funds seriously constrains the organizations' ability to deliver more professional and service-oriented activities.

In 2014 the state provided around €400,000 in grants to civil society organizations. One tranche was allocated in the name of economic growth, EU and NATO integration, education, and the fight against crime and corruption. The second focused on the evaluation and monitoring of the Ohrid framework, and on improving interethnic trust and cooperation in the fields of culture, sports, and education.<sup>51</sup> A 2014 report by the Skopje-based Macedonian Center for International Cooperation (MCIC) showed that over the last three years, the Macedonian central budget had allocated some €4 million to associations of citizens, unions, religious communities, and political parties.<sup>52</sup> At the end of the year, the government also opened two draft bylaws regulating the environment for civil society organizations to public discussion. One of the laws would establish a Council for Civil Society, and the other would regulate public financing of NGOs.

Unions participate regularly in the Economic and Social Council, a tripartite institution established in 1996 by agreement between the government, the Confederation of Trade Unions, and the Economic Chamber of Macedonia. The council facilitates social dialogue in the country and discusses all legal changes in the economic and social policy area. In July 2014, trade unions were able to influence key decisions such as the level of the minimum wage, though cooperating with the government compromised the public's perception of their independence. In late October, the leader of the Confederation of Trade Unions appeared at a joint conference with Labor Minister Dime Spasov to announce an increase in the minimum wage and legal changes making it harder for employers to circumvent the rule.

Other attempts by trade unions to agitate for improved conditions failed under apparent government pressure. In September, the Union of Education, Science, and Culture (SONK) announced plans for a general strike demanding higher wages at the end of the month, but within days of the announcement many of the union's branches had pulled out. SONK president Jakim Nedelkov blamed "pure politics and [government] pressure over union membership" for the regional branches' withdrawal.<sup>53</sup> The next week, the education and science minister proposed legislation that would allow schools to replace striking primary and secondary school teachers with special "stand-in" substitutes. SONK denounced the move as a further attempt to intimidate its members and prevent striking.<sup>54</sup> Legal experts also criticized the draft legislation as an unconstitutional limitation on the right

to strike. Nevertheless, the provision was passed via an expedited parliamentary procedure. When SONK called on students not to attend classes, the Education and Science Ministry and the State Education Inspectorate responded by reminding parents that school attendance is compulsory and truancy may be punished with €1,000–€2,000 fines.<sup>55</sup> By year’s end, the strike had largely been defeated.

Macedonia’s LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) citizens continued to face discrimination and occasional violence in 2014. On 23 October, around 20 hooded assailants vandalized a café in the Old Bazaar area of Skopje to end a celebration of the second anniversary of the Center for Support of the LGBT Community. Speaking on behalf of the Dutch embassy, which finances the work of the center, Ambassador Marriët Schuurman stated that the failure of the authorities to react to the violence “creates a perception that this is sponsored, or tolerated in the best case, by the government and used as an instrument to make people afraid and try to shut people up.”<sup>56</sup> Civil society groups continued to fight for sexual minorities’ rights amid rising political hostility, initiating petitions to rid school curriculums of materials that depict LGBT people as deviant, immoral, or harmful.

Most human rights groups also denounced the government’s 2014 proposal to define marriage as a union between a man and a woman via a constitutional amendment, accusing the state of “picking into the family life of citizens and working against the principles of equality, equity, and the rule of law.”<sup>57</sup> The amendment—championed by parliamentary deputy Vlatko Gorchev (VMRO-DPMNE)—was still awaiting its second round of parliamentary approval at year’s end.

### Independent Media

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.25	4.50	4.75	4.75	5.00	5.00

Macedonia’s media are increasingly politically polarized and often fail to provide objective or balanced reporting. Journalists are poorly paid and usually lack the technical resources to cover important stories. Government advertising accounts for a large share of the advertising market, contributing to self-censorship; at least 1 percent of the annual national budget is spent on state advertising campaigns, with government-friendly media receiving the bulk of the allocations.<sup>58</sup> Media freedom analysts have noted the connections between media outlets and their owners’ political and business interests, as well as the political bias of the public broadcasting service.

At the beginning of 2014, the most prominent media policy debate centered on revisions to the new Law on Media and Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, which had been adopted in December 2013. Journalists and media freedom activists had objected to the laws, which created a new regulator with the authority to impose fines and revoke broadcast licenses for content that violates vaguely defined criteria. In January 2014, the parliament adopted several



amendments proposed by the Journalists' Association of Macedonia (ZNM). They exempted online outlets from the regulations, reduced the obligations of print media, and provided assurances that future content restrictions would conform to the standards of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR).<sup>59</sup> While the ZNM and other critics of the laws welcomed the revisions, they argued that the legislation remained problematic.

As part of the January amendments, the ZNM was given a seat on the seven-member council of the new regulator, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, but the same representation was granted to the rival Macedonian Association of Journalists (MAN), which is seen as an ally of the government.<sup>60</sup> In a similar move, the parliament in July amended the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services to give the MAN one of the ZNM's two seats on the program council of Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT), the public broadcaster.<sup>61</sup>

By September the parliament had amended the law a third time, again using an accelerated procedure without public debate or consultation with civil society groups. The latest changes increased the role of the director of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services in imposing sanctions on media outlets. They also allowed the government to provide 50 percent subsidies for private, domestic film productions, including documentaries, which the ZNM criticized as another means for the authorities to influence media content and companies.<sup>62</sup>

The enforcement of media laws and adjudication of cases related to the media continued to be selective. During 2014, the owner and editors of Telma TV, one of the country's few independent stations, repeatedly faced fines under the new media legislation for alleged infractions including failure to air at least four hours of folk music per week.<sup>63</sup> In June, the Constitutional Court ruled that the forcible removal of journalists from the parliamentary chamber on 24 December 2012, as progovernment lawmakers pushed through a controversial budget bill, was not a violation of freedom of expression. The ZNM submitted an appeal to the ECtHR in October.<sup>64</sup>

Journalist Tomislav Kezarovski, who had been sentenced to four and a half years in prison in October 2013 for allegedly revealing the identity of a protected witness in 2008, remained under house arrest throughout 2014 pending the outcome of an appeal. Press freedom organizations reiterated their calls for the charges to be dropped,<sup>65</sup> arguing in part that the accusations were unfounded and that Kezarovski had merely exposed official abuses in the investigation of a murder case.

In September 2014, an appellate court upheld a January civil defamation judgment against journalist Vlado Apostolov and editor Jadranka Kostova of the independent weekly *Fokus*. They were ordered to pay €6,000 (\$8,000) in damages and €3,000 (\$4,000) in court costs for defaming Saso Mijalkov, head of the Security and Counterintelligence Administration, in a 2013 article. The OSCE representative on freedom of the media called the judgment "another example of the urgent need for an established ceiling on damages in civil defamation cases to prevent the bankruptcy of media outlets."<sup>66</sup> In addition to defamation suits and other legal harassment, journalists face verbal attacks, intimidation, and politicized or arbitrary dismissals in response to their work.<sup>67</sup>



Some journalists encountered obstacles from police while attempting to cover protests during the year. On 5 July, Besim Ibrahimović of the daily *Lajm* was arrested for allegedly participating in that month's ethnic unrest and interfering with police. He rejected the claims and was released the next day when a judge denied the prosecutor's request for detention pending an investigation.<sup>68</sup> In May, during ethnic protests related to the murder in Gjoče Petrov, journalists from *Fokus*, Nova TV, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) were ordered to provide identification papers and forced to erase their footage.<sup>69</sup>

Recent studies have supported observations that the media in general are not adequately informing citizens about public affairs, including legislative activity, and that content often reflects political polarization or bias.<sup>70</sup> For example, the progovernment media initially ignored the student-led protests of late 2014, then attempted to smear and discredit the movement.<sup>71</sup> A journalist who wrote the 2014 *Nations in Transit* report on Macedonia was similarly attacked in June.<sup>72</sup> Lack of professional and objective reporting was also noted surrounding the murder case in Gjoče Petrov, contributing to interethnic tensions.<sup>73</sup> In February, the editor in chief of TV Sitel, a leading private television station, urged ethnic Macedonians to vote in large numbers for the ruling party in the April elections so as to stave off the policy demands of ethnic Albanians.<sup>74</sup> Hate speech in general has been a growing problem,<sup>75</sup> in both traditional and social media, and a variety of civic initiatives have attempted to monitor and combat it.<sup>76</sup> A report issued in October by the Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers (SSNM) detailed the precarious employment conditions endured by Macedonian journalists. Short-term contracts, irregular salaries, lack of effective labor rights, and poor protections from dismissal for union activity all leave reporters vulnerable to self-censorship and editorial pressure from owners, further contributing to bias and low journalistic quality in the media.<sup>77</sup>

The SSNM, the European Commission, and other observers have repeatedly cited the government's use of official advertising to support friendly media outlets and encourage self-censorship by others. The government is one of the country's largest advertisers, and its own data show that the allocation of the spending has little correlation with the audience shares of the outlets.<sup>78</sup>

#### Local Democratic Governance

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75	3.75

Since the 2013 local elections, Macedonia has had 80 municipalities, as four municipalities—Zajas, Vraneštica, Oslomej, and Drugovo—merged with Kičevo at that time. Though much emphasis has been given to the importance of the decentralization process called for under the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001, Macedonia's local self-government is still controlled by both the central government and the leadership of the political parties. Many municipalities lack the capacity to

collect taxes that would supplement capital grants from the central government, which are often described as insufficient to carry out municipal responsibilities.

VMRO-DPMNE and DUI control the mayoralties in all but 6 of the 80 municipalities. The opposition SDSM narrowly controls the council of Centar, an important municipality within Skopje, and council chairman Miroslav Šipović has come under pressure from the authorities. After winning his post in October 2013, he had been detained for alleged financial fraud in his previous capacity as head of the company Mašino Promet. The detention was extended into 2014, and he was transferred to house arrest in May before winning release a month later. In August, after Šipović cleared the way for a vote on a controversial development plan that was opposed by his own party, there was speculation that he was collaborating with the VMRO-DPMNE in exchange for his freedom. In another sign of pressure on the opposition-controlled municipality, the 2014 EU progress report noted that Centar was subject to a disproportionate number of inspections by state agencies.

The start of the heating season revealed a failure in school management in Struga and Kičevo. The schools are managed by the municipalities and receive regular earmarked grants from the central government for heating and other utilities, but the schools in Kičevo and Struga failed to pay their utility bills, prompting a cut in service. Media reports attributed the problem in part to overemployment, which led the schools to use the earmarked grants for salaries.<sup>79</sup> In the second phase of decentralization, the central government had transferred responsibility for firing and hiring of school staff to the municipalities. While Struga municipality took over its schools' debts, the Ministry of Education approved emergency funds for Kičevo after that municipality requested help.<sup>80</sup>

The municipalities continue to struggle with fiscal decentralization. In this respect one municipality, Plasnica, has not yet entered into the second phase of decentralization. The Association of the Units of Local Self-Government (ZELS) report on municipal finances for 2013 showed that central government transfers remained the largest portion of municipal budgets (over 50 percent), total municipal income decreased by 5 percent, and municipal debt increased by 28 percent.<sup>81</sup> The collection of local taxes is expected to increase with the legalization of illegally built property, an ongoing process that is set to be finalized in the next four years.

Among other measures designed to improve local governance, a UN Development Programme project is introducing a range of new tools for 25 municipalities, such as a methodology for measuring susceptibility to corruption (Responsibility, Transparency, and Accountability Index); a Code of Ethics for Local Government Officials, which is adopted by municipal councils; and quality management standards in pilot municipalities.

A survey released in July 2014 by the Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis–Skopje (IDSCS) showed that while the majority of citizens believe their local administration has some level of transparency (54.6 percent), only 13.2 percent credited it with the highest level of transparency, and a minority of 41.8 percent of respondents said the public procurement processes are either fully or somewhat transparent. The perception that nepotism is present in local administration hiring

was shared by one-third of the respondents (32.6 percent), but the perception that the process of employment is open only for people close to the local ruling party was rather high at 64.7 percent. The perception of corruption at the local level was also high, with 74.7 percent of respondents selecting the three worst of five options in answer to this question; the response on conflict of interest was similar at 72.8 percent.<sup>82</sup>

Civil society monitoring of local budget transparency in the first quarter of 2014 found that a majority of local governments were publishing budget information (54 out of 80 municipalities), but that some did not have functional websites and therefore did not comply with the legal requirement to post their budgets on such a site, even if they responded to researchers' requests for public information.<sup>83</sup> The national government and a civil society network are both implementing plans to increase the use of information and communication technologies for open-government practices at the local level.<sup>84</sup>

Air pollution remained a major concern in 2014, with citizens demanding action from local authorities. In March, the government gave the industrial companies Makstil and Jugohrom another six months to comply with the European standards for air pollution and thereby obtain an A-integrated license. Activists organized protests and campaigning against air pollution through mainstream and social media the following month. In response to the concerns of citizens, the city of Skopje adopted several measures aimed at decreasing air pollution, such as managing traffic in the municipality, but these were seen as insufficient. When the six-month deadline expired on 1 November, the central government decided to suspend operations at Makstil and reduce production at Jugohrom until improvements could be made. Monitoring of air quality in the course of November and December again showed disturbing results, which led to the development of a mobile application for tracking pollution levels; citizens have increasingly used it to pressure local governments to adopt effective measures for improved air quality.

A recent study by ZELS concluded that 97 percent of municipalities are knowledgeable about the availability of EU funds, and over 80 percent of them have applied for funding to increase their financial sustainability, but only about two-thirds were successful in securing funds.<sup>85</sup> Although this seems like a significant absorption capacity, it should be noted that not only were the applications developed by consulting companies, but the projects were implemented by additionally hired project staff, which suggests a considerable lack of existing capacity for attracting EU funds for local development.

#### Judicial Framework and Independence

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
3.75	3.75	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25	4.25

Macedonia's judiciary has demonstrated progress toward EU standards over the past decade in terms of legislation and institutional structure. However, the 2014 EU

progress report emphasized that “the country is now in an advanced phase requiring more complex and challenging improvements ... relating to independence and quality of justice.”<sup>86</sup> One of the main challenges it identified was the selective enforcement of laws and the perception of improper influence over judicial decisions.

Macedonia has yet to sign and ratify the Council of Europe’s European Convention on the International Validity of Criminal Judgments, which allows one state to enforce a sentence imposed by another under certain circumstances.

The number of Macedonian appeals to the ECtHR remained fairly high compared with other countries on a per capita basis in 2014, though it declined somewhat from a spike in 2013.<sup>87</sup> The frequency of appeals and the judgements awarded to citizens, which amounted to more than €482,000 (\$643,000) in 2013,<sup>88</sup> suggest that the country’s own judicial system does not provide adequate protections against human rights violations. The package of constitutional changes proposed by the government in 2014 included an expansion of the Constitutional Court’s ability to hear human rights complaints. The Venice Commission welcomed this proposal in an October opinion, but noted some concerns, including the fact that the mechanism still applied to a closed list of rights instead of being covered by a general clause, meaning some basic rights would be excluded.<sup>89</sup>

There were no new amendments to the legal framework with regard to the appointment of judges, but monitoring of the work of the Judicial Council showed that existing legal requirements for appointments—for example the standards for training and experience—were not applied.<sup>90</sup> No progress was achieved in reforming the career system for judges. The security of tenure was not strengthened, and this was assessed in the EU progress report as a potential threat to judges’ independence.

The work of the judiciary in 2014 was marked by three notable decisions in the area of human rights. They are of particular importance for the implementation of an antidiscrimination law that was adopted in 2010 in an effort to align Macedonian legislation with EU standards. First, in May, a Skopje court ruled on a case in which the Macedonian Young Lawyers’ Association accused the border police of racially profiling Roma and stopping them from traveling abroad under the assumption that they would improperly seek asylum in EU member states. The court found that the authorities had illegally discriminated against the plaintiff represented by the lawyers’ association, who was prevented from leaving the country in June 2013.

Following this ruling, in late June 2014 the Constitutional Court upheld a complaint from the European Roma Rights Centre and struck down sections of the Law on Travel Documents that allowed the authorities to revoke the passports of people who had been expelled from another country, meaning they could no longer travel to any other country. In this judgment, the court applied a decision of the ECtHR, which is rather rare for Macedonian courts. In October, for instance, the Constitutional Court declined to apply ECtHR case law in rejecting a legal challenge to strict rules on abortion that had been enacted in 2013.

In the year’s third important antidiscrimination ruling, a court in July upheld another complaint brought by the Macedonian Young Lawyers’ Association, this

time in the area of labor rights. The defendant was found to have discriminated against the plaintiff, an employee, partly by withholding his salary after he successfully challenged his earlier dismissal and returned to work.

Although the legal and institutional structure of the courts may have improved over the long term, there are still “claims of indirect political influence on the conduct and outcome of high-profile court proceedings, especially in respect of organised crime and corruption prosecutions, as well as cases involving political personalities and the media.”<sup>91</sup> The most politically fraught case of 2014 involved Prime Minister Gruevski and SDSM leader Zoran Zaev. During the campaign for the elections, Zaev’s party released a lengthy recording of a telephone call in which, according to the opposition, Gruevski could be heard discussing the 2004 sale of Makedonska Banka with a VMRO-DPMNE party official and the Serbian businessman who acquired the bank. Citing the recording and other evidence, Zaev said Gruevski had taken a large bribe to expedite the deal. In July, chief public prosecutor Marko Zvrlevski said there were no legal grounds for opening an investigation into Gruevski because more than 10 years had passed since the incident.<sup>92</sup> However, Gruevski decided to sue Zaev for slander, initially seeking €500,000 (\$667,000) in damages, later reduced to €50,000. In September the court ruled in favor of the prime minister, having rejected the audio recording as evidence and refusing to call the ruling party official, Den Donceev, as a witness. Testimony was allowed from the businessman, Jovica Stefanović, who denied knowing Gruevski or anyone else involved in the case.

In October, at least 13 judges and a dozen other employees from the minor offenses department at the Basic Court Skopje 1 were arrested for negligent service, having allegedly failed to deliver written rulings in a series of cases, meaning some €1.1 million (\$1.5 million) in fines could not be imposed. The SDSM criticized the arrests as an infringement of judicial independence, arguing that the matter should have been addressed to the Judicial Council, which is responsible for supervising judges.<sup>93</sup>

In a monitoring report released in July, the Macedonian Helsinki Committee noted a range of problems in the criminal justice system, including overcrowding and poor living conditions in pretrial detention centers.<sup>94</sup> The national ombudsman also reported various shortcomings, such as old and poorly equipped detention areas in police stations that lacked heating and cooling systems.<sup>95</sup>

In an effort to address concerns about selective enforcement of laws, in 2014 the government proposed changes to the criminal code that would allow for the adoption of authoritative sentencing guidelines.<sup>96</sup> The Bar Association and the public prosecutor criticized the new “rulebook” for limiting the independence of the judiciary and interfering in the work of the judges by strictly regulating sentencing. In response to this pushback, the government submitted a new bill for public consultation in December that would supersede the rulebook’s sentencing guidelines.<sup>97</sup>

## Corruption

2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
4.75	4.75	4.50	4.25	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.25	4.25

Although nearly every government in independent Macedonia's history has claimed to prioritize the fight against corruption, graft remains widespread. Year after year, EU progress reports criticize the administrative capacity and the actual activities of agencies tasked with enforcing anticorruption laws.

A report issued by the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) in March 2014 found that the legal and regulatory framework governing conflicts of interest and asset declarations among elected officials, judges, and prosecutors was not being observed in practice, and called for improvements in compliance and monitoring mechanisms. The report also cited undue interference in judicial appointment and disciplinary procedures, and lack of transparency in the decisions of the Judicial Council. The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) was criticized for failing to pursue cases proactively, and for a perceived lack of impartiality. The report described severe staffing and budgetary restrictions that effectively hampered the commission's work; in the period under review, just two staff members were tasked with verifying over 1,000 asset declarations each year.<sup>98</sup>

The 2014 EU progress report made similar observations, finding that even though the legal framework was brought into line with European legislation in the past several years, implementation is still lagging. For example, it noted that although the SCPC has brought dozens of misdemeanor cases against public officials for failure to submit asset declarations or statements of interest, the courts rarely apply the strongest penalties, meaning there is little deterrent effect.<sup>99</sup> Beyond the EU, Macedonia has yet to ratify the OECD Convention on Combating Bribery of Foreign Public Officials in International Business Transactions.

The government in 2014 proposed amendments to the anticorruption law that would provide for the protection of whistle-blowers, but they had not been adopted at year's end. Transparency International Macedonia had raised a number of concerns about the draft legislation, arguing that it relied too heavily on the SCPC, despite its lack of resources and public trust. It was also unclear when or whether whistle-blowers would be permitted to make their accusations public without fear of legal repercussions.<sup>100</sup>

A number of significant corruption cases came to light during 2014. In January the SDSM revealed that public tenders for the purchase of medical equipment worth €1 million (\$1.3 million) had been awarded to a company linked to an editor at TV Sitel, the progovernment television station.<sup>101</sup> Separately, in April, three police officers, including the deputy head of internal affairs in Ohrid, were arrested on suspicion of involvement in the trafficking of women from Albania to work as prostitutes.

After the April parliamentary elections, Transparency International Macedonia filed criminal charges against the VMRO-DPMNE and DUI for making illegal cash payments during the campaign and misusing the funds of municipalities and

public companies for political purposes. The group said it was also suing the DUI for similar abuses during the 2013 local elections.<sup>102</sup>

In May, prominent ophthalmologist Dejan Stavric was sentenced to one year in prison for bribery after an unusually brief trial. Police had found marked banknotes in his possession. Some observers interpreted the arrest as revenge for Stavric's role in leading a doctors' strike in 2012 that stopped a proposed reform of the health sector's wage structure.

Also in May, the SDSM filed corruption charges against Interior Minister Gordana Jankuloska, accusing her of misuse of office and tax evasion for illegally accepting a cash donation of €80,000 (\$107,000) on behalf of the VMRO-DPMNE in 2006. The prosecution service announced in August that it would not investigate the case because there was no evidence of a crime. The SDSM criticized the chief prosecutor for disregarding documentary evidence and dropping the case without examining witnesses.<sup>103</sup>

In September an appellate court upheld the 2008 conviction of former SDSM prime minister Vlado Bučkovski for misusing funds for procurement of spare parts for tanks while he was serving as defense minister in 2001, though the sentence was reduced to two years in prison from three.

In late October the police arrested several businessmen and former Defense Ministry officials for alleged corruption and money laundering linked to a contract to service six military helicopters. Investigators said that some \$2.76 million in public funds had been siphoned off between 2005 and 2007 through a network of companies based in Macedonia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, and Britain.

In November former Ohrid mayor Aleksandar Petreski and 13 other suspects were arrested for allegedly operating an organized crime ring that embezzled €2 million (\$2.7 million) from the municipal budget through false procurement contracts between 2007 and 2013.<sup>104</sup>

An in-depth study of corruption in Macedonia, published by the MCIC in October 2014,<sup>105</sup> drew on surveys of citizens and business representatives that were designed to capture experience with, attitudes toward, and perceptions of corruption. It found that “while Macedonia has made steady progress in corruption perceptions, the levels of corruption pressure and victimization remain similar to a decade ago,” suggesting that the public is “prone to accepting corruption as a social norm.” Among other findings, the study reported that businesspeople rarely take action after witnessing corruption, filing lawsuits in just 0.25 percent of cases, and that the share of procurement spending issued without open competition has grown in recent years.

■ AUTHOR: MARIJA RISTESKA

*Marija Risteska is an assistant professor in the Faculty of Political Science and Diplomacy at FON University in Skopje, Macedonia. She is also a chief analyst at the Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM).*



- <sup>1</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Macedonia's New Red Lion Fails to Impress Opposition," *Balkan Insight*, 12 December 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-opposition-opts-against-coat-of-arms-change>.
- <sup>2</sup> "'Military' wing of DUI objects to leader Ahmeti for supporting the coat of arms," *24 Vesti*, 15 December 2014, <http://24vesti.mk/%E2%80%9Evoenoto%E2%80%9Ckrilo-na-duitprotistavi-na-liderot-ahmeti-poradi-poddrshkata-za-grbot>.
- <sup>3</sup> European Commission, *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Progress Report* (Brussels: EC, October 2014), 6–7, [http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2014/20141008-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-progress-report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2014/20141008-the-former-yugoslav-republic-of-macedonia-progress-report_en.pdf).
- <sup>4</sup> According to the European Commission progress report, 175 of 399 laws were adopted via a short procedure.
- <sup>5</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Macedonia plans to become tax heaven," *Balkan Insight*, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-plans-becoming-tax-heaven>.
- <sup>6</sup> Especially the former interior Minister Trajanov, President of Democratic union a political party member of the governing coalition, whose opinion is that 'crime money pours into such zones.'
- <sup>7</sup> Public statements by Abulmenah Betdzeti and Kire Naumov, available in "Јавна расправа по Нацрт-амандманите на Уставот на РМ" [Public hearing on the draft amendments to the Constitution], video, 17 September 2014, [http://vozivo.mk/nametnat\\_ustav-javna-rasprava/](http://vozivo.mk/nametnat_ustav-javna-rasprava/).
- <sup>8</sup> "Петар Гошев: Јавниот долг расте галопирачки" [Petar Goshev: Public debt is increasing at a gallop], *Prizma*, 15 April 2014, <http://prizma.birn.eu.com/мк/стории/петар-гошев-јавниот-долг-расте-галопирачки>.
- <sup>9</sup> Liljana Popovska, MP from the Macedonian greens (Democratic renewal of Macedonia), <http://dom.org.mk/odnosi-so-javnost/prescentar/soopstenija/833-2014-08-29-13-01-52>.
- <sup>10</sup> European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), *Opinion on the Seven Amendments to the Constitution of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia* (Strasbourg: Venice Commission, 13 October 2014), <http://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD%282014%29026-e>.
- <sup>11</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "EU slows Macedonia plan for tax haven," *Balkan Insight*, 1 December 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/brussels-remarks-slows-macedonia-plans-to-set-up-tax-haven>.
- <sup>12</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Macedonia contract workers protest tax increase," *Balkan Insight*, 22 December 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-contract-workers-protest-tax-increase>.
- <sup>13</sup> "СИКР: На секој трет работник му се исплакјаат придонеси на suma poniska od realnata plata" [Social contributions for every third worker are paid on smaller than the real salary], *Aktuelno24*, 4 December 2014, <http://aktuelno24.mk/tsikp-na-sekoj-tret-rabotnik-mu-se-ispklaat-pridonesi-na-suma-poniska-od-realnata-mesechna-plata>.
- <sup>14</sup> "Macedonian Teen's Murder Sparks Ethnic Unrest," *Balkan Insight*, 20 May 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-teenager-s-murder-sparks-ethnically-charged-protests-1>.
- <sup>15</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Macedonia: 2014 Marred by Ethnic Unrest," *Balkan Insight*, 29 December 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-2014-marred-by-ethnic-unrest/>.
- <sup>16</sup> European Commission, *Progress Report*.
- <sup>17</sup> "New Macedonia Albanian Party Denies Erdogan Link," *Balkan Insight*, 24 November 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/new-albanian-party-in-macedonia-denies-erdogan-connection>.



- 18 “NATO Chief Urges Macedonia to End Name Dispute,” *Balkan Insight*, 23 May 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/nato-chief-urges-for-macedonia-name-solution>.
- 19 European Commission, *Progress Report*, 2.
- 20 Under this compromise, the international community would refer to Macedonia as “the Republic of Macedonia,” but Greece would use “the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.”
- 21 Teona Surmava, “Macedonia: Elections and Nationalism,” Project for Democratic Union, 1 September 2014, <http://4liberty.eu/macedonia-elections-and-nationalism/>.
- 22 Since Macedonia became independent, only one candidate has achieved an outright victory in the first round.
- 23 International Election Observation Mission (IEOM), *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections, 27 April 2014, Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions* (Skopje: OSCE/ODIHR, 27 April 2014), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/118078?download=true>.
- 24 European Commission, “Statement following the meeting with the President of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia,” press release, 15 May 2014, [http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release\\_STATEMENT-14-160\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_STATEMENT-14-160_en.htm).
- 25 Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly, “Skopje: shortcomings during campaign overshadow well-run election day,” news release, 28 April 2014, <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/News/News-View-en.asp?newsid=5005&lang=2>.
- 26 MOST Citizens’ Association, *Final Report: Domestic monitoring of the presidential and early parliamentary elections, 2014* (Skopje: MOST, 2014), [http://most.org.mk/images/MOST/Final%20Report\\_Presidential%20and%20Parliamentary%20Elections%202014\\_ENG.pdf](http://most.org.mk/images/MOST/Final%20Report_Presidential%20and%20Parliamentary%20Elections%202014_ENG.pdf).
- 27 “Груевски: ова е голема, огромна, моќна, силна победа—ова е недвосмислена доверба” [Gruevski: This is a big, huge, and strong victory—this is unequivocal trust], MKD News, 28 April 2014, <http://mkd-news.com/gruevski-ova-e-golema-ogromna-mokna-silna-pobeda-ova-e-nedvosmislana-doverba/>.
- 28 <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/04/28/us-macedonia-election-idUSBREA3R12320140428>.
- 29 IEOM, *The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Presidential and Early Parliamentary Elections, 27 April 2014, OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report* (Warsaw: OSCE, 15 July 2014), <http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/fyrom/121306?download=true>.
- 30 Ibid
- 31 European Commission, *Progress Report*, 18.
- 32 IEOM, *Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions*.
- 33 SIGMA (2014), Public administration reform assessment: Policy making, April 2014, 20, <http://www.sigmaxweb.org/publications/FYRoM-Assessment-2014.pdf>.
- 34 Tomasz Żornaczuk (ed.), “Civil society in EU integration in Western Balkans” (Warsaw: PISM, 2014), [http://www.pism.pl/files/?id\\_plik=18260](http://www.pism.pl/files/?id_plik=18260).
- 35 Zoran Necev and Aleksandar Nikolov, “Mechanisms used by the executive authorities to ensure stakeholders’ participation in policy-making—evaluation and recommendations,” Research in Social Sciences in Macedonia, December 2012, [http://www.rppp-westernbalkans.net/en/policy-dialogue/Macedonia/mainColumnParagraphs/05/text\\_files/file/Research%20in%20Social%20sciences%20in%20Macedonia\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.rppp-westernbalkans.net/en/policy-dialogue/Macedonia/mainColumnParagraphs/05/text_files/file/Research%20in%20Social%20sciences%20in%20Macedonia_ENG.pdf).
- 36 Македонски Центар за Меѓународна Соработка (MCMS), *Огледало на владата 2014: Учество на јавноста во процесите на подготовка на закони* [Government Mirror: Public Participation in the Process of Policymaking] (Skopje: MCMS, October 2014), <http://mcms.org.mk/images/docs/2014/analiza-ogledalo-na-vladata-2014.pdf>.
- 37 United States Agency for International Development (USAID), Project Description: Macedonia Anticorruption Program (Start date: June 2013, Duration: 34 months), <http://www.usaid.gov/news-information/fact-sheets/macedonia-anti-corruption-program>.

- 38 MCMS, Government Mirror.
- 39 Open Government Partnership (OGP), “Macedonia National Action Plan for Open Government 2014–2016,” April 2014, <http://www.opengovpartnership.org/files/macedonia-ogp-action-plan-2014-2016pdf/download>.
- 40 Qendresa Sulejmani, “Together for OGP,” OGP Blog, 22 April 2014, <http://www.open.govpartnership.org/blog/qendresa-sulejmani/2014/04/22/together-ogp>.
- 41 Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM), “Local Transparency and Accountability Study (LOTOS)” (Skopje: CRPM, 2014), [http://www.crpm.mk/?page\\_id=13038](http://www.crpm.mk/?page_id=13038).
- 42 Institute for Democracy Civilis-Skopje (IDSCS), “Parliament Watch” (ongoing project), <http://idscs.org.mk/mk/tekovni-proekti/sobranieto-pod-lupa>.
- 43 MCMS, “Платформа за антикорупција” (Anticorruption Platform), <http://mcms.org.mk/mk/vesti-i-javnost/vesti/1604-platforma-za-antikorupcija.html>.
- 44 Article 95 of the Law on Higher Education stipulates that applicants for accreditation have at least two publications in peer-reviewed international journals with impact factor.
- 45 Professors’ Plenum, “Open Letter Regarding Higher Education Reforms in Macedonia,” November 2014, [https://www.academia.edu/9992817/Open\\_Letter\\_Regarding\\_the\\_Higher\\_Education\\_Reform\\_in\\_Macedonia](https://www.academia.edu/9992817/Open_Letter_Regarding_the_Higher_Education_Reform_in_Macedonia).
- 46 “Груевски: Протестите на студентите се партиски мотивирани и поттикнати од СДСМ и СОРОС” [Gruevski: The students protests are party motivated and instructed by SDSM and SOROS], *Kurir*, 3 December 2014, <http://www.kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/181132-Gruevski-Protestite-na-studentite-se-partiski-motivirani-i-pottiknati-od-SDSM-i-SOROS#>.
- 47 In September, the progovernment outlet *Respublika* published an analysis of Soros-funded activities in Macedonia over the last 19 years that linked Soros funding to the work of SDSM. “93 милиони евра од Сорос за медиуми, невладини организ” [93 million euros from Soros for the media and non-governmental organizations], *TIME.mk*, 11 September 2014, <http://www.time.mk/c/3285d7cbf9/93-milioni-evra-od-soros-za-mediumi-nevladini-organizacii-i-funkcioneri-na-sdsm.html>.
- 48 “Two hundred professors join in ‘Contra plenum,’” *META.mk*, 30 December 2014, <http://meta.mk/en/dveste-profesori-se-zdruzhija-vo-kontra-plenum/>.
- 49 “Позади истражувањето на “Еврометар” стои Лидија Димова и луѓе од СДСМ” [Behind the research of “Eurometer” stand Lidija Dimova and people from SDSM], *Kurir.mk*, 2 December 2014, <http://www.kurir.mk/makedonija/vesti/181026-Pozadi-istrazuvanjeto-na-Evrometar-stoi-Lidija-Dimova-i-luge-od-SDSM>.
- 50 Meri Jordanovska, “Uncivil Society: The Politicization of Macedonia’s NGOs,” *Balkan Insight*, 10 December 2013, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/uncivil-society-the-politicisation-of-macedonia-s-ngos>.
- 51 USAID, *CSO Sustainability Index for Central Europe and Eurasia 2012* (Washington, DC: USAID, 2012), <http://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/documents/1863/E%26E%202013%20CSOSI%20Final%2010-29-14.pdf>.
- 52 MCMS, “Извештај за овозможувачката околина за развој на граѓанскиот сектор во Македонија” [Report on the Enabling Environment for CSO Development in Macedonia] (Skopje: MCMS, 2014), [http://mcms.org.mk/images/docs/2014/izveshtaj\\_zao\\_ozmoghuvachkata\\_okolina\\_za\\_razvoj\\_na\\_gragjanskiot\\_sektor\\_vo\\_makedonija.pdf](http://mcms.org.mk/images/docs/2014/izveshtaj_zao_ozmoghuvachkata_okolina_za_razvoj_na_gragjanskiot_sektor_vo_makedonija.pdf).
- 53 Marija Mitevaska, “Угнетено правото на штрајк!” [Oppress the right to strike!], *Radio Slobodna Evropa*, 13 November 2014, <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/26592296.html>.
- 54 Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Macedonia Teachers Slate Change to Strike Law,” *Balkan Insight*, 10 September 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-curbs-teacher-s-union-strike>.

- 55 Milcho Veljanovski, “СОНК: ‘И да удирате, НИЕ ќе стоиме исправени и одиме понатаму,’” [SONK: “Even if you hit us, we will stand tall”], Akademik.mk, 26 September 2014, <http://www.akademik.mk/sonk-i-da-udirate-nie-ke-stoime-ispraveni-i-odime-ponatamu>.
- 56 Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Macedonia hooligans crash LGBT celebration,” *Balkan Insight*, 24 October 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-hooligans-crash-lgbt-celebration>.
- 57 Kocho Andonovski, Centre for support of the LGBTI community in an interview with Galena Nikolovska for 24 news ‘the constitutional definition of marriage is the same in seven members of the EU, 12 September 2014, <http://24vesti.mk/ustavnata-definicija-za-brakot-ista-kako-vo-sedum-chlenki-na-eu-nevladinite-reagiraat>
- 58 Tamara Causidis and Dragan Sekulovski, “Macedonia: ‘Critical Media Is Vanishing,’” *Index on Censorship*, 19 November 2013, <http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2013/11/macedonia/>.
- 59 Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Macedonian Media Law Changes Cautiously Welcomed,” *Balkan Insight*, 24 January 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-journalists-cautious-about-media-law-change>.
- 60 Borce Manevski, “Changes to the Act on Audio and Audiovisual Services,” IRIS Merlin, European Audiovisual Observatory, <http://merlin.obs.coe.int/iris/2014/3/article35.en.html>; Dejan Georgievski, “Macedonia,” in *Media Sustainability Index 2015* (Washington: IREX, 2015), 84, <https://www.irex.org/sites/default/files/2015-msi-macedonia.pdf>; Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor, “Macedonia,” in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2013* (Washington: U.S. Department of State, 2014), <http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/hrrpt/humanrightsreport/index.htm?year=2013&dclid=220304#wrapper>.
- 61 Borce Manevski, “New Addenda to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services,” IRIS Merlin, European Audiovisual Observatory, <http://merlin.obs.coe.int/iris/2014/8/article32.en.html>.
- 62 Journalists’ Association of Macedonia (ZNM), “Reaction of the Last Amendments of LAAMS,” news release, 2 September 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/784>.
- 63 ZNM, “AJM Asks for Low Penalties for Media,” news release, 28 May 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/757>; Erol Rizaov, “Срамен притисок врз Телма” [Shameful pressure on Telma], *Utrinski Vesnik*, 25 May 2014, <http://www.utrinski.mk/?ItemID=0AFAA740F0BA8640B2E0EF40FBD106F6>.
- 64 Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Macedonia Journalists to Seek Justice in Strasbourg,” *Balkan Insight*, 5 June 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-journalists-to-seek-justice-in-strasbourg>; ZNM, “AJM Submitted an Appeal to the Court in Strasbourg for Incidents of ‘24th of December,’” news release, 6 October 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/801>.
- 65 International Federation of Journalists, “‘Justice and Freedom Must Prevail’ for Macedonian Journalist Tomislav Kezarovski,” news release, 22 October 2014, <http://www.ifj.org/nc/news-single-view/backpid/34/article/justice-and-freedom-must-prevail-for-macedonian-journalist-tomislav-kezarovski/>; European Federation of Journalists, “EFJ Calls for All Charges against Tomislav Kezarovski to Be Dropped,” news release, 9 October 2014, <http://europeanjournalists.org/blog/2014/10/09/efj-calls-for-all-charges-against-journalist-tomislav-kezarovski-to-be-dropped/>.
- 66 Dunja Mijatović, *Regular Report to the Permanent Council* (Vienna: OSCE, 27 November 2014), <http://www.osce.org/fom/127656?download=true>.
- 67 ZNM, “Condemnation of the DPA Leader for Verbal Attack on Journalist from Koha, Arben Zeqiri,” news release, 9 October 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/808>; ZNM, “Statement for the Discharge of the Editor of the Newspaper Nova Makedonija,” news release, 13 February 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/733>.
- 68 ZNM, “Reaction of AJM for the Arrest of the Journalist Besim Ibrahim, from Daily Lajm,” news release, 7 July 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/773>.

- <sup>69</sup> OSCE, “OSCE Representative Deeply Worried about Police Intimidating Journalists at Demonstrations in Skopje,” news release, 21 May 2014, <http://www.osce.org/fom/118840>.
- <sup>70</sup> “Media Monitoring: The Boycott Was More Interesting than the Debates in October,” Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis—Skopje, 25 November 2014, <http://idscs.org.mk/mk/tekovni-proekti/sobranieto-pod-lupa/573-monitoring-na-mediumi-bojkotot-poiteresenod-sobraniskite-debati-vo-oktomvri>; Snezhana Trpevska and Igor Mitsevski, Зошто е важен интегритетот на медиумите: Враќање на јавниот интерес во работата на медиумите и во новинарството [Media Integrity Matters: Reclaiming Public Service Values in Media and Journalism] (Skopje: Macedonian Institute for Media, 2014), [http://mim.org.mk/mk/vesti-i-nastani/item/download/166\\_cfa1848cc31a24f54296a1226e66f081](http://mim.org.mk/mk/vesti-i-nastani/item/download/166_cfa1848cc31a24f54296a1226e66f081).
- <sup>71</sup> Ljupcho Petkovski, “From Student Protests to Movement—The (Un)expected Reinvention of Politics in Macedonia,” Centre for Southeast European Studies, *Balkans in Europe Policy Blog*, 16 December 2014, <http://www.suedosteuropa.uni-graz.at/biepag/node/131>.
- <sup>72</sup> “Скандал: Новинар на Фокус го пишувал извештајот на Фридом Хаус” [Scandal: Fokus journalist wrote report for Freedom House], Sitel video, 2:56, 13 June 2014, <http://www.sitel.com.mk/skandal-novinar-na-fokus-go-pishuval-izvestajot-na-freedom-haus>.
- <sup>73</sup> Dzelal Hodzic, “Медиуми или подбужнувачи?” [Media or instigators?], Civil.org, 21 May 2014, <http://civil.org.mk/mdiumi-ili-podbuznuvatchi/?lang=mk>.
- <sup>74</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Macedonian Editor Accused of Ethnic Hate Speech,” Balkan Insight, 4 February 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-editor-accused-of-ethnic-hate-speech>.
- <sup>75</sup> ZNM, “The Hate Speech in the Media Is Not Punished,” news release, 6 October 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/803>.
- <sup>76</sup> See for example Bezomrazno.mk and Nemrazi.mk.
- <sup>77</sup> Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers (SSNM), *White Book of Professional and Labour Rights of Journalists* (Skopje: SSNM, 2014), [http://ssnm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/White\\_Book\\_ENG.pdf](http://ssnm.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/White_Book_ENG.pdf).
- <sup>78</sup> ZNM, “The Government Campaigns Are Political Propaganda,” news release, 18 September 2014, <http://www.znm.org.mk/drupal-7.7/en/node/788>.
- <sup>79</sup> Svetlana Unovska, “Училишта без струја во Струга, ладни училиници во Кичево” [Schools without electricity in Struga, cold classrooms in Kicevo], 24 Vesti, 14 November 2014, <http://24vesti.mk/uchilishta-bez-struja-vo-struga-ladni-uchilnici-vo-kicevo>.
- <sup>80</sup> Martin Jakovlevski, “Владата ќе помогне за греење на училиштата во Кичево” [The government will help with the heating for schools in Kicevo], Telma, 8 November 2014, <http://telma.com.mk/vesti/vladata-kje-pomogne-za-greenje-na-uchilishtata-vo-kicevo>.
- <sup>81</sup> Association of the Units of Local Self-Government (ZELS), Гласило (Skopje: ZELS, December 2014), <http://www.zels.org.mk/Upload/Content/Documents/Izdanija/Glasilo/2014/ZELS%20Dekemvri%202014%20mk%20al%20web.pdf>.
- <sup>82</sup> Jovan Bliznakovski, *Судир на интереси и корупцијата на локално ниво* [Conflict of interest and corruption on local level] (Skopje: IDSCS, July 2014), <http://www.idscs.org.mk/images/anketi/anketa-sudir-na-interesi-korupcija-17072014.pdf>.
- <sup>83</sup> Коалиција за Буџетски Мониторинг (Coalition for Budget Monitoring) Blog, Monthly Reports: June–December 2014, <http://kbm.mk/category/reports/>.
- <sup>84</sup> OGP, Macedonia National Action Plan.
- <sup>85</sup> ZELS, Општините во Македонија и ЕУ фондовите [Municipalities in Macedonia and EU Funds] (Skopje: ZELS, 2014), <http://www.zels.org.mk/Upload/Content/Documents/Dokumentii/%D0%9C%D0%9A/2013/Opstini%20vo%20RM%20and%20EU%20fondovi%20-%20MK%20verzija.doc>.
- <sup>86</sup> European Commission, *Progress Report*, 10–11.
- <sup>87</sup> European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), *Analysis of Statistics 2014* (Strasbourg: ECtHR, 2015), 11, [http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Stats\\_analysis\\_2014\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Stats_analysis_2014_ENG.pdf).

- 88 Elena Pavlovska, “‘Ќе се жалам во Стразбур!’—Европскиот суд сè попривлична правна ‘атракција’ за Македонците” [‘You won’t regret in Strasbourg!’—European Court is an all-attractive legal ‘destination’ for Macedonians], *Akademik*, 17 February 2014, <http://www.akademik.mk/makedontsite-se-povesni>.
- 89 Venice Commission, *Opinion on the Seven Amendments to the Constitution of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia*, 16.
- 90 Institute for Human Rights, *Анализа на независноста на судството во Република Македонија—перцепција, потешкотии и предизвици* [Analysis of independence of the judiciary in Republic of Macedonia—Perception, difficulties, and challenges] (Skopje: Institute for Human Rights, 2014), [http://www.ihr.org.mk/images/pub/Analiza\\_na\\_nezavisno\\_sudstvo\\_vo\\_RM.pdf](http://www.ihr.org.mk/images/pub/Analiza_na_nezavisno_sudstvo_vo_RM.pdf).
- 91 European Commission, *Progress Report*, 40.
- 92 “Macedonia Court Says Opposition Leader Slandered Prime Minister,” Reuters, 3 September 2014, <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/09/03/uk-macedonia-slander-idUKKBN0GY1XS20140903>; Sase Dimovski and Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Macedonia Opposition Leader Fined for Slandering PM,” *Balkan Insight*, 3 September 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-opposition-head-fined-for-slander-against-pm>.
- 93 “Шилегов: МВР направи упад во независната судска власт” [Shilegov: MVR makes inroads into the independent judiciary], *Makfaks*, 9 October 2014, <http://makfax.com.mk/makedonija/politika/silegov-mvr-napravi-upad-vo-nezavisnata-sudska-vlast>.
- 94 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Macedonia, *Основните граѓански и политички права и слободи: Анализа на набљудувани судски постапки за периодот од 01.09.2013 до 30.06.2014* [Basic civil and political rights and freedoms: Analysis of monitored court proceedings for the period from 01.09.2013 to 30.06.2014] (Skopje: Helsinki Committee, 2014), [http://www.mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor\\_assets/documents/731/Analysis\\_-\\_Final.pdf](http://www.mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/731/Analysis_-_Final.pdf).
- 95 *Годишен извештај 2013 година—Национален превентивен механизам* [Annual Report 2013—National preventive mechanism] (Skopje: Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, May 2014), <http://ombudsman.mk/upload/NPM-dokumenti/2014/NPM%20Godisen%20izvestaj-2013.pdf>.
- 96 “Судските казни ќе се изедначат со правилник” [Court sentences will be evened with a book of rules], *Dnevnik*, 12 January 2014, <http://www.dnevnik.mk/default-mk.asp?itemID=AED5C8722C4B624EA60F09DD065E770B&arc=1>.
- 97 “Правилник за казни и покрај Кривичниот законик” [Book of rules besides the Criminal code], *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 29 January 2014, <http://www.makdenes.org/content/article/25247056.html>.
- 98 Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), *Fourth Evaluation Round: Corruption Prevention in Respect of Members of Parliament, Judges and Prosecutors. Evaluation Report, ‘The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 17 March 2014), [https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/greco/evaluations/round4/Eval%20IV/GrecoEval4%282013%294\\_TheFYROMacedonia\\_EN.pdf](https://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/greco/evaluations/round4/Eval%20IV/GrecoEval4%282013%294_TheFYROMacedonia_EN.pdf).
- 99 European Commission, *Progress Report*, 43.
- 100 Milcho Veljanoski, “Укажувачите на корупција ќе се штитат со закон—предложени нови мерки за борба против корупцијата” [Pointing at corruption will be protected by law—Proposed new measures to combat corruption], *Akademik*, 3 June 2014, <http://www.akademik.mk/ukazhuvachite-na-korupsija-ke-se-shtitat-so-zakon-predlozheni-novi-merki-za-borba-protiv-korupsijata>.
- 101 “Никола Тодоров: тендерот со ‘Висарис’ е раскинат поради ‘неетичност’” [Nikola Todorov: Tender with ‘Visaris’ terminated because of ‘ethics’], *Nova Makedonija*, 30 January 2014, <http://www.novamakedonija.com.mk/DetalNewsInstant.asp?vestInstant=30338>; Sinisa Jakov Marusic, “Medical Tender Angers Macedonia Opposition,” *Balkan Insight*, 15

January 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/medical-equipment-scandal-rocks-macedonia>.

<sup>102</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Macedonian Parties Sued For Paying Cash in Elections," *Balkan Insight*, 30 April 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-ruling-parties-sued-for-cash-payment-amid-elections>.

<sup>103</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Refusal to Probe Police Minister Angers Macedonia Opposition," *Balkan Insight*, 5 August 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonian-prosecution-slammed-over-police-minister-cash-payment-case>.

<sup>104</sup> Sinisa Jakov Marusic, "Macedonia Police Arrest Ex-Mayor of Ohrid," *Balkan Insight*, 21 November 2014, <http://www.balkaninsight.com/en/article/macedonia-police-arrests-former-mayor-for-organized-crime>.

<sup>105</sup> Emina Nuredinoska, Marija Szadevski, and Borjan Gjuzelov, *Corruption Assessment Report for Macedonia* (Skopje: Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, 2014), <http://www.mcms.org.mk/images/docs/2014/corruption-assessment-report.pdf>.