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**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Fifth Report submitted by North Macedonia

**Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the Framework
Convention for the Protection of National Minorities –
received on 24 June 2020**

**Report of the Republic of North Macedonia on the Fifth Round of Observation
under Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe**

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has consistently taken serious measures to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Committee of the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Concerning Recommendations for immediate action:

- *Take with resolve all necessary measures to continue building an integrated society that is firmly based on the rule of law, the protection of human rights, including minority rights, and respect for diversity, and avoid mutually exclusive ethno-nationalist politics that further the formation of parallel societies;*

At its 93rd session, held on 8 October 2018, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the information on the need to draft a National Strategy for the Development of the Concept of One Society and Interculturalism. The preparation and implementation of the Strategy is in line with the Government's program, as well as with the Government's strategic priorities for 2020. Its purpose is to improve intercultural communication in the Republic of North Macedonia among different cultures and communities, as well as through it, to implement the recommendations of the international bodies of the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the European Commission, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

The National Strategy for the Development of the Concept of One Society and Interculturalism is a document prepared for the first time in the Republic of North Macedonia, and is of particular importance, given the division of society on different grounds. This strategic planning document should initiate activities and strengthen the processes of communication and cooperation among communities in order to create a society in which everyone will feel as member of *one society*. The main goal is to promote from a divided society into a society that is both fair and equitable and makes citizens more equal.

In accordance with the commitment of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to partner with civil society in the process of policy making and implementation, as well as direct and substantial participation of CSOs in the preparation of this strategic document, working groups were set up consisting of representatives of institutions and civil society that actively participated in the overall process of preparation of the Strategy.

The National Strategy for the Development of the Concept of One Society and Interculturalism is designed for three years after which the processes will be re-examined and analysed for further steps. The document consists of seven strategic areas, which have an analysis of the situation, priorities and goals, as well as an action part. These sectoral documents should each state their priorities as well as their goals, which should contribute to activities that should enable this strategy to change social reality by initiating processes for a more integrated society.

The need for this strategy in the Republic of North Macedonia has arisen from the widespread assessment that the state functions through divided and separate societies. The primary axis of that

division is ethnicity (which often coincides with religious division). This divide has been noted by many international organizations and their bodies, including the European Commission, the Advisory Committee to the Framework Convention for National Minorities, as well as other monitoring mechanisms of the Council of Europe and the United Nations, as well as in analyses carried out at national level. Second, in addition to ethnicity as an axis of division of Macedonian society, this strategy takes equality and non-discrimination as one of its basic principles. This approach is in line with the preconditions for the implementation of interculturalism, which include: human rights, democracy and the rule of law, equal dignity and mutual respect, gender equality, overcoming barriers that interfere with cultural dialogue, and religious considerations.

- *Implement measures to regain trust in public institutions and actively disengage from politically and ethnically based hate speech; ensure that all instances of hate speech and hate crime are promptly condemned, effectively investigated and sanctioned;*

With the entry into force of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (LAAVMS) in January 2014, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services was deprived of the opportunity to impose measures against broadcasters in cases where hate speech and discrimination appeared on their programs. Namely, although there was a provision in LAAVMS forbidding such occurrences (Article 48 - Special Prohibitions), the penal provisions did not stipulate a fine for violating this Article. It cannot therefore be said that the Agency *refrained from imposing measures and instead relied on informal warnings with uncertain results* as stated in point 49 of the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee. In fact, during this period the Agency has made great efforts, in such a practically impossible situation, to combat hate speech and discrimination on all prohibited grounds, including also ethnic/national affiliation. *Informal warnings* were based on very thorough analysis taking into account the European Court of Human Rights practice. Actually, the practice of this Macedonian Agency is evaluated as follows in the Council of Europe publication Media Regulatory Bodies and Hate Speech: *Especially when identifying potential cases of hate speech, it is recommended to consider all possible aspects of the case, as shown in the examples of the Macedonian cases.*

In the 2014-2018 period, while the Law did not provide for any measure, the Agency undertook several activities to fill the loophole. Some of them concerned ethical sanctions; others related to initiating proceedings with other competent authorities (Commission for Protection against Discrimination, Public Prosecutor's Office - unfortunately with little or no success); and the rest related to the education of media workers.

In this context, as early as 2014, at the request of the regulatory body, the Guide to Monitoring Hate Speech was drafted,¹ under the IPA project titled Strengthening the Administrative Capacity of the Bodies in Charge of Telecommunications and Media to Effectively Regulate New Digital and Multipurpose Services. It provides clear rules on what is permissible and unacceptable in the media and transparently outlines the principles for oversight.

During these four years, the Agency has repeatedly established the occurrence of hate speech and discrimination in broadcasters' programs on several grounds. In three cases, it was about

¹ The Hate Speech Monitoring Guide was made in Macedonian, English, and Albanian, and is available at: <https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Vodic-za-monitoring-za-govorot-na-omraza-Mak.pdf>.

discrimination/hate speech based on nationality/ethnicity affiliation: against the Albanians - relating to Sitel TV (in December 2016); against the Roma - relating to Alfa TV (in May 2017)², and again against the Albanians, this time on Alfa TV (in January 2018). Having in mind that there was no sanction provided in LAAVMS, the Agency also informed the general public (in addition to the media) of all these cases and requested that the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) and the Public Prosecutor's Office initiate proceedings. Unfortunately, in only one case did the CPD agree with the Agency and established discrimination (in the Alfa TV report on the Roma). In addition to violations of Article 48, the Agency has also responded to non-compliance with professional principles of work. One such report shown on Alfa TV in 2019 was associated with negative stereotypical generalizations about the Albanian ethnic community.

During this period, the Agency has also conducted a series of trainings for media workers on raising the level of compliance with professional standards and against hate speech, which are documented in the annual reports on the work of the regulatory body, available at www.avmu.mk.

By amending the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services on 31 December 2018, Article 147 provides for a fine in the amount of €1,000 to €5,000 in MKD counter-value for the legal person and €500 in MKD counter-value for its officer responsible for the program if there is violation of Article 48. Article 48 itself has been amended and provides for additional prohibited discriminatory grounds such as: *race, colour, origin, national or ethnic affiliation, sex, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, belonging to a marginalized group, language, citizenship, social origin, education, religion or religious belief, political belief, other belief, disability, age, family or marital status, property status, health status, personal status and social status, or any other grounds*. In the meantime, as of January 2019, there has been no hate speech on broadcasters' programs, which one can freely say is also due to the activity of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services - regardless of the fact that the penalties were of ethical nature.

As part of the TAHCLE (Training against Hate Crimes for Law Enforcement) Program, the Ministry of the Interior delivered trainings on hate crimes for law enforcement officers who come in contact with and act on the said offences. The main purpose of the scaling trainings was to familiarize with hate crime, to identify and establish the elements and motives behind the commission of these crimes, as well as to provide pieces of evidence and further process them to the competent institutions. 2327 police officers were trained under the program and eight inter-institutional regional workshops for high and middle level management were conducted involving 185 participants. In 2017, amendments were made to the Minutes of receiving a complaint and it was published in the Rulebook on Amending the Rulebook on the Manner of Conducting Policing. In the Minutes of receiving a complaint, a new section has been added which reads: *Are there any indications that the criminal offence committed belongs to hate crimes*, with the possibility, if any, to be mentioned in the Minutes. In 2018, the Criminal Code was harmonized with international standards in the field of hate crime and achieved visibility of hate crimes by prescribing a legal definition of the term and envisaging specific forms of hate crimes in a specific section, which according to the principle of legality obliges the prosecution authorities to detect, identify, and prosecute such offences.

- *Take all necessary measures to build an integrated and multicultural education system in line*

with the Education Strategy for 2018-2025; allocate an adequate budget and ensure that teachers are appropriately trained and that textbooks and curricula in all schools reflect intercultural content;

The Ministry of Education has taken a number of measures necessary to create an integrated and multicultural education system in accordance with the Education Strategy for 2018-2025. The strategy will focus mainly on promoting:

- the quality of education and its relevance to the development priorities of Macedonian society (especially when it comes to forming productive and engaged citizens) and to the needs of the labour market and aimed at achieving the expected learning outcomes, as well as the acceptance of multiculturalism, interethnic integration, respect for diversity and democratic values;
- promoting the integration of pupils belonging to different ethnic communities through joint school classes and extracurricular activities, joint language learning;
- improving the spatial conditions for integration, ensuring interpersonal and intercultural social and society competences;
- enrolling children of appropriate age at school, regardless of their background and competences, especially those from marginalized groups (for example, Roma children) and ensuring that they complete at least primary education;
- providing scholarships and tutoring for Roma pupils in secondary schools;

The Education Strategy for 2018-2025 is based on clearly identifying the main challenges in the education sector, thereby ensuring its *relevance* by carefully defining priority areas. On the basis of recommendations for urgent action, concerning all measures necessary for the creation of an integrated and multicultural education system, the Ministry of Education and Science, in accordance with the *Strategy A step towards integrated education in the education system*, undertakes a series of activities transposed into primary and secondary education laws related to the promotion of multiculturalism and interethnic integration.

Pursuant to Article 24c of the Law on Primary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 161/18) and Article 46 of the Law on Secondary Education (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia nos. 44/1995, 24/1996, 34/1996, 35/1997, 82/1999, 29/2002, 40/2003, 42/2003, 67/2004, 55/2005, 113/2005, 35/2006, 30/2007, 49/2007, 81/2008, 92/2008, 33/2010, 116/2010, 156/2010, 18/2011, 42/2011, 51/2011, 6/2012, 100/2012, 24/2013, 41/2014, 116/2014, 135/2014, 10/2015, 98/2015, 145/2015, 30/2016, 127/2016, 67/2017, and 64/108), school integration teams should be established in all schools as such. The school principal forms a school integration team for a period of three years, consisting of five to seven members: the president of the pupils' parliament, the pupils' ombudsman, and representatives of the teachers and other school staff. The principal or assistant principal is a member of the school integration team *ex officio*. When forming the school integration team, the principal takes care of the representation of teachers of all languages in which the instruction is taught. The school integration team plans and organizes activities that contribute to respect for multiculturalism and the development of intercultural dialogue, interaction and the promotion of interethnic integration.

The school integration team, in cooperation with the teachers, is obliged to prepare a plan of activities that will be planned in the school's annual program in order to promote interculturalism, to

recognize similarities, to accept diversity, to eliminate stereotypes and prejudices. The basic criteria for organizing the activity that aims to offer interaction, i.e. integration of ethnically/linguistically mixed groups of participants, are: balanced groups of participants by ethnicity, gender and age; interaction among participants from different ethnic/linguistic groups (during the activity, pupils from one language/one ethnic group cooperate with pupils from another language/another ethnic group); use of all languages represented; equal treatment of participants from all ethnic/linguistic groups; achieving specific shared objectives (tangible/visible products) involving the participation of all ethnic groups represented. Funds for the implementation of these activities amount to MKD 3,100,000.00 per year or for each school the sum of MKD 30,000.00 is provided by the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, municipal budgets, and other sources (donations, gifts, etc.), and are used purposefully.

In accordance with statutory provisions and the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Ministry of Education and Science annually publishes a public call for implementation of the activities for interethnic integration. The decision to allocate funds is made by a Commission consisting of three representatives of the competent Ministry and one representative each from the Bureau for Development of Education and the State Education Inspectorate. For the fourth year in a row, the Ministry of Education and Science allocates funds for primary and secondary schools that will implement activities for Promotion of multiculturalism and interethnic integration as provided by the competent law. Per the aforementioned basis, in the 2016/17 school year, funds have been allocated for 50 primary and 14 secondary schools; in the 2017/18 school year, for 65 primary and 14 secondary schools; in the 2018/19 school year, for 64 primary and 26 secondary schools; while in the current 2019/20 school year, funding is provided for 70 primary and 25 secondary schools. For the implementation of the activities, promotion of multiculturalism and interethnic integration within the framework of the project Interethnic integration in education, the Macedonian Civic Education Centre (MCEC) has conducted trainings for all school integration teams.

In addition to providing financial support for activities to create an integrated and multicultural education system, education is also provided by interventions in schoolwork programs and curricula. According to Article 49 of the Law on Primary Education, all primary schools within their annual work program should also plan to promote the well-being of pupils, protection from violence, prevention of discrimination, as well as inter-ethnic integration. In accordance with the thematic group 3 of the Strategy *A step towards integrated education* (Curricula, programs and textbooks), measures have been taken to improve the integration basis by strengthening teaching content and standards for acquiring interpersonal, intercultural, social, and civic competences through curricula. To that end, the Bureau of Education Development has prepared new curricula for the subject Music Education for sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth grades, as well as new curricula for the subject Civic Education for eighth and ninth grades. What is new in these curricula, unlike so far, is that the multi-ethnic character of Macedonian society should be clearly and unambiguously represented, respecting cultural diversity and differences, pluralism of views and behavioural differences, promoting openness and sensitivity to cultural differences, beliefs, world views and the behaviour of others, while having pupils listening and learning Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Roma, Vlach, and Bosnian songs through the chosen songs of these nations, to learn about their own, but also about the culture, tradition and customs of others in the country. In addition to these curricula, the Bureau of Education will also gradually revise other curricula for subjects that should include multicultural content with clearly defined goals.

- *Continue to implement the principle of equitable representation and promote the effective participation of all persons belonging to national minorities, in public life and in relevant*

decision-making processes at all levels.

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia pays great attention to the principle of equitable representation and promotion of the participation of all persons belonging to ethnic communities in public life and in the decision-making process at all levels. Regarding the ethnic structure of public sector employees, the Law on Public Sector Employees, adopted in 2015, provides for the first time a mechanism for achieving the constitutional principle of adequate and equitable representation of persons belonging to communities at the level of each of the institutions in the public sector, based on the needs of the institutions themselves expressed through the Annual Employment Plans. However, it must be emphasized here that the statutory provision provides for employment procedures to be conducted on a merit-based basis in combination with the so-called *positive discrimination* or *affirmative action*, thus ethnicity is only one of the parameters that is taken into account once the candidates in the selection procedure demonstrate that they are fully qualified for the job. However, in order to systematically improve the situation, in 2016 a Public Employment Planning Methodology was adopted. As of 2017, every public sector institution prepares an annual employment plan and implements employment procedures accordingly. The distribution of planned new hires, according to appropriate and equitable representation, is done electronically via the web tool available at <http://balancer.mioa.gov.mk/>. On 31 December 2018, out of 112,164 employees in the public sector institutions, 83,993 or 74.88% were Macedonians; 22,060 or 19.67% were Albanians; 2,110 or 1.88% were Turks; 1,355 or 1.21% were Roma; 1,019, or 0.91% were Serbs; 754 or 0.67% were other or did not declare themselves; 450 or 0.40% were Bosniaks; 423 or 0.38% were Vlachs. For comparison in the 2017 Employment Registry Report, the situation was as follows: 82,374 or 75.36% were Macedonians; 21,112 or 19.31% were Albanians; 2,012 or 1.84% were Turks; 994 or 0.91% were Serbs; 1,245 or 1.14% were Roma; 429 or 0.39% were Bosniaks; 408 or 0.37% were Vlachs; while 730 or 0.67% were other or did not declare themselves at all.

With regard to further recommendations:

- *Ensure the proper functioning of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination as a fully independent and professional equality body, equipped with a functioning Secretariat, and take comprehensive measures to promote awareness of applicable anti-discrimination standards within the judiciary and amongst society, particularly among the most disadvantaged;*

In May 2019, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a new law to prevent and protect against discrimination. In the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, the grounds for discrimination are broadened and include new provisions, which are expected to provide more effective protection against discrimination. They modify and better clarify the definition of discrimination, professionalize the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, and change the name and competence of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, as it is expected to work on prevention, in addition to protection against discrimination. One of the key additions is the inclusion of sexual orientation as grounds for discrimination. With the provided conditions and manner of election of the members of the Commission, the use of new evidence in court proceedings and *actio popularis*, and exemption from court costs in litigation, it is expected that there would be overcoming of the weaknesses of the previous law, which have been recorded for years by the relevant international organizations as a serious deficiency in terms of disrespect for the principle of equality, the prohibition of unequal treatment, and serious remarks on the rather narrow statutory

definition of discrimination as such. This legislation is of exceptional importance seeing as it contains all deficiencies of the old law detected while providing a legal guarantee for the implementation of the concept of equality and non-discrimination. Thus, its consistent implementation stands out as a challenge for this strategy as well. In that context, it seems that the immediate priority is the consistent application of the new legislation and the necessity of coordination and synchronization of the activities stemming from the Law. This particularly relates to the need for regular communication and coordinated activity between the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, the Ombudsman, and the Standing Inquiry Committee for Protection of Civil Rights and Freedoms with a view to meeting their legal obligations as set out under the Law. The new Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination envisage to establish the Secretariat as a professional body for the new commission.

- *Provide adequate political and financial support to the Office of the Ombudsman and ensure that all vacancies are promptly and adequately filled;*

In 2016, amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman were adopted with a view to the Ombudsman meeting the criteria for becoming a status-A national institution. The amendments brought about the following improvements:

- The Law on the Ombudsman was aligned with the Paris Principles by introducing the promotion of human rights, a pluralistic approach in the selection of managerial positions in the office of the Ombudsman, and the financial independence of the institution;

- They set out the establishment of a special department for monitoring the status and protection of children's rights as well as of persons with disabilities and a special department for monitoring the status and protection against discrimination and appropriate and equitable representation of members of communities;

- They align the Law with the provisions of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, hence further expanding the competences of the Ombudsman as a National Preventive Mechanism against torture;

- They introduce an obligation for the annual report of the Ombudsman to outline recommendations on how to overcome situations established. They also provide for the involvement of the Assembly and the Government in acting responsibly on the recommendations of the Ombudsman as well as reporting on the implementation of specific measures;

- They authorize the Ombudsman to submit requests within its competences to the Standing Inquiry Committee for Protection of Civil Rights and Freedoms at the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia to investigate cases of violation of constitutional and legal rights and take appropriate measures. The Standing Inquiry Committee for Protection of Civil Rights and Freedoms is thereafter obligated to consider the requests of the Ombudsman to investigate cases of violation of constitutional and legal rights and submit reports on such cases, while the Assembly would then meter out appropriate measures, and

- They establish an additional mechanism to enable the implementation of special reports on obstructions to the work of the Ombudsman and non-compliance with and non-implementation of requests, proposals, opinions, recommendations or indications filed by the Ombudsman.

The General Acts on the Organization of Work and Systematization of Jobs in the Office of the Ombudsman were approved by the Assembly on 11 July 2017. In that context, funds were allocated by the Ministry of Finance for 7 new jobs in the office of the Ombudsman by the end of 2017. In addition, at the beginning of 2018, consent was issued for allocating funds for 3 more posts for 2018, making it a total of 10 new jobs being approved in the years 2017 and 2018. In 2017, the Ombudsman was granted observer status in the Management Board of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). The budget of the Ombudsman in 2018 increased by 5.3% compared to 2017, while in 2019 it stood at 10% more than in 2018.

- *Proactively address the inequalities experienced by persons belonging to national minorities, in particular persons belonging to numerically smaller minorities and Roma³, and regularly collect disaggregated data for the design of effective measures for the promotion of equal opportunities, in close consultation with minority representatives;*

In 2018, the Agency for Community Rights Realization (ACRR) drafted a new Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Communities Constituting Less than 20% of the General Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. To that end, a working group was established comprising of members of in-line government institutions and representatives of civil society organizations from the communities, holding two working sessions to date with the support of the OSCE Mission to Skopje. In preparing the text to the new Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Communities Constituting Less than 20% of the General Population in the Republic of North Macedonia, the ACRR in 2018 received European Commission support via TAIEX, as part of which, the following activities have been implemented to date: a five-day expert mission to support the preparation of the text to the new Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Communities Constituting Less than 20% of the General Population in the Republic of North Macedonia. The expert met with all in-line institutions and civil society organizations of the communities and paid a three-day study visit to Northern Ireland in order to get acquainted with the legal framework in the area of community rights in an EU member state, the work of relevant institutions, and good practices in the field of protection and promotion of community rights in Northern Ireland and exchange experiences on the matter with those working in that particular field in the country. Over the course of the second expert mission, the TAIEX expert attended a working session of the working group on the preparation of the text to the new Law, producing a final report on the event. At this juncture, the draft text of the Law is in parliamentary procedure, pending adoption over the coming period. At the same time, a number of analyzes relating to this matter were drafted such as the following: status analysis on appropriate and equitable representation of members of communities at local level (2015), status analysis on the use of languages and symbols of communities (2016), status analysis on the education system for students belonging to communities in the Republic of North Macedonia (2016), needs assessment on the institutional development of civil society organizations working in the field of protection and promotion of the rights of communities comprising less than 20% of the general population (2016), analysis on the

³The term *Roma and Travellers* is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term *Gens du voyage*, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

exercise of the rights of communities to participate in cultural life at local level (2016), database on civil society organizations working in the field of promotion and protection of the rights of communities (2016), analysis on the exercise of the right to information in the mother tongue via electronic and printed media (2017), status analysis on the education system for students belonging to the communities in the Republic of North Macedonia (2017), status analysis on the application of the principle of equitable representation in 2015 at cultural institutions in the Republic of North Macedonia (2017). Moreover, a series of events/fora were held in relation to the matter over the period, such as the following:

- Multiculturalism and Integration of Diversity-based Societies - 2015. An analysis titled Multiculturalism and Social Integration was prepared for the purposes of this forum;
- Application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities - 2015 (for purposes of this forum, an analysis was drafted under the title of Comparative Overview of Legal and Institutional Framework for Protection of Rights of Members of Communities in Europe;
- Improving Legal and Institutional Framework for Exercising Rights of Communities - 2015 (for purposes of this forum, an analysis was prepared titled Supervision in the Legislation of the Republic of Macedonia with Emphasis on the Supervisory Role of the Agency);
- Improving Participatory Forum Effectiveness and Creating Future Activities Framework – 2017;
- Improving Quality of Education in Languages of Communities – 2017;
- Measures to Encourage Entrepreneurship among Non-majority Ethnic Groups – 2017;
- Ministry of Culture Support in Realization and Promotion of Cultural Rights of Communities – 2018;
- Appropriate and Equitable Representation of Community Members at Central Level – 2018;
- Appropriate and Equitable Representation of Community Members at Local Level – 2018;
- Meeting on Strengthening Inter-institutional Cooperation and Coordination and Meeting on Planning Participatory Forum Future Activities – 2018;
- Two Participatory Fora on Draft Text to National Strategy on Development of One-Society and Interculturalism Concept in Republic of North Macedonia – 2019;
- Legal Framework and Importance of Community Members Census - 2019.

Below are some of the trainings and workshops conducted for the civil society organizations from the communities:

- Strategic Planning (2015);

- Fundamentals of Project Management (2015);
- Democratic Governance, Advocacy and Engagement of Membership Potentials (2015);
- Organizational Strengthening and Good Governance in Civil Society Organizations (2017);
- Access to Grants and Funds and Project Preparation (2018);
- Two-day training on Gender Equality and Gender-based Violence (2018);
- In November 2018, a workshop was held on Strengthening Capacities of Inter-Community Relations Commissions and Relating Regulatory Framework.

A number of conferences, public debates, open days and promotional events have also been held over the reporting period, such as the following:

- Local conference on Promoting Community Rights and Cultural Dialogue at Local Level – 2015;
- Public debates and meetings with citizens across five municipalities aimed at introducing community members, members of inter-community relations commissions, representatives of municipal councils and the general public to the work of the Agency, as well as at strengthening cooperation between government institutions on one hand and local self-government and civil society on the other – 2015;
- Round table on the promotion of exercise of rights of members of communities constituting less than 20% of the general population with the participation of then Minister of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia, Renata Deskovska, Minister of Culture, Robert Alagjovovski, and Deputy Minister of Information Society and Administration, Aleksandar Bajdevski, who outlined Government and in-line ministries policies and reforms in view of the promotion of the exercise of rights of smaller communities in areas such as education, culture, media, and equitable representation – 2017;
- Open days of the Agency for Realization of Community Rights with some of the non-governmental organizations of the Turkish, Serbian, Roma, Bosniak, Vlach community, as well as with some of the non-governmental organizations belonging to communities listed under the category of *Others* in the Republic of North Macedonia – 2017;
- Public debate and stakeholder consultations on the proposed amendments to the Law on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Members of Communities Constituting Less than 20% of the General Population in the Republic of North Macedonia - 2018
- Six open days for the members of communities as part of which meetings were held with representatives of civil society organizations working in the area of promotion and protection of the rights of the communities. At these working meetings, community members had the opportunity to become acquainted with the work of the Agency to that point in time, as well as with activities planned until the end of the year - 2018.

- Promotional events in the municipalities of Kumanovo, Tetovo, Ohrid, Jegunovce, Dolneni, Chucher Sandevo and Mavrovo-Rostushe aimed at promoting the competences and work of the institution, as well as to acquaint the general public with the rights of community members. The commissions for inter-community relations took part in these events as well - 2018.

In January 2019, the ACRR started implementing the IPA project titled Strengthening Democracy through Promotion and Improvement of Community Rights planned to take place until June 2020. First activity pursued under the project was a three-day session for staff at the Agency for Realization of Community Rights. In February 2019, training was held for staff at the Agency for Realization of Community Rights and representatives of other in-line institutions on Project Cycle Management. In March 2019, training was hosted for staff at the Agency for Realization of Community Rights and representatives of other relevant institutions titled The Role of Social Media in Public Relations of Institutions. As part of the project, the Agency supported 17 activities of local civil society organizations, in order to contribute to improving the situation of communities and interethnic relations in the country. To that end, public calls were announced for civil society organizations. Under this project, ACRR organized a gathering with journalists where the activities and results achieved of the Agency were presented. The informal socializing with journalists was also used to present the benefits of the European Union-funded Project.

- *Establish an effective and transparent mechanism for the allocation of support for the preservation and development of national minority cultures, and increase the available funding opportunities;*

The Office for Affirmation and Promotion of Cultures of Communities was established in 2002 at the Ministry of Culture. The main goals of the Office are the following: affirmation and promotion of the cultures of each smaller community in the Republic of North Macedonia individually; preserving the identity, culture and customs of communities in the Republic of North Macedonia and enabling cooperation between all ethnic communities in the Republic of North Macedonia for purposes of mutually acquainting with each other's cultures, customs, languages and traditions.

- *Raise public awareness of the legal remedies available against hate crime and hate speech and promote professional journalism and ethical behaviour in the media through targeted training activities;*

In 2018, amendments were adopted to the Criminal Code criminalizing hate crimes. The main purpose of these amendments to the Criminal Code was to raise the visibility of hate crimes by prescribing a legal definition of the term and providing for special forms of hate crimes in its Special Part, which, in line with the principle of legality obligates prosecuting authorities to uncover, establish and process such offences.

Under the amendments, a new paragraph 42 was first added to Article 122 introducing a definition of hate crime. The definition reads: *Crime of hate explicitly foreseen by the provisions of this Code, shall be considered the crime against a natural person or a legal entity and associated persons thereto or a property which is committed wholly or partially due to a real or speculative (imaginary, assumptive) characteristic or association of the person and relates to the race, skin colour, nationality,*

ethnic origin, religion or conviction, mental or bodily disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and political conviction. Within the second set of provisions that the amendments introduce, certain forms and aspects of other crimes are also defined as constituting hate crimes. In cooperation with the OSCE, the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors is currently working on organizing trainings for judges and public prosecutors on dealing with this type of crime.

- *Put in place an effective and fully independent supervisory mechanism to ensure that the adherence to professional standards by the police is properly monitored and all alleged infringements are promptly investigated and sanctioned in accordance with the law:*

The overall goal of the project on Enhancing Human Rights Policing that was implemented as part of the Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey (2016-2019) was to strengthen the protection of human rights in the country in line with Council of Europe and international standards. Under the project, the model of External Oversight Mechanism was selected to control police work which lead as a result to the establishment in December 2018 of the Department for Investigation and Prosecution of Criminal Offenses Committed by Persons with Police Powers and Prison Police at the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption. The department is authorized to prosecute the following:

- all criminal offenses committed by persons with police powers and prison police while performing official duties, as well as
- crimes committed by the aforementioned persons while off duty by using force or means of coercion resulting in death, grievous bodily harm, bodily injury, unlawful deprivation of liberty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, if such crimes are prosecuted under a special law when committed on official duty. To that end, amendments were made to seven laws.

Furthermore, a special department has been established within the Office of the Ombudsman as a civil control mechanism to act as additional corrective of the system of investigation of criminal offences committed by persons with police powers and prison police which is to include three representatives of non-governmental organizations.

- *Facilitate the registration of the religious organisations of persons belonging to national minorities so that they can effectively enjoy the right to manifest their specific beliefs in their appropriate places of worship;*

The right to manifest freedom of religion and belief is regulated by Articles 9, 16 and 19 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia. Religious freedoms and rights as fundamental rights constitute civil liberties and rights. According to Article 9 of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, citizens are equal in freedom and rights regardless of gender, race, skin colour, national and social origin and religious beliefs, property and social status. Religious rights and freedoms are regulated by the Law on the Legal Status of a Church, Religious Community and Religious Group which was adopted in 2007, but started to be applied in May 2008 (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 113/2007). This Law was adopted in both cooperation and intensive consultation with other government institutions, non-governmental organizations and religious communities. It has received positive reviews from the Venice Commission, the OSCE and other international organizations. The new

law is democratic and liberal and is in line with international declarations and conventions on freedom of religion and expression. Article 1 of this Law regulates the establishment and legal status of a church, a religious community and a religious group, the arrangement of worship, prayer and religious rites, religious instruction and educational activities, income of a church, a religious community and a religious group and other issues. In keeping with Article 2 of the Law, a church, religious community and religious group is a voluntary community of natural persons who with their religious conviction and the sources of their learning exercise the freedom of religion united by faith and identity expressed by equal worship, prayer, rites and other expressions of faith. According to Article 6 of the Law, the state is obligated to respect the identity of churches, religious communities and religious groups and other forms of religious association and establish with them a relationship of constant dialogue as well as develop forms of permanent cooperation. As set out under Article 9 of the Law on the Legal Status of a Church, Religious Community and Religious Group, churches, religious communities and religious groups are registered in the Single Court Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups, thus acquiring the status of a legal entity. The court authorized to maintain the Single Court Register of Churches, Religious Communities and Religious Groups is Skopje II Basic Court. As such, Skopje II Basic Court, Skopje, has to date registered or opened entries on 17 churches, 9 religious communities and 11 religious groups. Persons belonging to national minorities also enjoy their rights as part of these registered churches, religious communities and religious groups. According to Article 5 of the Law, a Church, religious community and a religious group have the right to organize themselves freely by establishing their governing bodies, hierarchy, and competences and to appoint persons who will represent them, as well as to adopt documents in this regard. Moreover, Article 27 of the Law stipulates that religious education may be organized as a religious subject in educational institutions. Based on the above, the Republic of North Macedonia believes that the registration of religious organizations of persons belonging to national minorities in order to enable them to effectively exercise the right to practice their special beliefs in their respective places of worship in the Republic of North Macedonia is completely facilitated.

- *Enhance support to minority-language media, including independent and small media outlets, and promote a pluralist media environment; proactively ensure that all public broadcasting contributes to the formation of an integrated and inclusive society by promoting intercultural respect and awareness;*

The amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services adopted at the end of 2018 provide for a change in the way radio and television content is organized on the Public Broadcasting Service for the Albanian and less numerous ethnic communities in the country. Namely, the Second Television Program Service and the Third Radio Program Service, which to date broadcasted program in six languages (Albanian, Turkish, Romani, Serbian, Bosnian, and Vlach), will broadcast a program only in Albanian, while the programs in Turkish, Romani, Serbian, Bosnian and Vlach languages will be broadcast on radio and television on special program services. At this juncture, programs in all languages of the ethnic communities are still broadcast as stated in item 55 of the Fourth Opinion of the Advisory Committee.

In the commercial sector, 48 television and 72 radio outlets are active. Among commercial radio outlets, 11 broadcast program in Albanian, two radio outlets broadcast program in Macedonian and

Serbian, one radio outlet in Macedonian and Albanian and one radio outlet in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish⁴.

Of the 48 commercial television outlets, 4 broadcast in Albanian, 8 in both Macedonian and Albanian, 3 in Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish, and one in Macedonian and Serbian; Albanian and Turkish; Bosniak and Macedonian language; and Romani and Macedonian each⁵.

Television Outlets		Radio Outlets	
<i>Broadcasting language:</i>	<i>No. of TV outlets:</i>	<i>Broadcasting language:</i>	<i>No. of radio outlets:</i>
Macedonian language	29	Macedonian language	57
Albanian language	4	Albanian and Macedonian languages	1
Albanian and Turkish languages	1	Albanian language	11
Macedonian and Serbian languages	1	Macedonian and Serbian languages	2
Albanian and Macedonian languages	8	Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish languages	1
Macedonian, Albanian and Turkish languages	3		
Bosniak and Macedonian languages	1		
Romani and Macedonian languages	1		

Since the beginning of regulation of broadcasting in the Republic of North Macedonia (1997), practice demonstrates that broadcasters with program in the languages of less numerous ethnic communities cannot survive working on purely commercial grounds. The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services believes that one of the ways in which the needs of these communities to be informed in their mother tongue can be met is through non-profit radio outlets.

The third, non-profit sector in broadcasting in the Republic of North Macedonia was first introduced with the adoption of the Law on Broadcasting Activity in 2005. From then to this date, the regulatory body has granted five permits for non-profit broadcasters, of which only one was intended to meet the specific needs and interests of the Turkish ethnic community in the area of Shtip and the surrounding area. Unfortunately, the community did not recognize its interest and did not support its existence, so it ceased to exist after just over a year due to financial reasons. In 2015, the agency adopted a document entitled Concept for Development of Non-Profit Broadcasting Institutions which had a dual purpose - on one hand to convey information about the existence of the third broadcasting sector, and on the other to encourage institutions and bodies in the country to design and anticipate measures to help its development⁶

⁴Register of radio outlets available at: <https://avmu.mk/registar-na-radija-mk/>

⁵Register of TV outlets available at: <https://avmu.mk/registar-na-televizii/>

⁶<https://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Koncept-za-razvoj-na-neprofitnite-R.-ustanovi.pdf>

- *Monitor and ensure the effective implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages at central and local levels, including as regards the display of minority languages on topographical signs; encourage the use of minority languages in the public sphere where possible and refrain from relying exclusively on the 2002 census:*

On 14 March 2018, the Law on the Use of Languages was adopted. In keeping with Article 1 of this Law, the official language and script on the entire territory of the Republic of North Macedonia and in its international relations is the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script.

Paragraph 2 of the Article stipulates that another language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens (Albanian language) is also an official language and script. In all bodies of national authority in the Republic of North Macedonia, government institutions at central level, public enterprises, agencies, directorates, institutions and organizations, commissions, legal entities performing public authorities in accordance with law and other institutions, official language in addition to Macedonian language and its script is the language of 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its script in a manner as set out under this Law (paragraph 3).

Paragraph 4 stipulates that in local self-government units, the language and script used by at least 20% of the citizens is official language, in addition to the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script. The use of languages and scripts used by less than 20% of the citizens in local self-government units is determined by bodies of local self-government units.

Article 2 of the Law stipulates that *citizens have the right to use any of the official languages and their scripts as referred to in Article 1 paragraph 1 and 2 of this Law, and the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as other institutions, have the obligation to enable them the use and application of those official languages and their scripts in any proceedings, as well as the implementation of those procedures in that official language and script.*

Paragraph 3 of this Article determines the scope of application and the institutions in which the official language is the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script in addition to the Macedonian language and its script: communication, use and application in all actions of the citizens in front of all the bodies that make up the state power (Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, President of the Republic of North Macedonia, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, judiciary, public prosecution), Constitutional Court of the Republic of North Macedonia, Ombudsman of the Republic of North Macedonia, in the election process, education, science, health, culture, in the exercise of police authority, in broadcasting activity, notary activity, enforcement, infrastructure facilities, registry books, personal documents, finances, the economy, as well as in other areas.

Article 3 stipulates that elected or appointed officials of the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as other institutions headquartered in Skopje or municipalities in which at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than the Macedonian language, in their official communication use the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script, if at least one of the elected or appointed officials speaks an official language other than the Macedonian language.

Articles 4 and 5 regulate the use of languages in the Assembly and the Government: Pursuant to Article 4, in the work of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, the official language is Macedonian and its Cyrillic script, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia and its script. An MP, elected or appointed official who speaks a language other than the Macedonian language, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia, at sessions of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia and sessions of its working bodies, also speaks in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia.

MPs who speak a language other than the Macedonian language, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, when chairing sessions of the Assembly or sessions of its working bodies, moderates them in that language. MPs, elected or appointed officials who speak a language other than Macedonian, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia, receive and deliver in time materials in their language and script to be used at sessions of the Assembly or sessions of its working bodies.

Stenograms from sessions of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia and from sessions of its working bodies, as well as other materials and documents, are issued and kept in the Macedonian language and its script and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

All laws and other decrees and documents adopted by the Assembly are published in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

According to Article 5, in the work of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, official language is the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

Sessions of the Government are conducted in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script. When sessions of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, its committees, as well as the Collegium General of State Secretaries, are chaired by an elected or appointed official who speaks a language other than Macedonian, and which language is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia, in that language and script.

Elected or appointed officials who speaks a language other than Macedonian, and whose language is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens, at a session of the Government, of its committees and of the Collegium General of State Secretaries, speak in that language as well. Elected or appointed officials who speak a language other than Macedonian, and whose language is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia receive materials in a timely manner, i.e. submit them in their language and script to be used at a session of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. of its committees or of the Collegium General of State Secretaries.

Stenograms of Government sessions, sessions of its committees and of the Collegium General of State Secretaries, as well as other materials and documents, are issued and kept in the Macedonian language and its script and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

All decrees adopted by the Government are issued and published in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens.

Articles 6 and 7 regulate the obligations of the institutions in the application of this Law: Namely, as set out under Article 6:

The institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions are obligated ex officio to ensure that the use, communication and procedures take place in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia and its script if the person, i.e. participant, speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia.

All decisions and other decrees, as well as identification documents arising from the competence of the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions, are in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script if holders, i.e. participants speak a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Elected or appointed officials who speak a language other than Macedonian spoken by at least 20% of the citizens, write their personal name in decisions and other decrees issued within the competences of the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as of all other institutions, in their own language and script.

In addition to the Macedonian language and its script, websites of the institutions referred to in Article 1 of this Law and the content thereof, must be published in a language other than Macedonian, spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

Article 7 stipulates that the names of the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions and their regional offices in the local self-government units in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than the Macedonian language, and in Skopje, will be written in Macedonian and its Cyrillic script and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script, as well as in English. The names will be the same size and font, and the name in the Macedonian language and script will be written first.

In the regional offices of the state administration bodies that cover at least one local self-government unit in which at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian, the names of said offices will be written in Macedonian and its Cyrillic script and in the language spoken by at least 20 % of citizens and its script.

The seals of the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law and all other institutions based in Skopje or in the units of local self-government in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, are written in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

Article 8 stipulates that banknotes and coins, as well as postage stamps, will contain symbols representing the cultural heritage of the citizens who speak the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script and the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

Postage stamps, payment orders, and fiscal reports issued by the institutions outlined in Article 1 paragraph (3), and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this law, invoices from institutions outlined in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this law, and excise stamps shall be written in Macedonian and its Cyrillic script, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

Insignia on uniforms of police, fire-fighters, and health professionals in Skopje and municipalities in which at least 20% of the citizens use an official language other than Macedonian, are written in Macedonian and its Cyrillic script, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

Articles 9 to 12 regulate the use of languages in court proceedings, the execution of sanctions, notary procedures, as well as procedures related to enforcement agents and the civil registry:

In line with Article 9 paragraph 1:

In the judicial, administrative, enforcement agents proceedings, procedures for the execution of sanctions, pre-trial and investigative procedures, criminal and misdemeanour procedures, litigation and non-contentious procedures, as well as other procedures before the courts, the public prosecutors' offices as well as all other organs, bodies and institutions the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script shall be used, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

All procedures referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article shall be conducted in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as in a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script in the case where a judge, public prosecutor, party or another participant in the procedure is a person who speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia.

All decisions and other acts arising from the procedures referred to in paragraph (1) of this Article shall be adopted and issued in Macedonian and its Cyrillic script, as well as a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script in the case where a judge, a public prosecutor, a party or other participant in the procedure is a person who speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The institutions referred to in paragraph (1) of this Article are obliged to provide translation for all necessary documents and materials, as well as simultaneous translation of presentations, statements and hearings during their work or their proceedings.

Failure to provide translation of all necessary documents and materials, and consequently failure to provide simultaneous translation throughout the course of the procedure constitutes a material breach of the procedure.

The names of the institutions referred to in paragraph (1) of this Article in Skopje and in the units of local self-government in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than

Macedonian, are written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as in the language spoken by at least 20 % of citizens and its script.

The institutions referred to in paragraph (1) of this Article that are headquartered in an area encompassing several basic courts, of which at least one belongs to a unit of local self-governance that uses an official language other than Macedonian which is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, shall have their names written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as and in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

The costs incurred from the translation for the parties and the participants in the procedures, as well as the costs for a court interpreter that arise from the application of the provisions of this Law shall be borne by the budgets of the institutions referred to in paragraph 1 of this Article.

Procedures in front of a notary, as well as notary documents and certificates can be issued in Macedonian language and its script as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

In procedures in front of enforcement agents, should a participant be a person who speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, the orders, conclusions, minutes, official notes and other acts of the enforcement agents shall be issued in Macedonian and its script as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script.

The institutions in charge of managing the institutions for the execution of sanctions, as well as the institutions in charge of the execution of sanctions themselves, are obliged to use the Macedonian language and its script, as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script in their communication and procedures, in the case where the person involved speaks a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the Republic of North Macedonia.

The institutions in charge of managing the institutions for the execution of sanctions as well as the institutions competent to execute sanctions are obliged to provide the persons who are placed at these institutions with the ability to use the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

The records of the Civil Registry in Skopje and the units of local self-government in which at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian are recorded in the official language spoken by the citizen as well.

Decisions, certificates, confirmations and other official acts are issued in the official language spoken by the citizen.

Personal documents and passports of citizens who speak a language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script are issued, ex officio, in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

Articles 13 and 14 regulate the use of languages in issuing personal identification cards, passports and other documents:

Citizens who speak a language different from Macedonian that is spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia shall receive a personal identification card that is also printed out in the language used by the citizen and its script.

Upon personal request, citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian that is spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, shall have their name and personal information recorded on their personal identification card both in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as in the language used by the citizen and its script.

Upon personal request, citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian that is spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia shall have the form of their passport and travel documents printed out in the language used by the citizen and its script as well.

Upon personal request, citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian that is spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia shall have their personal information recorded on their passport and travel documents in the language used by the citizen and its script as well.

Upon personal request, citizens who speak a language other than Macedonian and that language is spoken by less than 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, shall have their name recorded on their passport and travel documents in the language used by the citizen and its script as well.

Article 15 outlines that all the sessions of the State Election Commission and Municipal Election Commissions in Skopje and the units of local self-government where at least 20% of the citizens speak an official language other than Macedonian, shall equally apply and make equal use of the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script during their work and proceedings in all commissions, institutions, or other bodies while conducting the elections.

According to Article 16: Names of streets, public squares, bridges and other infrastructure facilities in all units of the local self-government where at least 20% of the citizens speak a language other than Macedonian, such as in Skopje, shall be written in Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script, as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script, as well as in languages accepted by the international community.

Border crossing points of the Republic of North Macedonia and airports located in areas where at least 20% of the citizens speak a language different from the Macedonian language, as well as the names of institutions, other inscriptions and signs shall be written in the Macedonian language and its Cyrillic script as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

All laws, by-laws, decisions and notices from the institutions referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law that are published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia shall be published in the Macedonian language and its script as well as in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens and its script.

For the purposes of accomplishing the goals of this law, namely the promotion, protection, and the application of the official language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script, the Agency for the Use of the Language Spoken by at Least 20% of the Citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia shall be established, carrying the capacity of a legal entity responsible for the standardization and equal use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and its script, including supporting bodies for institutional support as referred to in Article 1 paragraph (3) and Article 2 paragraph (3) of this Law, as well as all other institutions (Article 18).

According to Article 20: *An Inspectorate for the Use of Languages shall be established, as part of the Ministry of Justice, having the status of a legal entity, which shall be tasked with the supervision of the full and consistent implementation of the provisions of this Law, relating to the use of languages.*

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and all institutions having competencies relating to the implementation of this Law shall adopt measures for the promotion of the use of all official languages and for guaranteeing the protection of languages of other communities speaking a mother tongue different from the official one (Article 21).

In light of Article 20 of this Law, the Law on the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages was adopted on 21 October 2019.

The said Law regulates the competences, organizational set-up and procedures to be followed during inspections made by the Inspectorate. The purpose of the Law is to facilitate the establishment of an efficient system of supervision inspections of the implementation of Amendment V to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia, as well as of the application of the provisions of the Law on the Use of Languages, on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia.

Activities relating to supervision inspection of the implementation of Amendment V to the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and of the provisions of the Law on the Use of Languages are carried out by the Inspectorate for the Use of Languages, as a body part of the Ministry of Justice. The Inspectorate has the status of a legal person.

Supervision inspection consists of the following: supervision of the application of the Law on the Use of Languages in procedures pursued before institutions, supervision of names and seals of institutions, supervision of the names of infrastructure facilities, supervision of the material published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, supervision of laws, secondary legislation, decisions and public advertisements, as well as other activities as forth by law, relating to the application of the Law on the Use of Languages. The supervision inspection is carried out in pursuance with the provisions of the Law on Supervision Inspection.

- *Ensure that Roma representatives are effectively included in all decision-making processes related to the promotion of their socio-economic integration, including the adoption and implementation of relevant strategies and action plans, and take all necessary measures to resolve the remaining obstacles to the issuance of personal documentation, registration, and property legalisation processes.*

- *Comprehensively address the propensity to place Roma children in special schools and separate classes and take all measures to actively promote their inclusion in mainstream education, including the appropriate employment of suitably skilled staff;*

I. Inclusion of Roma Children in Pre-School Education

There were 7 supervisory visits to public kindergartens (in Kumanovo, Vinica, Gazi Baba, Karposh, Centar -2 visits, Chair, Bitola, Prilep, Berovo, Pehchevo, Shtip, Veles and in Debar).

The Recommendation for exemption from participation in the costs for pre-school education for Roma children attending kindergarten, under the project - *Inclusion of Roma Children in Pre-School Education/ Public Kindergartens*, adopted on 28 December 2018, was accepted by 10 municipalities (out of the total number of 18 municipalities), June 2019 inclusive. In other words, a total number of 167 Roma children were exempted from participating in the costs for pre-school education. There were also several meetings held with parents of Roma children attending public kindergartens and representatives of the kindergarten with a view to presenting relevant information and consider problems and possibilities of improving the stay of children.

Under this Project, in the 2018/2019 school year, a total number of 275 Roma children attended public kindergartens, June 2019, inclusive, i.e. Roma children attended 17 kindergartens, in 15 municipalities. In line with the Recommendation of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (1 December 2018- 31 December 2019), the number of Roma children planned to be included in preschool education /public kindergartens in the next 2019/2020 school year is 390, in 16 municipalities. The Recommendation adds the Municipalities of Tetovo and Gostivar to the list of municipalities where Roma children are exempt from participating in the costs for pre-school education, recommending exemption from such costs for 30 Roma children in Tetovo and 30 Roma children in Gostivar. October 2019, inclusive, a total number of about 220 Roma children attend public kindergartens, while the number of Roma children attending pre-school education in the other 3 municipalities covered by the IPA project is as follows, in average: Shuto Orizari – 111 Roma children, 42 in Tetovo, and 23 Roma children in Gostivar. In the 2018/2019 school year, out of the total number of Roma children covered by pre-school education under the Project *Inclusions of Roma Children in Pre-school Education/ Kindergartens*, 134 children (58 boys and 76 girls) were enrolled in the first grade of primary education.

Work of Roma Information Centres and Civil Society Organizations

In line with their respective work plans, Roma Information Centres worked with citizens on problems and needs relevant for the community concerned.

In the period from June to September 2019, Roma Information Centres provided a total number of 1, 192 services/ support of various type (23 services of employment, 984 services in the area of social protection, 130 services in the health care area, 10 services in the area of education, 7 services relating to personal identification documents, 35 services in the area of housing, and 3 services provided in other areas). The procedure for transformation of employments and integration of employees of Roma Information Centres within Social Work Centres was completed in 7 Municipalities – Kumanovo, Berovo, Veles, Delchevo, Shtip and Kochani. This procedure for systematization of Roma information officer job positions continues in Skopje (2 positions), Tetovo (1 Roma information officer), Gostivar (1 Roma information officer), Bitola (1 Roma information Officer), Prilep and Vinica (1 Roma information officer).

In this period, all 7 Roma Information Centres, having 9 Roma information officers, have been operating. The systematization of jobs, i.e. integration of the job position of Roma information officer within Social Work Centres is expected to be completed to the end of 2019 for all 7 Roma Information Centres. Roma Information Centres continue working in line with their plans and in parallel with the process of integrating Roma information officers in Social Work Centres. It is expected that the remaining Social Work Centres will publish job advertisements in line with the systematization of jobs in the period from June to September 2019.

Under the ROMACTED Programme, a national workshop was held with representatives of all 12 municipalities, representatives of units of local self-government and representatives of the Roma community. The goal of the workshop was to exchange experiences regarding the implementation of the Programme, to discuss challenges and raise initiatives to satisfy needs, i.e. to integrate the priorities of the community in the annual municipal budgets for 2020. There were also meetings with representatives of the ROMACTED structures, representatives of the institutional working group at the local level and representatives of the communities, together with the Programme facilitators. 12 invitations were prepared and sent to the 12 municipalities to apply for small grants under the ROMACTED Programme, in line with adopted priority action plans, in following with the methodology of the Programme. Financial support has been provided by the Council of Europe for implementation of local projects, in the amount of EURO 10,000, upon the initiative of each individual municipality. Such support applies to all 12 involved municipalities.

Legislative Framework

A new Law on Persons without Regulated Civil Status was adopted by the Parliament on 17th February 2020. This new Law regulates the manner of collecting and recording personal data, the type of data recorded and acquiring specific civil status. The purpose of the Law is to enable citizens to acquire specific civil status, with a view to exercising the rights to education, health care, social protection and employment, along with compulsory social insurance.

Housing and raising the awareness among this group of citizens

- 14 families have been dislocated from makeshift settlements (90 persons, of whom 33 adults and 57 children), and in pursuance with the mandate of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, they were accommodated in provisional housing facilities in the village of Vizbegovo;
- A Roma non-governmental organization is actively working with these persons with a view to improving their situation in areas of education and employment, as well as to raise the awareness among families about the need for their self-sustainability. Hence, 22 children were included in primary education, regular schooling was organized for children aged 15 to 18, then a visit to the ZOO was organized for children and support was provided to help school going children achieve better results in their education. There were lobbying meetings held in the Municipalities of Butel and Shuto Orizari in support of ensuring transportation for children;
- Workshops were organized to raise the awareness among parents about the importance of education and employment (motivating parents to actively seek jobs and register with the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia and participate in trainings, as part of active employment

measures). In the employment context, in cooperation with the Municipality of Aerodrom, contracts for seasonal employment were signed for 10 persons. Applications were filed for a total number of 14 families for the exercise of the right to guaranteed minimum welfare assistance;

- After the situation had been established, October 2019 inclusive, 12 families or 67 persons were provisionally accommodated in the building of the Ranka Milovanovic Orphanage (37 of whom children, only 4 of whom attend school). There are individual activities implemented for these persons, and individual work plans are regularly prepared. Professionals from Social Work Centres, from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and from one non-governmental organization work with these persons. Activities continue to be pursued for these persons in order to improve their situation while they are staying in this said institution;

- Under the Social Mapping Project, a report was prepared containing findings from the research consisting of social mapping in the field, including remarks from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. In addition, an interactive map was developed, containing specific indicators about the situation of researched communities. The final Report and the interactive map were presented at the end of July 2019. The Report and the interactive map, containing social mapping data about 14 municipalities, are available at the website of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

Working meetings with and guidelines from relevant bodies aimed at social integration of Roma

The National Coordination Body held its regular meeting at the end of July 2019. Information about activities implemented by in-line ministries in the period from May to July 2019 were presented at the said meeting, followed by a discussion and presentation of the draft Law on Persons not Registered in the Birth Register. In-line ministries presented activities planned for the coming period.

In the context of the project for potential partnership between the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the UNDP Office in Skopje, with a view to implementing the project component of support to the employment of Roma and other persons at risk from social exclusion, conditions were fulfilled to provide advisory support in piloting measures founded on an appropriate methodology and conditions for setting prices for employment services.

In September 2019, there was the VIII working meeting on social integration of Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia, in cooperation with the Minister without Portfolio in charge of the implementation of the Strategy for the Improvement of the Situation of Roma, then the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Secretariat for European Affairs and the Delegation of the European Commission to the Republic of North Macedonia. The goal of the working meeting was to present information about the degree of attainment of set priorities in the period between the VII and VIII meeting, as well as to facilitate exchange of views among representatives of in-line ministries, civil society organizations and international organizations regarding the applicable policies for inclusion of the Roma, and to define guidelines for further social and economic integration of Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia. At the meeting, operating conclusions were adopted in areas of employment and education, non-discrimination and gender equality, housing and returnees, health care and undocumented persons.

- *Pursue a close dialogue with national minority representatives and increase efforts to provide high-quality minority-language education, including in the languages of numerically smaller minorities, through the introduction of modern bi- and multilingual teaching methodologies in all schools;*

In addition to undertaking measures for developing an integrated and multicultural education system, as part of its competencies and mandate, the Ministry of Education and Science pays particular attention to the education of persons belonging to the communities, who in accordance with the Constitution have the right to education in their mother tongue.

In line with the Curriculum and the Concept of Nine Year Primary Education (of 2007), the instruction in schools in the Republic of North Macedonia is carried in four languages (Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish and Serbian), while children belonging to communities for which there is no instruction for all subjects in their mother tongue, have a selective subject, i.e. classes teaching their mother tongue, such as Language and Culture of the Bosniaks, of the Vlachs and of the Roma, starting with the third grade up to the ninth grade of primary education, having one or two classes per week. Textbooks for these selective subjects are provided by the Ministry of Education and Science for all grades, from the III to the IX grade, except for the subject of Language and Culture of the Roma, for which textbooks are provided from the III to the V grade, while textbooks for the remaining grades, i.e. for the VI, VII, VIII and IX grade of primary education have still not been provided. Publishing an advertisement, the Pedagogical Service at the Ministry of Education and Science makes efforts in order to ensure a team of authors to develop the said textbooks. Regretfully no interested authors have applied under the advertisement or those who have applied do not fulfil the conditions stipulated in Article 10 of the Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education. The public competition is still open. Hence, as soon as a team of authors is chosen, textbooks for this subject will be developed for the relevant grades of primary education.

In the context of the experimental curriculum for the Bosniak language and under a Decision of the Minister of Education and Science, the teaching of the Bosniak language was introduced in the instruction in the 2018/2019 school year, as the fifth language of instruction in primary education, starting with the first grade, in three schools. With a view to satisfying the demands of the Serbian and Turkish communities for teaching their respective mother tongues, as a selective subject in regions where there are no possibilities for regular instruction in these languages and following the amendments of the 2019 Curricula, the following two subjects were introduced: Language and Culture of the Serbs and Language and Culture of the Turks. Currently, there are activities to develop the syllabi, upon the completion of which they will be submitted to the Pedagogical Service in order that textbooks for these two subjects are developed. All these changes confirm the commitment of the Ministry of Education and Science to fully respecting the identity and interest of all citizens in the country, in accordance with the Constitution, laws and specifically Articles 12 and 14 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

The Ministry of Education and Science pays special attention to the Roma community in order to increase the coverage of Roma children with all levels of education- primary, secondary, but also university education. As regards the disproportionately large number of children enrolled in special schools, Article 11 of the new Law on Primary Education envisages inclusion of all children in the regular primary education process, regardless of the ethnic, religious and gender affiliation, which will help reduce the number of children enrolled in special schools. **(Item 71 of the Recommendations of the**

Advisory Committee), regardless of their ethnic, religious or gender affiliation. In accordance with the transitional and final provisions of the Law on Primary Education, or more specifically in accordance with Article 179 of this Law, the following public schools: *Kocho Racin* Institute for Rehabilitation of Children with Impaired Hearing, in Bitola, the *Idnina* Special Primary School, in Skopje, the *Dr. Zlatan Sremac* Special School for Primary Education of Children with Impaired Psychological Development, in Skopje, the *Sv. Kliment Ohridski* Special School for Primary Education of Children with Special Education Needs, in Novo Selo and the *Maca Gjorgjieva Ovcharova* Special Primary School, with a Dormitory in Veles, as of the 2020/2021 school year will continue working as primary schools with resource centres.

In order to facilitate the communication between schools and parents and to reduce the drop out of Roma pupils, in line with Article 37 of the Law on Primary Education, it was envisaged to recruit education mediators and education mentors. Education mediators undertake activities to improve the level of being informed about possibilities and access to schools and organize regular meetings to sensitize the population and the teaching staff about the specific features and needs of vulnerable groups in the area of education. Furthermore, education mediators regularly cooperate with professionals and teachers in order to improve the pupils' performances, then they undertake activities to reduce the drop-out rate of pupils. In the 2018/2019 school year, there were 25 education mediators selected, while following the public competition this year, 35 Roma education mediators are to be recruited.

Despite the fact that secondary education is compulsory for every citizen and is provided free of charge in public secondary schools, certain number of children do not continue their education after having completed primary education. According to relevant data, the reduction of number of children going over to secondary education is the greatest among the Roma community. With a view to maintaining the transition from primary to secondary education, the Ministry of Education and Science undertakes a series of measures in order to keep Roma students within the education system. One of these measures is facilitated enrolment in secondary education of students belonging to the Roma community, i.e. this measure enables Roma students who have 10% of points less than the required number of points for enrolment in a given secondary school to enrol anyway. This ensures that Roma students are enrolled in schools where the enrolment points are set at a rather high level, as different from other schools (for example they can enrol in secondary vocational medical school, general secondary education schools).

In addition to this measure, students belonging to the Roma ethnic community enrolled in public and private secondary schools are granted scholarships by the Ministry of Education and Science, in pursuance with Article 54 of the **Law on Students' Standard**. The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, i.e. the Ministry of Education and Science pay special attention to this ethnic community also in the area of university education, although this level of education is not compulsory. Students belonging to the Roma community are granted scholarships. In order to enhance the entire process of developing inter-cultural and relations of integration, which helps promote cultural diversities and their bridging over in the wider societal multi-ethnic and multicultural context, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted a Strategy for one society for all and interculturalism, which covers a number of segments of the society.

