



General Assembly

Distr.: General
16 February 2024

Original: English

Human Rights Council
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Forty-sixth session
29 April–10 May 2024

National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

North Macedonia

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



Methodology description

1. The Republic of North Macedonia Report on the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) has been prepared in accordance with the guidelines in the Resolution of the Human Rights Council 5/1 of 18 June 2007, confirmed by the 16/21 Resolution and the General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information under the UPR.
2. While preparing the report, the recommendations obtained from the Presentation of the Third Cycle UPR National Report, which was delivered in November 2018, were taken into account, and its presentation took place on 25 January 2019 during the 32nd session of the UPR Working Group. The outcome was 169 recommendations, of which 167 were completely accepted, and 2 recommendations were noted.
3. The fourth UPR report was created by the expert group of the Inter-ministerial Human Rights Body, as a national mechanism for reporting and implementation of the recommendations of the treaty bodies for human rights. The body and its Expert working group was working on the implementation's monitoring of the recommendations from the third cycle, for which, with the support of the OHCHR, a workshop with representatives of the independent institutions for human rights and the civil sectors took place in December 2019.
4. Initial informative consultations with the civil sector took place in June 2023.

I. Development of the legal and institutional framework for promotion and protection of the human rights

Legal and strategical framework (19, 25, 26, 53, 54, 58, 62)

5. A Law on Monetary Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes was passed in 2022¹ thus making a coordination with the Directive 2004/80/E3 of the Compensation of Victims of Crime Council. The goal is to secure monetary compensation to the victims of violent crimes, in accordance with the tenet of social solidarity and prevention of potential and secondary victimisation as an additional suffering that the victims can endure from the treatment of the competent bodies.
6. A new Criminal Code, a Law on Criminal Procedure, and a Law on Justice for the Children are in a process of creation in order for them to be harmonised with the European Directives and the practice of the European Court of Human Rights.
7. A Law on Amending the Criminal Code was passed in February 2023,² thus amending the crimes of torture from Articles 142 and 143, in accordance with the practice of the European Court of Human Rights and the area standards.
8. Article 417 from the Criminal Code consists of the following crime: Racial and other discrimination.

II. Implementation of recommendations from the third cycle of UPR

International relations (1, 2, 3, 5–16, 27, 28)

9. A ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and of the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance is under way.
10. A Law on Ratification of Protocol 16 to the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms was passed in March 2023.³
11. A Law on Ratification of the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness was passed in October 2019.⁴

12. The International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families has still not been ratified, but, is entirely relevant to:

- Education: Articles 30, 43(1-a) and 45(1-a, 2).
- Local Self-Government: Articles 42 and 45(2).
- Culture: Article 45(3).

13. Analysis on the Ratification of the Optional Protocol is performed, considering the institutions of the system and the ratified international treaties offer sufficient protection in the case of an injury of economic, social, and cultural rights.

14. The Inter-Ministerial Human Rights Body works as a national mechanism that reports, monitors, and tracks the implementation process of the recommendations obtained by the UN contractual bodies.⁵ The National Reports are prepared through the Expert Working Group of the body and the obtained recommendations are disseminated to the competent institutions. A clustered review of all obtained recommendations was prepared.

Independent institutions (22, 23, 24, 30, 31)

15. Amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman were passed in 2016 directed to fulfil the status A national institution criteria, which is further referred to in the third national report.

Rule of law and judiciary reforms (29, 33-34, 21, 87-96)

16. The Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors, upon implementing a starting and continuous training to judges, public prosecutors, and judges and public prosecutors candidates, follows and applies all recommendations and strategical priorities to strengthen the rule of law and judiciary independence.

17. Realisation of annual trainings that refer to subjects related to international standards for human rights and jurisprudence of ECHR, for equality rights and banning of discrimination has been projected. Trainings are realised by national and international experts to give access to international expertise. The list of the Academy lecturers continuously expands with persons that are actively involved in preparation of analyses, strategies, and other useful materials, judicial practice with abstracted relevant judgements, relevant judgements of ECHR.

18. The Academy undertakes an additional activity to put into action the new web page with a separate section named E-Academy in which the tab “E-case” is placed (for a review of ECHR Decisions against the country) and a “Cross reference” tab (an opportunity for members of the National Legislature to connect with members of the European Convention on Human Rights).

19. The weakest points in the Justice System are determined in the Strategy for Reform of the Judicial Sector 2017-2022 and in the Action Plan for its implementation through suitable guidelines, measures, and activities to overcome them in order to achieve judiciary independence, access to justice, and fair trial.

20. With the amendments of the Law on Courts and the new Law on Court Council in 2018 and 2019, the new Law on the Public Prosecutor’s Office and the amendments of the Law on the Public Prosecutors’ Council of 2020 and the sub-legal acts passed by the Judicial Council and the Public Prosecutors’ Council, strengthened, objective, and measurable criteria for choice and promotion of judges and public prosecutors. The Advisory Council and the Public Prosecutors’ Council with sub-legal acts have finished amending the provisions on the manner of ranking during choice and promotion.

21. The assessment of the judge’s work is done regularly every four years or irregularly when they apply for higher court through defined qualitative and quantitative criteria in 60% to 40% ratio and through implemented objective assessment criteria for the judges.

22. In 2020, the Judicial Council adopted the Methodology for Qualitative Assessment of the Presidents of Courts and the Methodology for Assessment of the Work of a Judge based on the fulfilment of the qualitative criteria for the judicial work. The Methodology with indicators for establishment of the complexity of the cases and a Rulebook on the manner of forming committees for assessment of the work of the judges and presidents of courts were adopted in 2021.
23. The Rulebook on assessment of the work of the public prosecutors in which the criteria and the assessment process are explained in detail was passed in 2020. In 2021, the Public Prosecutors' Council passed the Rulebook on the manner of implementing the procedure to establish responsibility in a public prosecutor for a disciplinary injury.
24. A new Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest was passed in 2019 and a new constitution of the Commission for Prevention of Corruption was elected in the Assembly, through a public advertisement and objective election process (on the basis of a merit system, without political influence and transparent process).
25. Pursuant to the new law, the mandate for presidents and members of the State Commission is five years, with no right for re-election.⁶
26. A National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest with an Action Plan 2021-2025 was passed.
27. A progress in the professionalism and personnel equipment of SCPC, financial independence and conditions of space were achieved.⁷
28. In September 2020 a Government Deputy President was appointed tasked to fight corruption, sustain development and human resources, upon which suggestion in March 2021 the Action 21 - Plan to fight corruption was adopted.⁸
29. Since January 2022, the Government has determined a Deputy President of the Government tasked with policies of good governance.
30. In July 2021, the National Strategy for Strengthening the Capacities for Financial Investigations and Confiscation of Property 2021-2023 with an Action Plan was adopted.⁹
31. In October 2021, the Government passed a Decision to Appoint the National Commission for Monitoring the Implementation of the Strategy 2021-2023.¹⁰
32. A separate budget for the Prosecutor's Office is determined by the new Law on Public Prosecutor's Office of 2020. The 2022 budget has increased by more than 100% compared to the 2020 budget.¹¹
33. Since 2020, the Prosecutor's Office for Prosecuting Organised Crime and Corruption has been strengthened by investigators and proper accommodation rooms have been provided, whose reconstruction is in its final phase and are fully equipped (with a server room and electronic logging of registers and documents for every prosecutor, three rooms equipped for audio and video interrogations of persons, space for holding a video conference link and communication access).
34. The Interdepartmental Body for Coordinating Anti-corruption Activities was formed in July 2023,¹² with a Deputy President of the Government as chairman tasked with policies of good governance.¹³
35. The Cabinet for good governance policies has been tasked with monitoring of the implementation of the Ethical Code of Conduct for the members of the Government and the public office holders elected or appointed by the Government (since 2020 amended 2021).
36. In 2021, supported by the USAID project, trainings for the Code of 82 public office holders were implemented, and 37 holders took an integrity test. In 2020, four on-line trainings on the Ethical Code were implemented, including 140 public office holders, and 120 took the integrity tests. Training for the Secretariat General of the Government, the Office of the President of the Government, and the Cabinet of the Deputy President of the Government tasked with good governance policies was implemented in 2023. Thirteen educators completed trainings. Eleven trainings on the Code with total of 226 appointed office holder were conducted.

37. Guidelines on the promotion of transparency in order to increase the capacity of published information on the web pages of the state institutions were also adopted. The National Strategy for transparency has been adopted in 2023.

Penitentiary system (75–78, 80–83, 85)

38. In July 2021, by support of the CoE, a new National Strategy for Development of the Penitentiary System 2021-2025 was passed. Its activities are currently being realised through the “Strengthening of the Capacities of the Penitentiary System in North Macedonia (2023-2026)” project.

39. Within the Twinning project “Strengthening of the Correctional System and Development of the Probation Service” during 2018–2020 a Strategy for Development of the Probation Service (2021-2025) was prepared. Strategy's activities are implemented through the “EU Support to the Rule of Law” IPA Project.

40. In order to decrease cases of bad conduct and professionalise the section of application of force, a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for use of means of coercion was revised in November 2022, in accordance with the National Strategy for the Penitentiary System (2021-2025).

41. The problem with low capacity can be solved by building new and expanding the existing accommodation facilities for the convicted and detained persons.

42. Within the IPA II National Program from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA), the “Prison Bitola” Penitentiary in Bitola was being reconstructed during 2020 and it has been into function since November 2021.

43. With the support of the Development Bank at the Council of Europe, the Project for Reconstruction of the Penitentiaries is continuously being realised within which frames the new facility of the Tetovo Correctional Facility for children from Volkovija Village - Tetovo was put into function in October 2020.

44. The new detention department with adjoining facilities in Prison Skopje, in accordance with the Bank is being dislocated and its construction will start in Idrizovo Prison.

45. The new digital court room has been built in Idrizovo Prison,¹⁴ with the support of EU within the “Support of the Justice Sector” IPA Action Programme.¹⁵

46. In order to strengthen the surveillance mechanisms in 2021, in accordance with the annual plan for regular surveillances, the Administration officers conducted 9 regular and 15 irregular surveillances in total in all penitentiaries, and 15 irregular surveillances in total in 2022.

47. In 2023 the regular surveillances in penitentiary and the correctional facilities were conducted. The Law on Execution of Sanctions of 2019 strengthened the role of the Administration and its director, who, after performing supervision in the institutions, issues an order for the removal of established irregularities, and for non-compliance with it, he can submit a proposal to the Government for the dismissal of the director of the facility. To strengthen the role of the Administration, the directors are being chosen at the proposal of the Sanctions Enforcement Authority Director.

48. Since April 2019, the health protection of the convicted persons is under surveillance of the Ministry of Health (MH). The health protection in KPU penitentiary was taken over by the health centres on whose territory the prison is located. Each health centre organises the health protection in accordance with the needs.¹⁶ In KPU penitentiary where the number of prisoners is the greatest, a health personnel is constantly present, while in the remaining penitentiaries the health personnel visits occasionally and in accordance with the need.

49. With the support of the CoE, a SOP for health protection in the penitentiaries has been prepared and it was piloted in PCF Shtip and Skopje Prison as well. SOP was adopted on January 27, 2023 by the MH.

50. In order to motivate the work of the health workers in KPU penitentiary, the MH passed an Annex on amending the collective agreement of the health department, thus the health workers working in KPU penitentiary and the correctional facility are provided with benefits to the salary for special work conditions or work at risk in the amount of 30% of the amount of the base salary.

51. During October 2021, the CoE provided a medical equipment in the amount of 50,000.00 euros in six facilities (Idrizovo Prison, PCF Prilep, Skopje Prison, PCF Shtip, Tetovo Prison and Gevgelija Prison).

52. Within the project implemented by the CoE “Strengthening of the Capacities of the Penitentiary System and the External Police Control Mechanism” in October 2021, 15 doctors and health workers from nine CEF penitentiaries in total passed a training on logging injuries that point to inappropriate conduct.¹⁷

53. In order to prevent corruption in the penitentiary system, in accordance with the National Strategy on the Penitentiary System (2022-2025) - strategic goal 7, a training with 100 members of the prison police and 40 officials from the Resocialisation Sector was realised in November and December 2022.¹⁸

54. The Administration has prepared Annual Plans for Prevention of Corruption in the PCF penitentiaries and correctional facilities for 2023, and it has also prepared quarterly reports that are available on its web page.

55. With the Law on Health Insurance, the persons serving a prison sentence, in custody and minors serving correctional measure going to a correctional facility have status as insurers.

Ohrid Framework Agreement (142)

56. In accordance with the completed review of the Ohrid Framework Agreement and the Analysis for social cohesion, made based on a Decision by the Government, and upon organised public debates for all Chapters of the analysis, part of the conclusions have been translated into bills.

57. The Law on the Use of Languages promotes the use of language being spoken by 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia and in the units of the local self-government. The Law provides for and forms an Agency for implementation of the language being spoken by 20% of the citizens (formed March 2019) and an Inspectorate for the Use of Languages.¹⁹

58. The year 2023 marks the 22nd Anniversary of the adoption of the Ohrid Framework Agreement.

59. With the Law Amending the Law on Organisation and Work of the Self-government Bodies,²⁰ the Secretariat for Implementation of the Framework Agreement has been transformed into the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations.

60. A Permanent Advisory Body and a Coordinating Body of the Cabinet of the Prime Minister function within the Government to provide respect for the rights of smaller non-majority communities.²¹

Roma people (129, 130, 132, 133, 136, 145-147, 149, 150–158)

61. The right to education of the Roma students is guaranteed by the Constitution and the Laws on Education. The MoES provides two separate budgetary support accounts for each educational level of the Roma, through Roma educational mediators in primary (Article 37 of the Law), scholarships for secondary education Roma students (Article 54 of the Law on Student Standard) and scholarships for higher education (Law on Student Standard).

62. Inter-cultural education is the basis of coexistence in our multicultural and multi-ethnic society, through activities and materials that encourage respect of cultural diversity and interaction among students from different ethnic origin.²²

63. All defined measures in the action plans from the National Strategy for the Roma have been translated into public policies. When it comes to unregistered persons, these students reserve the right to education and are included in the educational system as regular students and as recipients of scholarships.
64. The rate of leaving the educational system in the past years has been varying from 5% to 7% compared to each school year, The Roma girls' participation in the educational system is 60%, and the Roma boys' is 40%. The Roma girls' drop-out rate is smaller in almost 24% compared to the Roma boys'.
65. MoES has been providing resources for every education level of the Roma students through its two budget programmes 11 – Support for the Implementation of the National Strategy for the Roma People and 32 – Support for the Secondary Education of the Roma People. Compared to each year this budget has increased 10 times from 2008 to 2023, currently it is 500 thousand euros (annually).
66. There has been progress with the rate of the Roma students' transition from primary to secondary education from 77.4% in 2019 to 78% in 2021/2022 school year and 82.92% in 2022/2023 school year.
67. For 2022/2023 school year, 40 education mediators were hired for the support of the primary education for the Roma, and 35 mediators for 2021/2022 school year.
68. In accordance with the Law on Protection of Children, 21,025 primary education students and 6,168 secondary education students used education allowance.
69. The number of scholarships for secondary Roma students in the secondary education increased from 800 in 2019 to 913 in 2020. The drop-out rate of student scholarship users is smaller than 1%.
70. There has been an increase in the rate of the Roma students' transition from secondary to higher education from 33.5% in 2021 to 53.9% in 2022. For 2022/2023 school year, 125 scholarships were given to Roma university students (50 scholarships to students enrolled in first academic year and 75 for the remaining academic years).
71. The increase in the enrolment of special education needs students in the primary education is inevitable, upon transformation of special needs primary schools into primary schools with resource centres and introduction of the school inclusive teams. Their representation has increased from 0.75% to 1.20%.
72. With the Law on Primary Education, students with disability have been entirely included in the inclusive education since 2023/2024 school year.
73. A Law amending the Law on Registry Office was passed in 2023 in order for the persons registered in the special registers of birth and with a Certificate of it pursuant to the Law on Unregistered Persons in the Registers of Birth to be registered in the regular register of births until the end of 2023.²³
74. In accordance with the recent data from the Office for Management of Registers, from the total of 650 registered persons on-site without personal identification documents, around 320 have received a special certificate of births (155 persons with special identification document during 2020–2022, the applications for 100 persons are in a regular enrolment process).
75. Law on Unregistered Persons in the Registers of Birth enables the persons registered in the special registry of births to realise 4 rights: rights to social and health protection, right to employment and education for their children.
76. The following was adopted during 2005–2015 and 2016–2020: Two National Roma Strategies, passed NAPs for all present priority areas of the Roma Strategy (among which one for protection, promotion, and fulfilment of human rights for Roma women and girls 2022-2024), placed infrastructure for monitoring and coordination of the activities and implemented targeted and mainstream measures in order to promote the position of the Roma community. In accordance with the guidelines given in the EU Roma Strategic Framework, a Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030 has been prepared and adopted.

77. The MLSP is responsible for coordination and integration of the Roma issues in the main social and economic policies and action plans. It coordinates the operation of the National Coordinating Body in providing functionality of working groups in the resource ministries in the process of preparation, implementation, and monitoring of the annual operating plans in accordance with the provided budgetary means on a resource ministry level. The Department of Implementation of the Roma Strategy and Decade functions as well.

78. In order to improve the access to health services for the Roma, Roma health mediators have been introduced since 2013 with the function of facilitating the access to health protection, establishing trust between the patients and the providers of health services, and developing habits for care of one's own health. At the moment, the project functions in 10 municipalities with 16 executors, and they are scheduled to be adopted next year.

79. An Action Plan of the MH for the promotion of health protection of the Roma has been prepared.

Refugees and migrants (165–169)

80. The Law on International and Temporary Protection²⁴ regulates the limitation of freedom of movement of minors and vulnerable population (Article 66).

81. For the vulnerable population and unaccompanied minors, the “accommodation in Shelter Centres for Foreigners” measure applies only on the basis of individual assessment and prior consent from the parent, i.e. the lawfully established guardian, that such accommodation is suitable to their personal and special circumstances/needs, in accordance with the health condition. The accommodation is regulated by act of the Shelter Centre for Foreigners.

82. Basic principle in the fugitive law is the principle of non-refoulement according to which: “Seeker of right to asylum, a person with a refugee status or person under subsidiary protection cannot be banished or in any way be brought back to state borders: where their life or freedom are in danger due to their race, religion, nationality, affiliation to a certain social group or political beliefs or where they would be subject to torture, inhumane or humiliating acts or punishment.”

83. Each claim is put into the asylum's system, an initial conversation is performed with the seeker, they are issued a certificate, a notice on how the procedures will run (regular or emergency), they are photographed, their fingerprints are taken, they are issued an identification document, an interview is conducted based on the claim and a decision is made.

84. Only in extreme cases can their freedom of movement be limited. Other less forceful alternative measures are: confiscation of an identification document, regular sign up.

85. Containment as a measure is applied only when necessary – in extreme cases and in the shortest time possible, and the need to contain persons with illegal residence (illegal immigrants) is decided for each case individually. Most of the revealed illegal immigrants are housed into open-type buildings authorised by the Crisis Management Centre and the MLSP.

86. The time limitation on the containment into the Shelter centre for foreigners and the access to effective remedy are regulated by the Law on foreigners in which provisions from multiple EU Directives are implemented, among which the Directive No. 2008/115/E3 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

87. In accordance with its Article 161 paragraph 1, the foreigner is temporarily contained in the Shelter centre until the reasons that disabled their removal from our territory cease to exist, but not longer than six months.

88. In accordance with Article 161 paragraph 2, containment can be extended for another 12 months at most under conditions determined by law.²⁵

89. Access to remedies is guaranteed by Article 160, paragraph 2 and 4, and in practice, there have been no cases of detention for even half of the maximum stipulated term.

90. For now, there have been no reports of offensive or humiliating acts during the implementation of the refoulement process. The Border police is responsible for registration of every undocumented person met on the territory or revealed at illegal entering. According to the National Legislation, persons older than 14 will be registered and fingerprints and photograph will be taken of them. The registration process is conducted with no interruptions and there have not been cases of revealed unregistered migrants.

91. Topics from the subject areas of protection of human rights are part of the basic and the additional training of the police officers. Large part of them referred to the fundamental rights, implementation of the SOP for dealing with children – foreigners and SOP for dealing with foreign vulnerable population. During the implementation of these procedures, the principles contained in the Children’s Rights Convention are especially obeyed (right to non-discrimination, the child’s best interest, its opinion, trustworthiness, and the non-refoulement principle). With regards to the unaccompanied minors, regardless of their formal status (asylum seekers, persons with illegal residence, victims of human trafficking), it is acted in accordance with the national legislation, the established SOPs and the international conventions, through obedience of the family unity and the child’s best interest.

Non-discrimination/equal opportunities (17–18, 35-38, 40, 45, 47–61, 116, 137–139, 156, 159, 160, 162)

92. Introducing the concept of gender equality of women and men in all institutions and promoting gender equality is the Government’s top priority.²⁶

93. The Strategy for gender equality 2022-2027 has been adopted.²⁷ The following has been passed: A National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2022-2024 with financial implications, the National Strategy for Equality and Non-discrimination 2022-2026 and a National Action Plan 2022-2024, as well as a formed National Coordinating Body for Monitoring the Conditions of Non-discrimination and Realisation of the laws, sublegal acts, and the strategic documents in this area²⁸. The body prepares annual reports.

94. Two bodies for matters of gender aspect function within the Assembly: the Committee on Equal Opportunities and Women Parliamentarians’ Club.

95. Institutional mechanisms have been established, both locally and nationally, responsible for taking over activities to promote equal opportunities for women and men.

96. The Resource Centre for Gender Responsive Policy Making and Budgeting was opened by the MLSP, in cooperation with UN Woman and with financial support from Switzerland and Sweden, in March 2022. It is systematised as a department and so far 32 trainings have been conducted and 420 people from the public administration have been trained on the subject of gender equality and non-discrimination.

97. In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, two electronic learning modules (basic and advanced) have been prepared for the implementation of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination and handed over to Ministry of Information Society and Administration for the establishment of the E-training system.

98. At the Resource Center for creating gender-responsive policies and budgeting, 13 trainings on discrimination were conducted and 200 people from the public administration at the central level, municipal representatives and Roma mediators were trained.

99. An Annual Report on the activities undertaken and the progress achieved in establishing equal opportunities for women and men in the country in 2022 has been prepared.²⁹

100. A new Law on Budgets was adopted in 2022, which contains the concept of gender-responsive budgeting.

101. A Regional Conference was held in Skopje, on best practices for the inclusion of gender flows in policies and budgets among the national gender machinery of the Western Balkans. Three training modules on gender responsive budgeting were organized in 2023:

basic training on gender and gender concepts, advanced training on gender responsive budgeting and basics of gender analysis.

102. The Second Gender Equality Index for 2022 has been prepared, which is 64.5 points, thus marking an improvement of 2.5 points compared to the last measurement in 2019.

103. In cooperation with the OSCE Mission, work is being done on a new Gender Equality Bill, in order to overcome obstacles and shortcomings in the effective provision of equality and eliminating stereotypes by strengthening the position and status of women in society, equal access to resources and equal participation in making decisions in all spheres of public and private life.

104. The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination was adopted in 2020.³⁰

105. "Intersectional discrimination" as a more severe form of discrimination is defined in Article 4 (Article 12).

106. Article 5 of the Law prohibits any discrimination based on race, skin colour, origin, national or ethnic origin, 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 condition, personal quality and social status or any other basis.

107. The Commission for Prevention and Protection from Discrimination (Article 21 of the Law), the Ombudsman and the courts are responsible for determining discrimination. The first composition of the Commission was elected by the Commission for Elections and Appointments in January 2021, and later voted by the Assembly.

108. A National Coordinating Body has been established to monitor non-discrimination situations and the implementation of laws, sub-legal acts, and strategic documents in this area. The process of harmonisation with other laws has been started, and the following have been harmonised: Law on Protection of Children, Law on family, Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.³¹

109. Within the "EU for Human Rights Project: Incorporating Non-discrimination Concepts into the Legislation" funded by the European Union Integration Framework (EUIF) of IPA II, 6 laws are specifically considered: Proposal of the Criminal Code; Criminal Procedure Code Bill; Labour Relations Bill; Gender Equality Bill; Draft Guidelines on the Duties of the Public Sector in relation to the promotion of equality and non-discrimination and specific amendments are provided. The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination was also analysed.

110. A new Law on Labour Relations, Law on Gender Equality and Law Amending the Law on Protection from Harassment in the Workplace is being prepared.

111. A memorandum of cooperation with USAID was signed in order to promote employment measures and to promote gender equality.

112. A Strategy for the Development of Women's Entrepreneurship was developed, with an Action Plan 2019-2023, for economic empowerment of women by creating a favourable business climate and providing support for the development of their entrepreneurial potential. There are incentive criteria in the measure for subsidizing micro, small and medium enterprises if the applicant is a business entity owned and managed by a woman, as well as providing financial support to female entrepreneurship in tourism. There are gender-disaggregated statistics for 2022, by number of received and approved applications. Costs were co-financed on various basis for 56 applicants, of which a total of 13 enterprises are owned and managed by women.

113. The Rural Development Program with the "115 Rural Woman" measure enables the development of female farmers for economic empowerment of women farmers. In 2022, the amount has been increased to 6,000 euros per user, funds that are intended for the finishing and processing of primary agricultural products, as well as for the purchase of equipment for direct marketing on the farm, etc.

114. Hate crimes are incriminated in the Criminal Code.

115. The concept of primary education, in addition to inclusion, also ensures gender sensitivity and equality, through the inclusion of the gender perspective in teacher training, teaching without explicit gender stereotypes, a gender-sensitive approach with a critical attitude towards gender inequality. The teaching contents offer positive models for identification without traditional gender roles, i.e. promoting gender equality.

116. The protection of vulnerable population, including unaccompanied minors, is a priority regardless of their formal status (asylum seekers, persons with illegal residence, victims of human trafficking, etc.). It's acted in accordance with the national legislation, established SOPs and international conventions.

Persons with disability (20, 131, 141, 159–164)

117. Child protection is achieved by providing certain rights, means and forms of protection. The rights for vulnerable categories are: child benefit, parental allowance for a child, education and participation allowance. The right for children with disabilities is the special allowance, which is realised regardless of the family's financial situation up to the age of 26, and they also have priority in admission to public kindergartens according to the findings and opinion submitted by the Service for Functional Assessment.

118. In the Government's work program for 2022-2024, the promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities is among the defined priorities. In "Social Inclusion and Human Capital Development", full support is given to all social categories, with a focus on social security, fight against poverty, protection of children and development and promotion of social services. National documents that promote their rights are:

- National Strategy for Deinstitutionalisation 2018-2027: transition from institutional to care in the family and community with the support of social services, development of services in the community in accordance with the needs of users, changing the medical model of seeing disability, no more children up to 18 years of age placed in institutions, 300 adults with disabilities have been relocated to 54 residential units.
- National Strategy for Equality and Non-discrimination 2022-2026; defined measures and activities for promoting the state of equality and non-discrimination.
- Concept for Inclusive Education, 2020.
- Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination, 2020; harmonized definition of "Person with a disability", defined forms and types of discrimination.
- The Law on Primary Education;³² in accordance with Article 24 Right to Inclusive Education of the CRPD, special primary schools transformed into primary schools with a resource centre, and special parallels transformed into Learning Support Centres for students with disabilities in 23 primary schools, a new service for educational assistance-provided are 5.7 million euros in the Budget of the Ministry of Education for 2022/2023 and employed 720 educational assistants, in the academic year 2023 employed 800 educational assistants.
- Law on Social Protection, 2019; harmonised definition of 'Persons with disabilities', a significant number of new rights and services projected in the local community, disability included as a basis for discrimination.
- Law on the Protection of Patients' Rights; harmonized definition of "Person with disability".
- The Marrakesh Agreement; Harmonization of national legislation to facilitate access to published works for the blind or visually impaired. The provisions of the Agreement have been introduced as amendments to the Law on Copyright and other related rights.
- A new model of assessment of children with disabilities in accordance with the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF), 2021; the medical view of disability is being abandoned. Services for functional assessment and strengthening of their capacities have been established; in Skopje, Bitola, Strumica,

Gostivar, Kumanovo, Shtip, and the establishment of assessment bodies in Veles, Ohrid, and Delchevo is in the final stage.

- New Rulebook on functional assessment and determination of measures for additional support in the field of education, health, social protection of children and youth of up to 26 years of age with an affected health condition; the assessment participation is compensated by the Fund.
- Ordinance on the right of persons with disabilities to be exempted from participation fee for studying first cycle studies, 2022.
- First software application - audio reader in Macedonian and Albanian languages, 2021, free for users.
- With the Law amending the Law on Health Insurance of 04.01.2020, the procedure for exercising the right to an orthopaedic aid has been facilitated. Insured persons have the opportunity to exercise the right to an orthopaedic aid made of super-standard material with the possibility to supplement the amount with their own personal funds.
- A National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2023-2030, with an Action Plan 2023-2026, was adopted. Since 2018, a National Coordinating Body for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has been functioning.³³
- Since July 2019, a team for monitoring the implementation of the Convention has been operating at the Ombudsman, which promotes, protects and monitors the implementation of rights. In 2021, the National Monitoring Mechanism was formed, composed of 22 civil organisations of and for persons with disabilities, parent organizations, etc.

119. The Law on Disability Compensation Social Protection is aimed at encouraging the social inclusion of persons with more severe types of disabilities. The personal assistance service includes individual help and support for persons at the age of 6, with reduced functional capacity, aimed at independent living, active and equal participation in the community, as well as performing daily activities.

120. The measure for Vocational Rehabilitation as a service system is implemented in the annual Operational Plans for Employment with the aim of individualised support, for full inclusion of the open labour market of persons with disabilities. The model enables the implementation of a client-oriented approach that focuses on their individual potentials and is implemented within a local network of service providers – the Reha Centre, ESARNM employment centres, civil society organizations, training centres, educational institutions, employers, etc.

121. The Law on Employment of Disabled Persons foresees incentive measures for companies that employ:

- 20 or 40 average net wages for the previous year before employment, for a blind person or a person with a disability who moves with the help of a wheelchair;
- Adaptation to the workplace, up to 100,000 denars;
- Purchase of equipment, in the amount of up to 200 average net salaries paid in the previous year, with the basic criterion for the amount of allocated funds being the number of employed persons with disabilities;
- Work assistant to a person with a disability, involved in work training at his or the employer's request;
- Work training of employed and unemployed persons with disabilities.

122. Modernization of policies for the employment of persons with disabilities on the open labour market is planned. A new Employment of Persons with Disabilities Bill has been prepared, which plans to introduce a quota system, introducing vocational rehabilitation and work training paid by the state, so that persons with disabilities will become more competitive in the market and will be able to be employed more easily, but also to retain their employment.

123. In terms of deinstitutionalisation, there are no more children placed in institutions, while for adults so far 275 disabled people have been moved into 55 residential units. By 2027, all facilities for persons with disabilities should be transformed.³⁴

124. With the Law on Social Protection of 2019, social services are being developed in the local community, new services in the home and the community.³⁵

125. Starting from 2021, the education system has raised the level of inclusiveness. A completely new, inclusive legal regulation in the area of primary education has been adopted and a phased introduction of new inclusive learning materials is available in electronic and audio version and in Braille alphabet. Educational assistance has become a systemic solution (820 educational assistants have been hired so far). The monthly amount of scholarships for students with disabilities has increased by over 27%, and with European partners and the civil sector, scholarship opportunities have been provided for students with disabilities enrolled in the 1st and 2nd grades (474 scholarships awarded).

126. Ensuring accessibility is a mandatory term that must be met for obtaining financial resources for adaptation, renovation or construction of school facilities and kindergartens.

127. The number of children with disabilities enrolled in regular primary schools and in support centres has been increased.³⁶

128. All special schools have been transformed into primary schools with a resource centre, while special classes (23) into support centres.³⁷ From the assessments performed on 884 children with disabilities, educational assistance in regular education is recommended. Funds in the amount of 5.7 million euros have been provided for the employment of 720 educational assistants for the academic year 2022/2023.

129. Eighteen sensory rooms, 10 inclusive playgrounds, 5 packages of assistive technology and didactic materials, tutoring support for students with disabilities, especially in the conditions of Covid-19, are equipped. The MoES provides scholarships for all students attending secondary education.

LGBT (41–44)

130. The Bureau for Development of Education has developed a strategy for sex education.³⁸ In September 2023, the Youth Strategy 2023-2027 was adopted, in which, in the subject areas of health and education, the need to introduce teaching content in the area of sexual and reproductive health was emphasized.³⁹

131. With the amendments to the Criminal Code in 2018, a definition of a hate crime is defined as "a crime against a natural or legal person and persons or property related to them, committed in whole or in part due to a real or assumed (imagined, presumed) characteristic or connection of the person regardless of race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religion or beliefs, mental or physical disability, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation and political beliefs."⁴⁰

132. Although there is no separate crime of "hate speech" in the Criminal Code, it provides criminal legal protection by projecting several special incriminations in which the element of hate speech exists in the legal essence.⁴¹

133. In the period from 2015 to 2022, 32 criminal charges related to hate crime and hate speech against LGBT+ persons were filed and on those: four charges were filed, upon which, three convictions and one acquittal were issued by the competent court, 21 charges were dropped, and the proceedings of 7 are in the pre-investigation stage.⁴²

Violence against women and children (64–74, 84)

134. The country ratified the Istanbul Convention in July 2018. An Action Plan 2018-2023 was adopted for its implementation, through activities, key institutions, indicators and the time frame for harmonising the national legislation.

135. In 2021, a new Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was adopted, fully harmonised with the Convention of the Council of Europe on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.⁴³

136. Article 3 covers: physical, psychological, economic and sexual violence, stalking, rape, sexual and on-line sexual harassment, forced marriage, female genital mutilation, forced abortion and forced sterilisation, as well as forced control over women. The key novelties are new forms of violence introduced by the Convention of the CoE, as well as the definitions of certain terms.

137. For its effective implementation, many Rulebooks have been adopted.⁴⁴

138. In accordance with the Action Plan, the competent institutions, within their horizontal budgets, schedule financial resources for the activities and measures they implement. In the Social Protection Programme, which is carried out every fiscal year, several sub-programs cover the rights to social protection, the financing of existing social services, which also include specialized services for women victims of violence and domestic violence, as well as services for perpetrators of domestic violence. Thirteen Centres for women-victims of domestic violence have been established in 8 planning regions, Centre for victims of gender-based violence, Centre for victims of human trafficking, 9 counselling centres for victims of domestic violence in 7 planning regions and SOS free mobile line for women-victims of violence.

139. In cooperation with the MoH, UNDP, UNFPA and the civil society sector, three referral centres for victims of sexual violence have been established, which operate within the University Clinic for Gynaecology in Skopje and in the hospitals in Tetovo and Kumanovo. Centres are fully equipped from a medical aspect and accessible to persons with disabilities, free of charge and with access oriented towards the needs of the victims.⁴⁵

140. MLSP, along with UNFPA and the financial support from the British Embassy, is realising a three-year project "Prevention and Protection from Gender-based Violence in the Republic of North Macedonia" (2021-2024), in order to implement integrated policies for gender-based violence, in accordance with the principles of the Istanbul Convention.⁴⁶

141. For complete operationalisation of the laws in practice, active work is being done on training and sensibility of the professionals who should implement the legislation in order to sensibly treat victims of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence.

142. In the period May-December 2022, through financial support and project of the Dutch Embassy, the campaign "We are with you" – Together against Violence against Women and Girls, comprised of posts for social media, web banners, advertising material, was broadcast on the National Television.

143. E-modules for trainings on violence against women and domestic violence have been developed. The electronic learning portal includes content on gender and domestic violence, tests, audio and video materials, interactive learning, electronic search and review of content intended for professional structures included in the system for the protection of victims of gender-based violence and domestic violence.

144. In cooperation with UNFPA, the "You are not alone" campaign is implemented, through the organisation of several activities, recorded video messages, animated videos, local events.

145. In March 2023, the "Loud and Brave" campaign was implemented, with the support of the Office of UN Women, with numerous panel discussions and workshops of different target groups of women. Two conferences were organized, the first on "Women in Politics – Hate Speech, a Shadow that Discourages", while the second regional conference on "Challenges that women and girls in the region face on the way to the EU".⁴⁷

146. The Government has formed the National Coordinating Body for the Prevention and Protection of Children against Abuse and Neglect which prepared a National Strategy for the Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence (2020-2025) and an Action Plan (2020-2022) with technical support from UNICEF. In order to protect children from violence, activities were done to raise public awareness, change knowledge, norms, attitudes and values towards zero tolerance for violence against children, raise media awareness of

children's rights, promote non-violence, professionally inform and notify the public on cases of violence against children, respecting the child's best interests, as well as strengthening the resilience of families through positive parenting practices and skills.

147. Work is being done on sub-legal acts that refer to the form and content of analysis and statistical processing of data from the System of Social Rights and Services on the situation with gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, integrated collection of them and keeping special records in the public prosecutor's offices on the number of cases of gender-based violence against women and victims of domestic violence, as well as data relevant to monitoring the situation with gender-based violence against women and domestic violence.

148. With regards to the implementation of the Convention of the CoE on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, a report was prepared in accordance with Article 68, paragraph 1 of the convention and it was submitted to GREVIO/Inf(2022)5.⁴⁸

149. The Law Amending the Criminal Code⁴⁹ was passed in 2023, which harmonised with the Istanbul Convention. In accordance with these amendments:

- In Article 122, domestic violence is defined as harassment, insult, security threat, bodily harm, sexual or other psychological, physical or economic violence that causes a feeling of insecurity, threat or fear, including threats of such actions against a spouse, parents or children or other persons living in a marital or extramarital union or joint household, as well as against a current or former spouse, extramarital partner or persons who have a child together or are in a close personal relationship, regardless of whether the perpetrator shares or shared the same residence with the victim or not.
- The existing definition of "a crime victim" is amended with a victim of gender-based violence, which entails every woman and girl up to the age of 18 against whom the crime was committed under those circumstances. For the first time, gender-based violence against women is also defined.⁵⁰
- Qualified forms of the respective criminal acts with harsher penalties are prescribed if they are committed or come as a consequence of gender-based violence in: Article 130 Bodily Injury, Article 131 Serious Bodily Injury, Article 139: Coercion, Unlawful Deprivation of Liberty and Article 140 and Endangering Security Article 144.
- New crimes are being introduced: "Female Genital Mutilation", "Stalking", and "Sexual Harassment".
- In the crime of Article 123: Murder, it is projected to incriminate the action of: "Anyone who takes the life of a woman or a girl under the age of 18, while performing a gender-based violence."
- A single crime of Sexual Assault and Rape is introduced in accordance with the provisions of the Istanbul Convention.

Human trafficking (32, 109–115)

150. Within its competences and in cooperation with the National Unit for the Suppression of Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking and with the other operational units of the PSB, the Border Police continuously takes measures to prevent illegal migration and migrant smuggling throughout the country.

151. In 2021, the fifth National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration was adopted, with a National Action Plan for the period 2021-2025. The goal is to provide strategic priorities and mechanisms to combat human trafficking and illegal migration, through a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach aimed at the victim of human trafficking, with the purpose of timely identification, protection and security of her rights in accordance with international standards.

152. Measures to strengthen institutional capacities, to regulate the legal and regulatory framework, to intensify the international cooperation, as well as to prevent persons from being affected by these types of crime are projected.

153. During 2020, 2021, 2022 and 2023, with the help of international and non-governmental organisations, a large number of trainings and events dedicated to the efficiency in detecting cases of human trafficking and smuggling of migrants were held.⁵¹ With the strategy, the mandate of the National Unit for the Suppression of Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking has been extended until 2025 (formed in 2018).

154. In 2022, an Operational Team was established for coordination, monitoring and management of human trafficking cases, formal identification of victims and their status.⁵²

155. In 2019, a National Rapporteur on Human Trafficking was appointed by the Office of the Ombudsman with the following duties: monitoring the overall activities to combat human trafficking, collecting and analysing data, monitoring and assessment of the implementation of the NAP, issuing recommendations for improving the fight against human trafficking in law enforcement, policies for a better institutional response and recommendations for the revision of strategic goals and preparation of an annual report.

156. An SOP for the identification of victims and potential victims of trafficking in human beings in the Western Balkans in emergency situations and Health indicators and guidelines for health workers to improve the identification and referral of victims and potential victims of human trafficking in the Western Balkans were also developed during 2020.

157. The Law on Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes was adopted in 2023, which has no restrictions on exercising the right to monetary compensation to all victims of human trafficking and child trafficking (in accordance with the territorial principle from Article 7).

158. The only prerequisite for exercising the right is that the crime has been registered/reported to the police or the public prosecutor's office. The victim has the right to monetary compensation regardless of whether the perpetrator of the crime is known and regardless of whether criminal proceedings have been initiated against the perpetrator of the crime or whether there are factual or legal obstacles to its conduct.⁵³

159. A Memorandum of Cooperation in the detection of crimes related to human trafficking and labour exploitation and the referral of potential victims of human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation was concluded in 2023 between the Ministry of Interior and the State Labour Inspectorate.

160. MLSP through the Department for Equal Opportunities, is the coordinator of the National Referral Mechanism that monitors and coordinates the activities (in 30 cities) in the SWC, which have an extremely important role in the entire process from identification to resocialisation and reintegration of victims and child victims of human trafficking.

Statistics on crimes related to human trafficking and smuggling of migrants⁵⁴

Criminal acts of human trafficking under Article 418-a (2019-2023)

Year	Criminal acts	perpetrators	victims
2019	-	-	-
2020	-	-	-
2021	-	-	-
2022	3	6	-
January-August 2023	-	-	-

Criminal acts of human trafficking under Article 418-g (2019-2023)

Year	Criminal acts	perpetrators	victims
2019	5	6	3
2020	-	-	-

Criminal acts of human trafficking under Article 418-g (2019-2023)

2021	-	-	-
2022	7	13	5
January-August 2023	8	31	3

Freedom of speech (97–108)

161. The Macedonian legislation is fully harmonised with the international standards for the protection of the right to freedom of information. All key international acts have been ratified and are a part of the legislation.

162. The Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services is fully harmonised with the revised Directive on Audiovisual Media Services and in terms of the placement of the independent regulatory body – AAVMS.

163. With the amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services,⁵⁵ changes were made to the Regulation in order to harmonise the national legal framework with the EU Audiovisual Media Services Directive and international standards, as well as strengthening the capacities of the regulatory body for the appropriate implementation of the new competences and promoting self-regulation and co-regulation. With these amendments to the Law, the provision by which the Government had a discretionary right to determine the percentage of the state budget that will be allocated to financing the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and the public broadcasting service – Macedonian Radio Television was also abolished, but the percentage of funds that it should receive, as well as the basis from which that percentage is determined, was reduced.⁵⁶

164. In accordance with these amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the AAVMS, as a regulatory body, is required to adopt new sub-legal acts for the development of certain legal provisions to which the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services refers to. Within the PROFREX project of the CoE and the EU, as well as within the Twinning project for strengthening the capacities of AAVMS and the public broadcasting service, the preparation of the sub-legal acts has been started with the purpose of consistent application of the provisions of the law.

165. The matter of electing members of the Council of the AAVMS and members of the Program Council of the public broadcasting service - Macedonian Radio Television (MRT), as well as the realisation of the reform of the public broadcasting service, remains open.⁵⁷

166. Media regulation provides adequate conditions for guaranteed diversity in the media space. The country has a large number of media that reflect the cultural and linguistic diversity of the society.

167. Journalism expresses its reached level of professionalism through responsible respect and consistent application of professional ethics, respect for the basic principles of the professional work, cooperation of the media with the Council for Ethics in the Media self-regulatory body and the Association of Journalists.

168. It has established mechanisms for monitoring cases of attacks, threats and intimidating behaviour towards Journalists, as well as an appointed prosecutor tasked with monitoring the procedures for cases of attacks on Journalists.

169. With the amendments of the Criminal Code from 2023, the press teams receive increased protection in the performance of their professional duties. These amendments prescribe qualifying forms if the crime is committed against a journalist, for which stricter penalties are prescribed. These are the following crimes: "Murder, Preventing an Officer from Performing an Official Action, Endangering of Security, and Coercion".

170. With the amendments to the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation⁵⁸ fines that could be paid by Journalists and the media in case of insult or defamation have been reduced.

171. In the period from January 2019, ending with August 2023, a total of 60 events related to attacks and threats against Journalists were registered within the Departments of Internal Affairs. A total of 22 criminal charges have been filed against the perpetrators.

Hate speech (39, 46)

172. The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination regulates: the prevention and protection against discrimination; the forms, types, and the protection procedures; the composition and work of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The goal is to secure the principle of equality and prevention and protection against discrimination in exercising human rights and freedoms.

173. Hate speech is incriminated in the Criminal Code.

Education (126, 127, 128, 135, 148)

174. The Roma, as the most marginalized community, exercise their right to education as any other community. Efforts are being made to increase funds, in order to provide a simpler access to education through public education policies.

175. Roma educational mediators are provided in primary education to help reduce the drop-out rate among Roma students and increase the pass rate. In the secondary education, there is a special measure in accordance with the Entrance Competition for these pupils entering in the secondary education; enrolment with 10% fewer points than the required minimum for entry. Scholarships (920) are provided within one school year (for almost 50% of the total number of Roma high school students, which varies from 1800 to 2100 per year).

176. The Law on Primary Education guarantees the right to education for every child and establishes the basic principles.⁵⁹

177. The right to education in mother tongue for the members of the communities is exercised through the study of the optional subject Language and culture of the communities from the 3rd to the 9th grade.

178. In the public health programs Health for All and Protected Mothers and Children Program, activities/education trainings are conducted for family doctors to work with people with disabilities on sexual and reproductive health.

Healthcare (79, 118–125, 134)

179. With the Law on Termination of Pregnancy of 2019, all waiting periods, mandatory counselling and other administrative burdens have been removed. The process of preparation and adoption of the law was transparent and open along with civil society organisations and women's organisations. The law also enabled the performance of a medical abortion. Trainings for gynaecologists have been conducted at secondary and tertiary level, and the revision of the guidelines for medical abortion in accordance with the new WHO recommendations is under way.

180. The budget for the costs of sexual and reproductive health has increased, and targeted interventions are made through mobile gynaecological clinics.⁶⁰

181. With the purpose of improving the living conditions of people in closed institutions as well as ensuring full access to health care, renovations and infrastructural works have been carried out in psychiatric institutions in recent years (Psychiatric Hospital Skopje and Psychiatric Hospital Demir Hisar).

182. The budget for the costs of sexual and reproductive health has increased, and targeted interventions are made through mobile gynaecological clinics.⁶¹

183. Through the system of primary health protection with family doctors - paediatricians and family gynaecologists, the MoH develops annual public health programs for: Early

Detection of Malignant Diseases, Active Health Protection of Mothers and Children, Health Insurance, Participation, Physical Examinations of Pupils and Students.

184. A mechanism for participation of the civil sector and affected communities in the preparation of national public health programs for prevention in the area of maternal and child health has been established (e.g. Safe Motherhood Committee).

185. Categories of insured persons are specified in the Law on Health Insurance with the purpose of providing access to health care for the poorest.⁶² Participation for insured persons is up to 20% of the total amount⁶³, while for haemodialysis, hemodiafiltration and peritoneal dialysis, it is symbolic in the amount of 1 denar. Exemption from participation is also projected for certain categories.

186. The Law on Health Protection establishes a basis for the adoption of public health programs that provide health services.⁶⁴ Through the Annual Program for Mandatory Health Insurance of the Citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia, the MoH pays the contribution for persons who are not health insured on any grounds.⁶⁵

187. The Law on Health Protection and the Law on Health Insurance define two measures to provide access to primary health protection for people living in remote and rural areas. One hundred rural places are defined by the first measure,⁶⁶ while the second measure is the so-called rural doctors within Public Health Institutions.

188. Through the Program for Providing Social Security for Women Engaged in Agricultural Activities, which has been implemented since 2023 through the MoAFWE and the Agency for Financial Support for Agriculture and Rural Development, 4000000 denars have been located, with the purpose of financial support in the amount of 81,000 denars for maternity of women (insured farmers) during a period of 9 months of pregnancy.

189. The Rural Development Program with the "115 Rural Woman" measure enables the development of female farmers for economic empowerment of women farmers. In 2022, the amount has increased to 6,000 euros per user, funds that are allocated for the finishing and processing of primary agricultural products, as well as for the purchase of equipment for direct marketing on the farm, etc.

190. As a priority, the health and well-being of mothers, newborns and children is part of several strategic initiatives of the Government: A Master Plan for Perinatal Health,⁶⁷ Safe Motherhood Strategy, etc.

191. A new Department for Fetal Medicine was opened at the University Clinic for Gynaecology and Obstetrics, and a new program for fetal medicine is being prepared at the Faculty of Medicine in Skopje.

192. A significant reduction in the indicators of perinatal mortality 6.9‰, (compared to 16‰ in 2016), neonatal mortality to 2.9‰ (compared to 10.2‰ in 2016) and infant mortality to 3.2‰ is evident compared to 11.9‰ in 2016).

Other recommendations (117, 140, 63)

193. The Criminal Code criminalises the act of forced marriages (Article 418-g of Child trafficking) and extramarital life with a child who has not reached the age of 18 (Article 197).

194. Centres for social work take measures to prevent under-age marriages through education and informing parents and minors about the consequences that will arise in the event of illegal under-age marriages.

195. In the section on Prevention, the Law on Mandatory Secondary Education foresees penalties for parents in the event that minor children do not attend classes.

196. In accordance with Article 16 of the Family Act, a person who has not reached the age of 18 is not allowed to enter marriage. The competent court, in a non-litigation proceeding, may allow the marriage of a person who has reached the age of 16 if it determines that he has reached the physical and mental maturity required to exercise the rights and duties

that arise in marriage, and after previously obtaining an opinion from a health institution and provided professional help in the centre for social work.

III. Priorities of the Republic of North Macedonia for the promotion and protection of human rights

- Strengthening of the judiciary independence.
- Fight against corruption.
- Implementation of national strategies in the field of human rights by ensuring respect and protection of the rights of vulnerable categories of persons, especially women, children and persons with disabilities.
- Continuous harmonisation of the national legislation with the international human rights standards.

Notes

¹ Off. Gazette No. 247/22.

² Off. Gazette No. 36/23.

³ Off. Gazette No. 66/2023.

⁴ Off. Gazette No. 208/2019.

⁵ The Body was formed by a Government Decision (Off. Gazette No. 55/12). The Minister of Foreign Affairs manages this body, and its members are the state secretaries in: the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Secretariat for European Affairs, the Secretariat for Implementation of Ohrid Framework Agreement, as well as the President of the Commission for Relations with Religious Communities and the Directors of the State Statistics Office, the Personal Data Protection Agency and the Agency for Community Rights Realization. Foreign body members are: the Deputy of the Ombudsman of the Republic of Macedonia, the President of the Broadcasting Council, the President of the Commission on Protection Against Discrimination, and the President of the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information.

⁶ The terms of their election are strengthened in the law; minimum of 10 years of work experience upon completing higher education (minimum of 8 for a president and 6 for a member in the area of revealing or preventing corruption, the rule of law or good governance), should not have been an Assembly MP, Government member, a political party donor or not to have held office in bodies of a political party in the past 10 years.

⁷ The Commission has its own budget that records growth every year. It was 30,100,000 denars in 2017 and 56,622,000 denars in 2022. The number of Secretariat employees has increased from 22 to 46 persons in the last five years. In February 2021, by decision of the Government, new spatial capacities were provided for SCPC, where an ICT hardware equipment was installed, and the implementation of several software solutions, including solutions to access the electronic data bases of 17 institutions are under way.

⁸ The plan was used to approach and take measures and activities to overcome the challenges of the battle against corruption, detected in multiple domestic and international reports, the European Commission reports, the recommendations of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, regulatory bodies, competent institutions that follow the condition, the requests by the civil society organisations, the Platform of Civil Society Organisations for Fight Against Corruption, "Transparency International", the recommendations by the USA and EU strategic partners.

⁹ The long-term goal of the Strategy unites the necessary measures and activities through the implementation of six (6) strategy goals: Institutional and personnel strengthening of the capacities of the bodies tasked with leading the financial investigations, Interdepartmental Cooperation and Statistics, Effective Office for Return of Property (ARO Office), Strengthening and greater effectiveness of the Agency for Management of Confiscated Property (AMCP), Integrated and interdisciplinary system for training and building competencies and Interoperability.

¹⁰ The Commission comprises of representatives of the Public Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Interior, the Financial Police Office, the Customs Administration, as well as representatives from the courts, the Financial Intelligence Administration, the Public Revenue Office, ARO, AMCP, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, and Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors. A chairman of the Commission is a Cabinet representative.

¹¹ In terms of personnel equipment, compared to 2017 when the BPPO for Prosecuting Organised Crime

- and Corruption had 30 employees (3 public prosecutors), in 2022 the number of employees is 44 (14 public prosecutors), and the number of public prosecutors in 2022 decreased to 12.
- ¹² Off. Gazette No. 145/23.
- ¹³ The goal is to strengthen the inter institutional cooperation and coordination of the activities for creating policies for promotion of the prevention and fight against corruption and implementing measures or activities projected by national or international strategic or program documents from the field area.
- ¹⁴ The goal is to implement procedures for convicted and detained persons for serious crimes against which other criminal procedures are also being conducted, and whose transport to the courts poses a safety risk.
- ¹⁵ The supply of additional safety and IT equipment was supported by the US Embassy.
- ¹⁶ The number of imprisoned persons, and with agreement with the KPU administration.
- ¹⁷ In April 2022, a second two-day advanced training on logging signs of injuries that point to inappropriate conduct by health workers working in the facilities.
- ¹⁸ The training was implemented in the Administration's Centre for Training and Education, in accordance with the Annual Plan for Training of the Prison Personnel.
- ¹⁹ Off. Gazette No. 220/19.
- ²⁰ Off. Gazette No. 96/19.
- ²¹ Additional resources for the Agency for Community Rights Realization and the Language Implementation Agency are being provided.
- ²² It is being implemented through integration of a multi-cultural content that emphasizes the cultural attributes of all ethnic and religious communities.
- ²³ At this moment all preparations and checking on the enrolment of these persons in the regular register of births is being done.
- ²⁴ Off. Gazette No. 64/2018.
- ²⁵ In accordance with the provisions from the Directive 2008/115/E3.
- ²⁶ Gender equality is one of the key aspects for the prosperity of the entire society and a country's obligation that comes from the Sustainable Development Agenda 2020-2030.
- ²⁷ Off. Gazette No. 170/2022.
- ²⁸ Off. Gazette No. 218/2022.
- ²⁹ Off.

Gazette	201/2015
---------	----------

https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/ednakvi%20moznosti/14_9/%D0%93%D0%BE%D0%B4%D0%B8%D1%88%D0%B5%D0%BD%20%D0%B8%D0%B7%D0%B2%D0%B5%D1%88%D1%82%D0%B0%D1%98%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%20%D0%95%D0%9C%20%D0%BD%D0%B0%20%D0%B6%D0%B5%D0%BD%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%20%D0%B8%20%D0%BC%D0%B0%D0%B6%D0%B8%D1%82%D0%B5%20%D0%B2%D0%BE%202022.pdf
- ³⁰ Off. Gazette No. 258/2020. It regulates prevention and protection against discrimination, forms and types of discrimination, protection procedures, as well as the composition and work of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The goal is to secure the principle of equality and prevention and protection against discrimination in exercising human rights and freedoms.
- ³¹ Within the joint project of EU and the Council of Europe, "Promotion of Diversity and Equality in North Macedonia", as part of the Horizontal Facility program for the Western Balkans and Turkey II, recommendations are being prepared for the harmonization of 12 laws on: scientific and research activity, primary education, secondary education, higher education, family, sports, social protection, labour relations, child protection, pension and disability insurance, health protection and health insurance.
- ³² Off. Gazette No. 161/19 and 229/20.
- ³³ Off. Gazette no. 69/2018, No. 75/2019. It has a mandate to coordinate and provide guidance to the relevant institutions regarding the country's obligation to implement the Convention, through preparing annual action plans containing activities at the level of the respective ministry.
- ³⁴ Additional funding is needed to provide living space and new employment of care and support staff.
- ³⁵ A Methodology for calculating the prices of services has been passed, as a basis for the Decision on determining the prices of social services. A licensing process for social service providers has been introduced, thus guaranteeing: the quality of delivery, the fulfilment of norms and standards for various services. About 100 social service providers have been licensed so far.
- ³⁶ 2108 enrolled students compared to 365 children enrolled in primary schools with a resource centre and in support centres).
- ³⁷ The support centre uses the material and human resources at the school and provides appropriate professional support to students with disabilities, teaching staff, professional associates, parents, i.e. guardians and the inclusive team in other primary schools in the area of the municipality.
- ³⁸ In the process of approval in the Ministry of Education.
- ³⁹ At the same time, options for the pilot program, which was implemented in 3 schools, are being considered to continue to be available as an optional subject.

- ⁴⁰ Qualifying forms with stricter penalties for hate crimes have been added to more crimes.
- ⁴¹ These include: Damage to the reputation of the Republic of North Macedonia Article 178, Exposure to undermining of the Macedonian people and members of the communities Article 179, Damage to the reputation of a foreign state Article 181, Damage to the reputation of an international organization Article 182, Causing hatred, division or intolerance on national, racial, religious and other discriminatory grounds Article 319, Spreading racist and xenophobic material via computer systems Article 394, Approval or justification of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes Article 407, and Racial and other discrimination Article 417.
- ⁴² In the period 2018-2020, the number of persons convicted for hate crimes and types of punishments, the Public Prosecutor's Office in Kichevo filed 10 charges, of which 8 were for the crime of endangering security under Article 144 paragraph 2, 1 for the crime of Sexual assault on a child under the age of 14 from Article 188 paragraph 1 and one charge of the crime of Murder from Article 123 paragraph 1 in relation with Article 19 of the CC (Criminal Code).
For the crime of Breach of security under Article 144 paragraph 2, 3 criminal warrants and 5 indictments were filed and all were convicted (7 sentences with suspended sentences and 2 with prison sentences). The motivation for prejudice in all these cases is gender.
For the crime of Sexual assault on a child under the age of 14 according to Article 188 paragraph 1, 1 indictment has been filed, for which a first-instance verdict with a prison sentence has been passed, and the case is in the appeal procedure phase. The motivation for prejudice in all these cases is ethnicity.
For the crime of Murder under Article 123 paragraph 1 in relation with Article 19 of the CC 1 indictment has been filed and is in the trial phase before a competent court. The motivation for prejudice in all these cases is revenge.”
- ⁴³ It enables an integrated multidisciplinary response in the fight against violence against women and domestic violence, respecting human rights in accordance with international standards.
- ⁴⁴ The following Rulebooks have been adopted: on the manner of implementation and monitoring of given interim protection measures; on the manner of implementation of the risk assessment of serious danger to the life and physical and mental integrity of the victim and their family members; on the manner of execution of the given emergency protection measure of removal of the perpetrator from the home and a prohibition to approach the home and interim protection measures; on the manner of implementation of the measure of mandatory treatment of the perpetrator; on the establishment of a separate register for the number of cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence in the courts and a protocol for mutual cooperation of competent entities to take measures to prevent, prevent and protect against violence against women and domestic violence.
- ⁴⁵ Teams of gynaecologists, psychologists, social workers and experts in the field of forensic medicine work there. The Centres are managed by a Coordinator who takes care of the centre in terms of complete logistics and maintenance, but also gathers the team and provides an appropriate response for the victim in case of sexual violence. In cooperation with the Department of Family Medicine, nearly 400 family health workers and general practitioners have been trained to deal with "violence", and it is projected that these trainings will continue.
- ⁴⁶ One of the activities is the adoption of a communication strategy, through prepared communication products and organized events in the local communities that aim to get to the vulnerable categories of women and girls and enable the help information to reach them.
- ⁴⁷ About 40 panellists from the country and the region, such as Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania, Slovenia, Kosovo, Serbia, ministers, ambassadors, deputies, representatives of the business community, the civil and international sector, academics and other guests participated at the regional conference.
- ⁴⁸ The first Evaluation Report (basic) of GREVIO on legislative and other measures applying the provisions of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) was published in September 2023.
- ⁴⁹ Off. Gazette No. 36/23.
- ⁵⁰ It means violence directed against women because of their female gender, which leads or may lead to physical, sexual, psychological or economic injury or suffering to women, including direct and indirect threats and intimidation of such acts, extortion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, regardless of whether they occur in public or private life.
- ⁵¹ Proactive methods have been applied, recognising "human trafficking" for the purpose of labour exploitation, initiating and conducting joint investigations with police agency services, identification and protection of unaccompanied foreign children, protection to vulnerable categories of migrants.
- ⁵² It is comprised of a Public Prosecutor from OJO (the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office) for the Prosecution of Organized Crime and Corruption, a police officer from the National Unit for the Suppression of Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking, the National Referral Mechanism and a representative of a citizens' association.
- ⁵³ With the payment of monetary compensation to the victim, the right of the victim towards the

perpetrator of the crime up to the amount of the paid compensation passes over to the state. When the Commission pays compensation to the victim, and it achieves full or partial compensation from the perpetrator of the crime, the state has the right to recourse from the victim, up to the amount that has been paid.

⁵⁴ Source; Ministry of Interior.

⁵⁵ Off. Gazette No. 154/2023.

⁵⁶ Now instead of the entire budget, the percentage will be calculated from the realized tax revenues. Moreover, in practice, the funds are further reduced due to the fact that the relevant ministry transfers less funds to the Agency's account than legally prescribed.

⁵⁷ Namely, on two occasions (in January 2019 and in May 2021) the Assembly announced public contests for election of members of the Council of the Agency and for members of the MRT Program Council. The first public contest was unsuccessful because extraordinary parliamentary elections were held in the meantime and in 2020 a new composition of the Assembly was elected, after which a new public contest was announced for the election of members of the Council of the Agency and for the election of members of the Program Council of the Macedonian Radio Television (MRT). In relation to the two public contests, the Commission for Elections and Appointments of the Assembly has not yet implemented the appropriate procedure.

⁵⁸ Off. Gazette No. 251/2022.

⁵⁹ That includes: priority of the students' best interests and comprehensive development; equality, accessibility, inclusiveness, maintenance of the general educational character, guarantee of quality education and international comparability of knowledge; encouraging active participation of students in school and community life, preparation for lifelong learning; acceptance of differences, multiculturalism and interculturalism, etc.

⁶⁰ Environments where these services are insufficient or unavailable (the Roma neighbourhood of Drisla in Prilep, rural areas, prisons, key populations).

⁶¹ Environments where these services are insufficient or unavailable (the Roma neighbourhood of Drisla in Prilep, rural areas, prisons, key populations).

⁶² Temporarily unemployed persons, person-beneficiary of permanent cash assistance; person with recognised refugee status; person under subsidiary protection; person placed in a foster family; person placed in a social protection institution, beneficiary of a monetary allowance for assistance and care from another person; person who up to the age of 18 had the status of a child without parents and without parental care, up to the age of 26 years, and benefits from social monetary assistance; a person-victim of domestic violence for whom a protection measure is taken under the Family Act and a person covered by organised independent living with support if it cannot be insured on another basis, person serving a prison sentence, person in custody (if not insured on another basis) and a minor who on whom an correctional measure of being referred to a correctional facility, i.e. institution is being executed.

⁶³ It is not more than 6,000.00 denars, i.e. not more than 600 denars for medications picked up with a prescription from a pharmacy.

⁶⁴ Program for providing funds for hospital treatment without charging a fee (participation) for pensioners and for providing funds for specialist and consultative and hospital health services for beneficiaries of the right to social financial assistance, Program for participation in the use of health protection for certain diseases of citizens and health protection of mothers and infants, Programs for providing funds for the purchase of insulin, for dialysis, for transplantation, for immunisation, for medications for rare diseases, for tuberculosis, for HIV/AIDS, for substitution therapy for addicts.

⁶⁵ About 250,000 people are covered.

⁶⁶ By the Regulation on Payment of Health Services in primary health care, an incentive is foreseen for the elected doctors.

⁶⁷ The capacity of regional and general hospitals is strengthened and clear criteria are established for obstetric and neonatal cases that need to be treated at each hospital level. In addition to the trainings for the health workers at the Clinical Hospitals and hospitals that have maternity departments, modern equipment is also provided for the hospital.