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Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Accession Process

Country assessment report

Skopje, 2024

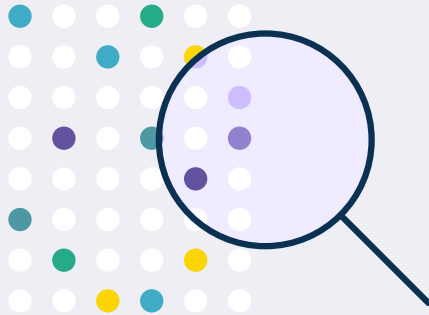
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INTRODUCTION

North Macedonia's path towards the European Union (EU) has been quite long. Identified as a potential candidate for accession twenty years ago, North Macedonia was the first country in the region to sign the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), which has been in force since 2004. The same year, the country applied for EU membership and it was granted a candidate status in 2005. Ever since 2009, the European Commission (EC) has continuously recommended the accession negotiations to be opened with North Macedonia¹. The Prespa Agreement², signed in 2018, arguably took the country one step closer to its EU integration and, in 2020, the European Council endorsed the decision to open accession negotiations. Nonetheless, this process was further challenged when the neighbouring Republic of Bulgaria opposed the beginning of the accession negotiations the same year.

For North Macedonia, 2022 was an important year marked by the long-awaited start of the negotiation process. After the revised French proposal was passed by the Parliament, the first Intergovernmental Conference took place in July 2022, and the Commission started the screening process³.

In the EU, equality between women and men is recognised both as a fundamental right and a common value. Since 1996, the EC committed itself to a “dual approach” that involves gender mainstreaming of all policies, while also implementing specific measures to advance gender equality at all levels⁴. With the adoption of the revised methodology for EU accession⁵, the chapters of the EU acquis were grouped into six clusters. The new methodology puts a stronger focus on the fundamental reforms which are central in the accession process. Gender equality is included in Chapter 23 of the negotiating framework, which is part of cluster 1 – The Fundamentals of the Accession Process. This cluster will be opened first and closed last and therefore it will determine the overall pace of negotiations. Additionally, gender equality is a horizontal and cross-cutting issue and, as such, it needs to be further mainstreamed in all six clusters.

To inform and gender-mainstream the EU Accession process and successfully undertake evidence-based advocacy on the gender aspects in the EU accession process at national, regional and EU level, it is necessary to monitor and report on the key EU-related processes and political dialogues in the Western Balkan countries. For this purpose, the [Coalition for Gender Equality in the EU Accession Process \(EQUAPRO\)](#), together with an external expert, developed a comprehensive methodology for monitoring and reporting on relevant areas from a gender

1 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/north-macedonia_en

2 <https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/spogodba-en.pdf>

3 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/north-macedonia_en

4 <https://eige.europa.eu/gender-mainstreaming/what-is-gender-mainstreaming#toc-the-eu-approach-to-gender-mainstreaming>

5 Enhancing the accession process – A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans. Available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/enhancing-accession-process-credible-eu-perspective-western-balkans_en

perspective. The methodology draws from the [EU Gender Action Plan \(GAP\) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in External Action](#) and its accompanying [Objectives and Indicators](#). Under 10 different criteria, the monitoring focuses on relevant actors both at EU and national level and attempts to analyse through a gender lens the EC Country Reports, the SAA Committee and Sub-Committee meetings, EU’s strategic engagement on gender equality at country level, the third programming of the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA III), the harmonisation of national legislation with the EU acquis, the collection and publication of sex-disaggregated data by national statistical offices, the extent of gender expertise in the national bodies responsible for EU integration, as well as the political dialogue on gender equality. Through diverse indicators, the report also attempts to evaluate the extent to which women’s civil society organisations (WCSOs) are consulted and involved in different aspects of the accession process. This is the second national monitoring report, covering the period from January 1st to December 31st, 2022, compiled by Reactor – Research in Action, a lead partner in the EQUAPRO Coalition and the Action “Furthering Gender Equality through the EU Accession Process,” funded by the EU and co-funded by Sweden⁶. Aside from the European Union Delegation to North Macedonia (EUD), this national report focuses on the work of the following institutions:

- The Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) – a professional service within the Government, governed by the Deputy Prime Minister for European Affairs (the National IPA Coordinator – NIPAC), with a horizontal coordinative function of the preparation process for EU membership.
- The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and its Department for Equal Opportunities which coordinates the implementation of the national gender equality legislation and strategic framework.
- The State Statistical Office (SSO) – the main coordinator of state statistics within the national statistical system.

The overall monitoring process is based on a mixed research approach that involves both quantitative and qualitative methods and includes but it is not limited to analysis of existing secondary data, content analysis of important strategic and political documents, as well as collection of primary data, participant observations and interviews with key informants. For each indicator, tables compare findings from 2021 and 2022. The last column of each table was introduced in this second monitoring report and it assesses changes using a five-point scale where “-1” illustrates significant regression, “-0.5” signifies slight regression, “0” is no change, “0.5” illustrates some improvement, and “1” is significant improvement or complete implementation.

⁶ This Action is implemented by Reactor- research in Action (North Macedonia), the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation (North Macedonia Office), Albanian Women’s Empowerment Network (Albania), Kosovo Women’s Network (Kosovo), Rights for All (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and Women’s Rights Centre (Montenegro).

ABBREVIATIONS

Action Documents	ADs
Country-level Implementation Plan	CLIP
Domestic violence	DW
European Commission	EC
European External Action Service	EEAS
European Union	EU
European Union Delegation to North Macedonia	EUD
EU Gender Action Plan III	GAP III
Gender Advisers	GA
Gender-based violence	GBV
Gender Country Profile	GCP
Gender Equality Index	GEI
Gender Focal Points	GFP
Instrument for Pre-Accession III	IPA III
Law on Gender Equality	LGE
Ministry of Information Society and Administration	MISA
Ministry of Labour and Social Policy	MLSP
National IPA Coordinator	NIPAC
National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis 2021-2025	NPAA
Organic Budget Law	OBL
Public Financial Management	PFM
Sector Working Groups	SWGs
Secretariat for European Affairs	SEA
Stabilisation and Association Agreement	SAA
State Statistical Office	SSO
Technical Assistance and Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission	TAIEX
Women, Peace and Security	WPS
Women's Civil Society Organisations	WCSOs
Working Party on the Western Balkans Region	COWEB
National Electronic Consultation System	ENER

FINDINGS

CRITERION A. COUNTRY REPORTS ARE GENDER-MAINSTREAMED

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating ⁷
1. Number of times gender is mentioned in the Country Report	22	37	0.5
2. Number of times women/girls are mentioned in the Country Report	32/2	31/5	0
3. Number of times boys/men are mentioned in the Country Report	0/4	1/6	0.5
4. % of Chapters gender-mainstreamed ⁸	6,06%	6%	0
5. Number of official recommendations ⁹ on gender equality included in the Country Report	2	2	0
6. Number of other recommendations with a gender perspective included in the narrative of Chapters	9	19	0.5
7. Extent to which Country Report uses sufficiently sex-disaggregated data	Moderately	Moderately	0
8. Extent to which issues recommended by women's organisations are included in the Country Report, based on your knowledge	Moderately	Moderately	0

The first section of this report analyses the extent to which the 2022 EC Country Report for North Macedonia¹⁰ has been gender mainstreamed comparing it to the findings from the baseline monitoring. In 2022, “gender” is mentioned 37 times,

7 This column assesses changes using a five-point scale where “-1” illustrates significant regression, “-0.5” signifies slight regression, “0” is no change, “0.5” illustrates some improvement, and “1” is significant improvement or complete implementation.

8 For a chapter to be gender-mainstreamed it would need to include specific reference to the situation and needs of women and girls in a particular sector/domain or/and specific gender aspects emerging from an analysis of a specific sector/domain. It should also, ideally, include an analysis of key barriers preventing progress in a specific sector/domain.

9 Official recommendations are those in the grey boxes of the Country Report.

10 2022 EC Country Report for North Macedonia, available at: <https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf>

“women” and “girls” 36 times, and “boys” and “men” 7 times. Even though this Report contains slightly more references to gender, women/girls and boys/men compared to the previous one, there has been no improvement on the percentage of chapters that can be considered gender mainstreamed, which remains at the same level - 6%. Reactor’s analysis reveals that, again, only two out of 33 chapters included in the Report are gender mainstreamed to some extent. These are Chapter 23 - Judiciary and Fundamental Rights (which contains references to gender equality and women almost exclusively in the Fundamental Rights section and therefore cannot be considered as fully gender mainstreamed¹¹) and Chapter 19 - Social Policy and Employment.

Our analysis reveals a limited number of recommendations related to gender equality and women’s rights for the second year in a row. The number of official (grey-box) recommendations remained unchanged as the same two gender-related recommendations from 2021 were repeated in 2022. The two official recommendations, again in Chapter 23 and Chapter 19, were as follows:

→ *allocate the necessary financial and human resources enabling the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination to become fully functional and increase the cooperation with the Ombudsman Office (Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental rights)*

→ *continue to implement labour market activation measures for young, long-term and low-skilled unemployed people, including women, persons with disabilities and Roma, and ensure proper evaluation of the measures (Chapter 19: Social Policy and Employment).*

There has been an increase in the number of other recommendations included in the narrative, rising from 9 in 2021 to 19 in the 2022 Report. They remain predominantly concentrated in Chapter 23, under the Fundamental Rights section. In addition to these two, there are several other chapters that include very limited references to women and gender equality, including Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security), Chapter 10 (Digital Transformation and Media) and Chapter 26 (Education and Culture). Women and gender equality are also mentioned in the Economic Criteria, as well as in the section titled Functioning of the Democratic Institutions and Public Administration Reform.

Sex disaggregated data and statistics are still generally lacking in the Report¹². The constraints in developing evidence-based policies and measures posed by the absence of reliable gender-disaggregated data across sectors are acknowledged, yet no targeted recommendation is provided. Additionally, the recommendation

11 In the section focusing on Functioning of the judiciary there is one short reference to the percentage of women judges and prosecutors and there is no reference to women or gender equality in the Fight against corruption section.

12 Giulia Pasquinelli (2023). Friends or Foes? Gender analysis of the 2022 European Commission Country Reports for the Western Balkans. Kvinna Till Kvinna Foundation. Available at: <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/The-Kvinna-till-Kvinna-Foundation-friends-or-foes.pdf>

included in the narrative of the previous Report referring to the need to enhance the capacities of relevant institutions and improve institutional coordination on gender statistics, is reiterated. There is lack of both overall and sex-disaggregated data on domestic violence and human trafficking¹³. Furthermore, there is no official recommendation within Chapter 18 (Statistics) aimed at improving the collection and dissemination of sex-disaggregated data¹⁴.

Similarly to the first monitoring period (2021), recommendations from WCSOs are moderately included in the 2022 Country Report. In some instances, input from WCSOs has been reflected in the narrative, such as on the status of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD), the need to align the Criminal Code with the Istanbul Convention, as well as the importance of gender mainstreaming in policymaking and integrating a gender perspective in the sector dialogue. The 2022 Report has reinstated the recommendation regarding legal gender recognition based on self-determination, which was excluded in 2021, and it is also a recommendation coming from WCSOs. Consistent with our previous findings, WCSO responses¹⁵ for this monitoring period indicate that input from WCSOs is often generalised and simplified, with important details and recommendations omitted. For instance, despite consistent advocacy efforts by WCSOs, the 2022 Report did not make any reference to the growing anti-gender movement in North Macedonia. What also remains challenging is addressing intersectionality issues comprehensively.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 In-depth interviews and group discussions with WCSOs, conducted by Reactor in 2023.

CRITERION B. STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS INCLUDE GENDER ISSUES

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. % of SAA Committee meetings with gender equality issues on the agenda	Cannot be concluded	N/A ¹⁶	Cannot be concluded
2. % of Sub-Committee meetings with gender equality issues on the agenda	16%	33%	0.5
3. Extent to which women's organisations were consulted by the EU ahead of the Sub-Committee meetings	Minimally	Minimally	0
4. Extent to which SAA Committee and Sub-Committee meetings conclusions attend to gender equality issues	Minimally	Moderately	0.5

When it comes to the Stabilisation and Association (SAA) structures and meetings, the 2022 Country Report for North Macedonia notes that the experts met according to schedule in seven Sub-Committee meetings and one Special Group for Public Administration Reforms¹⁷. However, the official response from the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) to Reactor's freedom of information request stated that six Sub-Committee meetings took place in 2022¹⁸. The SAA Committee, the Sub-Committee on Justice and Internal Affairs and the Special Group for Public Administration Reforms did not hold any meetings and they were postponed for 2023 due to the start of the intensive bilateral screening process for Cluster 1 – Fundamentals¹⁹.

As in the baseline monitoring period (2021), easily accessible publicly available data on the meetings of the SAA structures for 2022 were scarce. Press releases with brief information on five of the six Sub-Committee meetings that took place in 2022

16 The SAA Committee did not convene in 2022.

17 On the seventh SAA Committee meeting a Special Group for Public Administration Reforms has been formed to monitor the progress of North Macedonia in public administration reform process. This group held its first meeting in October 2010, in Skopje. Source: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=15>

18 Official written response to freedom of information request of the SEA number 17-1473/2 from August 18th, 2023.

19 Ibid.

were available on the website of the European External Action Service (EEAS)²⁰. Information on one more Sub-Committee meeting was found in a publicly available note from the General Secretariat of the Council of the EU to the Working Party on the Western Balkans Region (COWEB)²¹. Information on some of these meetings could also be sporadically found on the SEA's and national ministries' websites, and they are not publicly available on a single location. Both in 2021 and 2022, the Committee and Sub-Committee meeting agendas and conclusions were not available online. For this monitoring period they were obtained by freedom of information requests sent to the SEA.

According to the official response from SEA noted above, six different Sub-Committee meetings took place in 2022. **A modest improvement** under this criterion is noticeable in this monitoring period as the available data indicates that gender equality was on the agenda and it was addressed to some extent in two out of six (or 33%) Sub-Committee meetings. In comparison, in 2021, the limited information that was publicly available lead to a conclusion that gender equality issues were discussed in just one out of the six meetings that took place (or 16%). More information on the Sub-Committee meetings in 2022 is available at the end of this document, as Annex 2. The first indicator from this section could not be completed for this monitoring period as the SAA Committee did not convene in 2022.

Although they are not assessed as part of this monitoring, it is important to note that two meetings of the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) between the European Committee of the Regions and North Macedonia²², also took place in 2022: the 19th meeting on July 6th, 2022, in Brussels²³ and the 20th meeting on November 24th, 2022, in Skopje.²⁴ Several topic were discussed but from the brief information provided in the press releases, it could not be concluded whether any gender equality issues were discussed.²⁵

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- 20 Press releases available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/north-macedonia/17th-meeting-saa-subcommittee-between-eu-and-north-macedonia-internal_en?s=229
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/north-macedonia/18th-subcommittee-transport-environment-energy-and-regional-development_en?s=229
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/north-macedonia/eu-north-macedonia-18th-subcommittee-innovation-information-society-and_en?s=229
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/north-macedonia/19th-meeting-subcommittee-economic-and-financial-issues-and-statistics_en?s=229
https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/north-macedonia/19th-meeting-stabilisation-and-association-agreement-subcommittee_en?s=229
- 21 The following document includes brief information on the meeting:
<https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5136-2023-INIT/en/pdf>
- 22 The JCC provides a consistent and stable form of cooperation with the local and regional authorities of a country seeking to join the EU. In North Macedonia, it was established in 2007 by a Decision of the SAA Council. More information available at: <https://cor.europa.eu/en/our-work/International-cooperation/Pages/Enlargement-countries.aspx>
- 23 Press release available at: <https://zels.org.mk/newsd/3107> (information only available in Macedonian)
- 24 Press releases from ZELS and the European Committee of the Regions available at: <https://zels.org.mk/newsd/4120>
<https://cor.europa.eu/en/news/Pages/Twentieth-meeting-JCC-North-Macedonia.aspx>
- 25 Reactor's representative had a side meeting with one of the participants to this Skopje meeting (a policy analyst from the EU) and this person additionally informed that gender equality was not in the focus of any of the sessions that took place.

In the previous monitoring period, Reactor observed a notable gap in WCSO participation in the SAA processes. Namely, WCSOs were not usually consulted nor included in a timely and systematic manner in the SAA processes and their involvement was typically project-based²⁶ and somewhat inconsistent²⁷. In 2022, the EUD organised consultations with civil society and the invitation stated they were in view of the Country Report. However, during later advocacy meetings, Reactor was informed that the input provided during these consultations was also used for one of the Sub-Committees²⁸. Given that WCSO representatives were unaware of the dual nature of these consultations, it could be concluded that their involvement was limited.

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. Country-level Implementation Plan for GAP III agreed and transmitted to HQ (Brussels) (indicator 5.1 GAP III)	Yes	Yes	1
2. Gender Country Profile conducted / updated	No	No ²⁹	0
3. Fully-fledged gender analysis conducted / updated	No	No	0
4. Number of sector-specific gender analyses for the priority areas under the programming cycle 2021-2027 developed and transmitted to HQ (Brussels) (indicator 5.2)	0	3	1
5. Extent to which EU Delegation engages in dialogue on gender equality with governments, national gender equality mechanisms, parliaments, and other institutional actors (indicator 7.1)	Moderately	Moderately	0

26 EU funded national project: CSO DIALOGUE – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integration, more information available at: <https://reactor.org.mk/en/wp-all/www-dijalogkoneu-mk/>

27 Reactor’s observation and direct experiences (which confirm project-based involvement and late invitations, sent a day ahead of the SAA meeting)

28 Reactor was informed that the input provided would be used for the meeting of the Sub-Committee on Justice and Internal Affairs. However, the official response from the SEA stated that this Sub-Committee did not hold a meeting in 2022. And in 2023, Reactor was again invited to consultations which then clearly stated the joint nature of the consultations (both for the new EC Country Report and the forthcoming Committee on Justice and Internal Affairs).

29 The Gender Country Profile was finalised and published, during the preparation of this report, later in 2023.

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
6. Extent to which EU Delegation consulted civil society including women's organisations for the development of the Country-level Implementation Plan	Fully	Fully	1
7. Extent to which EU Delegation engages in dialogue on gender equality with civil society including women's organisations (indicator 7.2)	Moderately	Moderately	0
8. Extent to which EU Delegation engages in dialogue with civil society on women, peace and security issues in partner countries (indicator 7.2)	Moderately	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded

The GAP III Country-level Implementation Plan (CLIP) for North Macedonia was prepared during 2021 in an inclusive process. The CLIP was finalised, transmitted successfully to Brussels, and published on the EEAS website in the spring of 2022³⁰. As reported in the baseline monitoring report, the CLIP was produced without a Gender Country Profile (GCP) and a fully-fledged gender analysis³¹. The GCP for North Macedonia was being prepared during 2022, through the Gender Equality Facility project implemented by UN Women³² and it was finalised and published outside the reference year for this report (2022), i.e. in September 2023³³.

In the absence of a GCP and an updated fully-fledged gender analysis, the EUD used updated information from different sources, including national stakeholders and civil society with expertise in this area to inform and prepare the CLIP for North Macedonia. As reported in the baseline assessment, in 2021, Reactor organised a round of consultations with national and local organisations, including grass-roots organisations. The diverse feedback from (W)CSOs gathered during these consultations was used to produce a joint written input on the gender equality state of affairs which was shared with the EUD to feed the CLIP. This was a successful

30 Gender Action Plan III – 2021-2025 Country Level Implementation Plan – CLIP for the Republic of North Macedonia, available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/north-macedonia/eu-gender-action-plan-iii-country-level-implementation-plan-clip_en?s=229

31 This information was confirmed by the EUD Gender Focal Point during the interview conducted in 2022 for the previous monitoring report.

32 Gender mainstreaming advisory services to North Macedonia's administration at central level (Gender Equality Facility – GEF). More information available at: <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/where-we-are/north-macedonia/gender-equality-facility-advisory-services-to-the-administration-of-north-macedonia>

33 <https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2023/09/country-gender-equality-profile-of-north-macedonia>

example of cooperation between the EUD and WCSOs that facilitated the preparation of this important document. During 2022, this cooperation continued although there was no official monitoring of the CLIP in North Macedonia, as DG NEAR and EUD representatives informed during different consultations and meetings. However, a digest on the situation concerning the CLIP was included in the country report and feedback was gathered from concerned stakeholders.³⁴ Upon the conclusion of this report, a new donor coordination was initiated, and it foresees additional monitoring of the CLIP related activities. According to information received through interviews for this monitoring report, the EUDs in the region were instructed to update the CLIPs until November 2023³⁵.

Two sectors were analysed through gender lenses in 2022, involving three different analyses. Statistics was recognised as an important sector (and a chapter in the negotiations of the country) and two specific gender analyses were conducted in 2022. One was described as a statistical portrait of the trends in gender equality in the country, aiming to provide an overview of the situation concerning gender equality in North Macedonia and to identify any clear trends or changes regarding the status of women in several areas by analysing the existing series of data presented in the publication *Women and Men* by the SSO³⁶. This publication intended to support the SSO and other national institutions to improve coordination and standardization among the various data producers in the public administration system. Prior to this analysis, Reactor conducted and published its *Gender Analysis - Gender Statistics and Gender Mainstreaming of the Statistical System of North Macedonia*, with a focus on existing policies and mechanisms³⁷. Both documents contributed to the national statistics and complemented one another as per coordinated efforts of the involved actors. The third gender analysis focused on gender equality in sports in North Macedonia³⁸. It was envisioned as tool which would enable policymakers and other relevant stakeholders to successfully mainstream gender into all sports-related activities, as well as to ensure that sports policies and legislation are based upon gender equality., A significant limitation mentioned in this gender analysis is lack of relevant and reliable data on gender equality in sports, as well as lack of official statistical data on sports in North Macedonia.³⁹ (statistical data used in the analysis is, in most cases, from 2015).

34 Interview of Reactor's representative with the EUD GFP in North Macedonia, 2023.

35 Interviews of project partners with the EUD GFPs in the region and meetings with DG NEAR and DG INTPA representatives, 2023. It refers to all CLIPs in the region and wider.

36 UN Women (2022). *Women and Men in North Macedonia: a statistical portrait of trends in gender equality*. Available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/2022/EN_WandM-NMK-Report_WEB_0.pdf

37 Reactor (2022). *Gender Statistics and Gender Mainstreaming of the Statistical System of North Macedonia – Gender Analysis*. Available at: <https://reactor.org.mk/en/publication-all/gender-statistics-and-gender-mainstreaming-of-the-statistical-system-of-north-macedonia/>

38 UN Women (2022). *Analysis on Gender Equality in Sport in North Macedonia*. Available at: https://eca.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-11/EN-Gender_Equality_in_Sport-web.pdf

39 Ibid. p.11.

Regarding the political dialogue between the EUD and national institutions, interview responses suggest that there is regular and detailed interchange⁴⁰ which, as expected, was intensified by the beginning of the accession negotiations and the screening process. On gender equality issues, interview responses indicate that the EU moderately engages in dialogue with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and its Sector for Equal Opportunities. As an example of this cooperation and support, it was pointed out that TAIEX (Technical Assistance and Information Exchange instrument of the European Commission) experts gave their opinion on the alignment of the draft version of the new Law on Gender Equality with the EU acquis. It was also emphasised that EUD representatives are directly included in the IPA III programming processes. While government officials consider that there is regular dialogue and collaboration with the EUD on gender related topics, some WCSO representatives voiced the need for more extensive and visible support by the EUD regarding gender equality.⁴¹ Diverse sources also highlight that in order to advance gender equality through the EU accession processes, it is important to reinforce the interinstitutional dialogue and cooperation, specifically between the SEA and the national gender equality machinery (the Sector for Equal Opportunities within the MLSP and the gender equality coordinators across different sectors and line-ministries).

Based on the compiled information, it could be concluded that the EUD continued to engage in dialogue on gender equality with WCSOs to a moderate extent. Interview responses confirm that several meetings between the EUD and WCSOs took place during 2022 where gender equality issues were discussed. It is worth mentioning that some local organisations have the impression that they had to rely on national, predominantly Skopje-based CSOs to organise and include them in these meetings⁴². While it was concluded in the baseline monitoring that the EUD moderately engaged in dialogue with civil society on women, peace and security (WPS) issues, there was not enough information available to draw a comprehensive conclusion for this indicator in 2022⁴³. A WCSO representative expressed concern that not enough attention is paid to WPS issues and to the implementation of the Resolution 1325⁴⁴. The limited emphasis on this topic is also evident in the 2022 Country Report which omits any references to WPS that were included in the previous Country Report.

40 Written responses to interview questions by the NIPAC and face-to-face interview with a representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2023.

41 Interviews with WCSO representatives, 2023.

42 Ibid.

43 An official response to the additional data request sent to the EUD in North Macedonia could not be obtained. Some data was gathered during an interview with the GFP at the EUD in North Macedonia.

44 Interviews with WCSO representatives, 2023.

CRITERION D. EU MAINSTREAMS GENDER IN ALL ACTIONS AND TARGETED ACTIONS

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. Number and % of new actions ⁴⁵ that are gender responsive / targeted (GM1 + GM2) at country level (indicator 1.1 GAP III)	5/71% ⁴⁶	4 /80%	0.5
2. Number and % of new gender targeted action (GM2) implemented from national allocation (indicator 1.2 GAP III)	0	1/20%	0.5
3. Total funding in support of gender equality at country level (GM1 + GM2) (indicator 1.3 GAP III)	62,95 mil EUR ⁴⁷	49 mil EUR ⁴⁸	-0.5
4. Amount of funding directed towards women's organisations and movements at country level (indicator 1.4 GAP III)	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded
5. % of new actions supporting public finance management reforms that include a gender budgeting component (indicator 3.1 GAP III)	Cannot be concluded	0	Cannot be concluded

For 2022, five IPA III Action Documents (ADs) were approved for North Macedonia, as follows:

1. [EU Integration Facility](#)
2. [EU for Modern Public Administration](#)
3. [EU for Improved Border and Migration Management](#)
4. [EU for Modern Wastewater Systems](#)
5. [EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality](#)

45 Action shall be defined as IPA III Action Documents. New shall refer to the Action Documents approved in 2022.

46 This score has been adapted since the 2021 monitoring report as the EU published the Action Document on the EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2023 after the 2021 monitoring report had been finalised. It has been updated to reflect this Action Document, approved in 2021 in which gender equality is a significant objective (GM1).

47 This has also been updated for reasons explained under footnote 48.

48 This amount sums up the total funding under all of the Action Documents for 2022 including the funding designated for 2022 in the Multi Annual the EU Civil Society Facility and Media Programme for the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2023.

Four out of five (or 80%) of IPA III ADs for 2022 are marked as gender responsive/targeted (GM1+GM2) and one of these five documents is a new gender targeted (GM2) Action Document, in line with GAP III requirements.

In 2022, the overall EU funding at country level distributed through gender responsive/targeted ADs decreased from 62.950.000 EUR in 2021 to 49.000.000 EUR. Despite this reduction in funds, it's noteworthy that North Macedonia had its first GM2-marked AD this monitoring year - **EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality**. Consequently, 11.000.000 EUR are transparently allocated to an action where gender equality is a principal objective. Additionally, there is co-funding of 120.000 EUR foreseen for this AD.

However, having in mind that the ADs marked as GM1 generally do not fulfil the DAC minimum criteria, same as for the previous year, this amount of 49.000.000 EUR could not be considered as a full figure. Moreover, the DAC gender marker, which is used by the EU for IPA III funding, is applied to entire actions, meaning the total budget of the action is counted as gender equality focused aid, even if gender equality is only one of the project's objectives. In 2022, the EU did not have a system for tracking of the actual dedicated funding in support of gender equality provided through IPA III actions⁴⁹.

It should be noted that, after advocacy undertaken by Reactor and implementing project partners following the completion of the monitoring reports for 2021 and during the drafting phase of this report, Reactor has been informed that two new features that allow reporting of gender sensitive data on Interventions for Results and Monitoring have been added to the EU OPSYS⁵⁰ in 2023. The two new features are:

- **Gender Sensitive Marker** – which will allow the calculation of the percentage of EU-funded Interventions that collect gender-specific data. The marker measures the availability of data at Intervention-level, which is relevant to monitor and evaluate from a gender perspective.
- **Gender Sensitive Flag** – has been added on indicators, which will also support additional analysis and reporting on gender-related topics⁵¹.

One new action supporting public finance management reforms has been approved for North Macedonia in 2022 – EU for Modern Public Administration. In this document, gender equality is marked as a significant objective. However, the rapid gender analysis revealed that this AD does not fully comply with the OECD DAC minimum criteria. On one hand, the AD does mention the newly adopted Organic Budget Law (OBL), which introduces gender equality and gender responsive budgeting as one of its key principles. It also refers to the Public Financial Management (PFM)

49 Information obtained through meetings and interviews with DG NEAR and the EUDs.

50 OPSYS stands for Operational System, and it is the information system used by the European Commission for External Actions.

51 Information obtained from meetings with EUDs and DG NEAR during the drafting phase for this report.

Programme 2022-2025, which follows the new OBL. Additionally, the 2012 Strategy for Gender Responsive Budgeting is mentioned⁵² and it is also noted that the Ministry of Finance has amended the budget instructions by introducing a gender budget analysis. Nevertheless, this 2022 action document does not have a specific component relating to gender budgeting.

CRITERION E. THE EU LEADS BY EXAMPLE

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. Number and % of women in senior and middle management positions in the EU Delegation/Office (indicator 10.1 GAP III)	Cannot be concluded	0	Cannot be concluded
2. % of management trained on gender equality and GAP III in EU Delegation and CSDP mission (indicator 10.2)	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded
3. % of management trained on women, peace and security in EU Delegation and CSDP mission (indicator 10.2)	N/A	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded
4. Number of Gender Adviser / Gender Focal Points in the EU Delegation and CSDP mission	1	1	0

According to official EU information, in North Macedonia, the Head of the EU Delegation, as well as the Deputy Head of Delegation and the Head of Cooperation are all men.

There has been no change in the number of Gender Advisers (GA)/ Gender Focal Points (GFP) in the EUD to North Macedonia. As noted in the previous report, there is no full-time dedicated GA/GFP. The currently appointed GFP in North Macedonia is a woman and she is simultaneously a focal point for civil society, which is her primary role. She handles both civil society relations and gender related topics. Considering her extensive primary responsibilities, this might potentially limit the time she could spend working on gender equality issues, especially if it is expected from one single person to handle the overall gender mainstreaming of the work of the EUD and the corresponding programming processes and documents. In the baseline monitoring period, it was reported that the GFP was trained on gender equality and GAP III in 2021.

We could not conclude the size and scope of the additional trainings for EUD staff from publicly available sources. There is no publicly available information on the

⁵² This Strategy covered the period from 2012 to 2017 and has not been renewed.

other two national indicators in this section referring to the training of staff on gender equality, GAP III and WPS. The baseline monitoring report noted that there is a focal point in the EUD that deals with the topic of WPS but training on this subject is not mandatory prior to deployment⁵³. Since these indicators are taken from GAP III, more information should be available after the publication of the midterm GAP III monitoring report.

CRITERION F. GOVERNMENT ADOPTS LEGISLATION IN LINE WITH THE EU ACQUIS COMMUNAUTAIRE ON GENDER EQUALITY AND CONSULTS WOMEN'S ORGANISATIONS

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. Extent to which gender equality is addressed in the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA)	Minimally	Minimally	0
2. Extent to which key laws on gender equality and EU Accession are open for public consultation	Moderately	Moderately	0
3. Extent to which inputs on Laws / amendments / policies by women's organisations in line with the EU Acquis on gender equality are taken on board	Moderately	Moderately	0
4. Extent to which new sectoral strategies are publicly available	Fully	Fully	1
5. Extent to which new sectoral strategies mainstream gender equality	Moderately	Moderately	0
6. % of sector working groups (or the like) with women's rights organisations included/represented	25%	Cannot be concluded	Cannot be concluded

The National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis 2021-2025 (NPAA)⁵⁴ has not been revised during 2022.⁵⁵ The official response of the SEA states that the intention is to continually revise the NPAA to address the findings and recommendations

53 Meeting with the Gender Equality Coordinator at DG NEAR, 2022.

54 [https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/NPAA/NPAA%20ENG%20Final_compressed%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/NPAA/NPAA%20ENG%20Final_compressed%20(1).pdf)

55 Official written response to freedom of information request of the SEA number 17-1473/2 from August 18th, 2023.

from the screening reports, as well as from the next Country Report. The next revision is expected to cover the period from 2024 to 2030. Therefore, the findings from the previous monitoring report remain valid. Reactor's direct involvement⁵⁶ in evidence-based advocacy towards the NPAA and a detailed text analysis of the document confirm that the NPAA is gender mainstreamed to a minimal extent. The document is predominantly gender-neutral and references to gender equality are mainly in the form of general commitments which are not further connected to planned activities and substantial allocated budgeting. For instance, there is only one direct reference to gender equality in the budget section of this document, under Chapter 3.19 Social policy and Employment, Item 7: Antidiscrimination and equal opportunities. Both for the period of 2021/2022 and 2022/2023, these allocations amount to approximately 0,05% of the sub-total for this budget section (i.e., 8.168.000 MKD out of 16,949,990,000 MKD foreseen for the period 2022/2023).⁵⁷ As noted in the Screening Report for North Macedonia⁵⁸, no clear monitoring of the NPAA is established and currently there are no available reports. Considering the upcoming revision of the NPAA, this presents a significant opportunity for engaging in consultations with WCSOs, gender equality experts, as well as utilizing the existing gender equality machinery to enhance gender mainstreaming within the NPAA.

As highlighted in the previous report, key laws on gender equality and EU Accession are open for public consultations to a moderate extent. Government officials consider that these laws are fully open for public consultation because they are accessible on the national electronic consultation system (ENER), and public debates are organised.⁵⁹ Draft laws concerning gender equality are also frequently published on the MLSP website. However, while ENER allows for the inclusive participation of all stakeholders in public consultations, both (W)CSO representatives and the European Commission have pointed out that national institutions do not ensure proper follow-up, and there is limited reporting on the outcomes of these consultations⁶⁰. Furthermore, there are considerable challenges associated with timely, systematic, and meaningful participation of WCSOs in public debates, including those on the new draft Law on Gender Equality.

56 Provision of written input and participation to online consultations during the first quarter of 2021.

57 NPAA 2021-2025. Annex 3: Budget projections (indicative 2020/2021-2024); status: 27.06.2021. Table 1: Projected budgeting (2020/2021-2024), per chapters, page 4; available at: https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/NPAA/NPAA%202021/Aneks3_Budgetski_proekcii_15_07_2021.pdf

58 Screening Report North Macedonia, available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/202307/MK%20Cluster_1%20Draft%20screening%20report_external%20version.pdf

59 Interview responses from NIPAC and MLSP, 2023.

60 Interviews with WCSO representatives in 2023 and the 2022 EC Country Report and Screening Report for North Macedonia, available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022_en https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2023-07/MK%20Cluster_1%20Draft%20screening%20report_external%20version.pdf

And, despite some good examples of close collaboration and ad-hoc consultations between the MLSP and (W)CSOs, interview responses from civil society suggest that these meetings primarily involve larger, Skopje-based organisations and that the participation of local organisations is rather limited.

WCSOs are also frequently invited, typically by the MLSP, to participate in working groups responsible for drafting specific laws related to gender equality. However, late notices remain as a challenge (working materials are often sent with little advance notice, sometimes just days before the meeting),⁶¹ as well as lack of follow-up information on the uptake of suggestions made by WCSOs. Transparency can also be an issue in these processes, with some working groups ceasing to function without official explanation to (W)CSO members, as seen in the case of the Law on Labour Relations⁶². Therefore, the findings from the baseline monitoring report remain relevant and timely, continuous, and meaningful engagement of WCSOs, as well as systematic mechanisms for transparent and fair inclusion are still lacking. WCSOs are typically involved in the initial drafting phases, followed by extended periods of no official feedback, culminating in a draft or final approved document that does not consistently incorporate the input and comments provided by WCSOs. There are also instances in which (W)CSOs are not invited to participate in the working group and their input is considered after the draft text is published, as in the case of the amendments to the Criminal Code. Interviews with WCSO representatives indicate that the inclusion of local civil society organisations in these working groups for drafting of laws is limited as well. During these interviews it was highlighted that, the extent to which (W)CSOs input was accepted can also depend on the political will of the current minister.

Same as in the baseline monitoring, new sectoral strategies are fully available and published on the respective ministries' websites. To examine the extent to which national strategies mainstream gender equality, we assessed the nine strategies adopted during the reference year for this report or beginning with implementation in 2022, as follows:

- [National Strategy for Small Arms and Light Weapons \(SALW\) Control and National Action Plan 2022 - 2024](#)
- [Strategy for Inclusion of Roma 2022 - 2030](#)
- [Strategy for Improvement of the Public Procurement System in North Macedonia for the period of 2022-2026](#)
- [National Strategy for Integrated Border Management 2021-2025](#)⁶³
- [Strategy of the Government of North Macedonia for Cooperation with and](#)

61 Interviews with WCSO representatives, 2023 and Reactor's own experiences as part of these working groups.

62 Civil society representatives were included and consulted up until June 2021 and the draft-text was finalised outside of the working group. A reaction was issued by the Platform for Gender Equality and the Network for Protection against Discrimination, available at: <https://bit.ly/46mz57i> (text available only in Macedonian)

63 Adopted in March 2022.

Development of Civil Society with Action Plan 2022-2024⁶⁴

- Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2023-2025 (with prospects until 2027)
- National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2022-2026
- Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027
- Public Debt Management Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2023-2025 (with 2027 prospects) and its revised version.

The extent to which the analysed strategies paid attention to gender equality varied immensely. Therefore, the mark for this indicator remained the same as in the baseline monitoring report. More than half, or five out of the nine strategies cannot be considered as gender mainstreamed at all - they do not mention nor reference gender and women, and if gender equality is mentioned it is mostly in the form of general commitments. These strategies are the Strategy of Improvement of the Public Procurement System, the National Strategy for Integrated Border Management, the Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society (which mentions the principle of equality and non-discrimination as one of its basic principles, but without going into any further detail), the Fiscal Strategy (women and gender equality are mentioned once each as part of IPA financed activities) and the Public Debt Management Strategy. The most extensively gender mainstreamed are, as expected, the Gender Equality Strategy and the Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination, as well as the National Strategy for Small Arms and Light Weapons. The Strategy for Inclusion of Roma is considered as moderately gender mainstreamed as there are parts of the document that reflect on the position of Roma women and girls and include gender disaggregated data, but there are also significant portions of the document that remain gender neutral. However, it is important to note that there is a specific action plan to address this issue – the National Action Plan for the Protection, Promotion, and Fulfilment of Human Rights of Roma Women and Girls 2022-2024⁶⁵.

As explained in the previous monitoring report, 12 Sector Working Groups (SWGs) are currently functioning in North Macedonia⁶⁶. In 2021, WCSOs were included in three out of 12 (or 25%) of SWGs. However, it was also observed that civil society participation is not uniform and formalised and that even when CSOs are represented, they face obstacles for meaningful participation. To assess whether WCSOs were represented at these meetings in 2022, freedom of information requests were sent to all line ministries that coordinate and prepare the work of the SWGs. Two SWGs did not hold meetings in 2022⁶⁷ and, for several SWGs, the data was insufficient

64 This Strategy was adopted on 28th of December 2021, but it was not included in the baseline monitoring report as its implementation begins from and it covers the year of 2022.

65 Available at the MLSP website: <https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nsp>

66 The SWGs cover the following policy areas: justice, internal affairs, public administration reform, public finance management, competitiveness and innovations, regional and local development, agriculture and rural development, transport, environment and climate action, education, employment and social policy, Roma integration and health.

67 The SWGs on transport and internal affairs did not hold meetings in 2022.

to determine whether WCSOs were included⁶⁸. The information provided by the national institutions suggested that WCSOs were represented in at least six of the SWG meetings in 2022. Nonetheless, from the responses we received we could not draw a definite conclusion.

CRITERION G. GOVERNMENT IMPLEMENTS RECOMMENDATIONS ON GENDER EQUALITY INCLUDED IN THE COUNTRY REPORT

Indicator	2021	2022	Rating
1. Extent to which recommendations on gender equality included in the Country Report have been implemented by the government/institutions	Moderately	Minimally	-0.5

The score in this section refers to the implementation of the recommendations made by the EC in the 2021 Report, as national institutions were able to work on them during the monitoring period (2022). The two official recommendations on gender equality that were included in the 2021 Country Report were reiterated in 2022. In Chapter 23, the EC recommended that national authorities “implement all the provisions of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, and to allocate the necessary resources enabling the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination to become fully functional”. The 2021 Report’s narrative also noted that “there has been criticism concerning a perceived lack of diversity in the new Commission, notably as regards to gender and persons with disabilities” and that “the new Commission faced numerous logistical and financial challenges that need to be addressed in order to become fully operational”. However, national institutions did not adequately address these challenges. The annual budget of the Commission was reduced, the recruitment of administrative staff was not completed, and Parliament did not fill the two vacant positions, resulting in no improvement in diversity in 2022. Civil society representatives also highlighted that the independence of the Commission is affected by the legal requirement to request prior budget related approvals from the Ministry of Finance⁶⁹.

68 For instance, some of the responses only stated that civil society organisations were invited without providing a list of participants. One line ministry responded that because of mishandling of documentation by an employee they could not provide answers.

69 Interview with a (W)CSO representative, 2023.

In Chapter 19, as an official recommendation, the EC encouraged national authorities to “continue to implement activation measures for long-term and low-skilled unemployed people, including women, persons with disabilities and Roma, and ensure proper monitoring and evaluation of such measures”. The Government attempted to address these challenges through adoption of strategies, action plans and yearly monitoring reports. However, this grey-box recommendation was repeated in 2022 indicating limited progress and a continuous need for improvement in this area.

Although not an official recommendation, Chapter 23 of the 2021 Report emphasized the necessity for the “alignment of related laws, adoption of bylaws and of operating procedures” for the operationalisation of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. While some bylaws have been prepared and adopted, the adoption of other essential implementing legislation remains pending⁷⁰. Furthermore, the 2021 Report highlighted that “an effective monitoring system for the implementation of the Convention’s action plan is still lacking”. Interview responses suggested that the monitoring of the National Action Plan for Implementation of the Istanbul Convention 2018-2023 will be initiated after its expiration⁷¹. This may potentially cause a lag in addressing the identified challenges in the preparation phases for the new action plan.

The 2021 Report noted that “the capacities of shelters need to be enhanced to meet the Istanbul Convention standards, including those on access to women with disabilities”. A more detailed version of this recommendation was included in the following Report, indicating that national authorities have not fully addressed it. According to information provided by the MLSP, at the time of writing this report North Macedonia has 13 regional specialised services for accommodation of women victims of domestic violence (DW) and gender-based violence (GBV). Additionally, there are 10 specialised counselling centres for women victims of DW and GBV, three centres for referral of victims of sexual violence and eight specialised counselling centres for psycho-social treatment of DW perpetrators⁷². However, regarding these services for both victims and perpetrators, among other things, GERVIO’s Baseline Evaluation Report for North Macedonia⁷³ highlights several critical issues. For instance, in general, perpetrator programs are not functional, they lack adequately trained staff and there are no programmes for perpetrators in custody, nor for sex offenders during their probation. Additionally, there are indications that there are not enough shelters and that the shelters that are available are in larger cities, making them difficult to access for many women from rural and remote areas. Finally, support for victims of sexual violence is provided in only one shelter in the country. The 2021 Country Report noted the situation regarding the status of the two “Public Room” cases and the civic protests that arose due to the “lack of timely action by the authorities” and the gaps in the legislative framework. Even though national institutions did work on and prepare amendments to align the Criminal Code with the Istanbul Convention in 2022, these amendments were adopted by the Parliament after the monitoring period for this report, in February 2023.

70 Interview with a MLSP representative, 2023 and the EC Country Report for 2022.

71 Interview with a MLSP representative, 2023.

72 Interview with a MLSP representative, 2023 and Screening Report for North Macedonia.

73 GERVIO Baseline Monitoring Report North Macedonia (2023). Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/baseline-evaluation-report-on-north-macedonia/1680ac76ab>

The 2021 Country Report pointed out that the 2019 National Gender Equality Index (GEI) was not updated and emphasized that “proper gathering and analysis of gender statistics requires enhancement of the capacity of relevant institutions and improved coordination”. During the monitoring period for this report the GEI was not updated. Although it was being prepared during 2022, the publication of the GEI occurred the following year, coinciding with the concluding phases of this report. During interviews, administrative and technical issues were pointed out as the reason for the delay in publication⁷⁴. More detail on the GEI is available below under Criterion I. The recommendation for increasing the capacity of national institutions concerning gender statistics was reiterated in the 2022 Report, indicating the ongoing need for improvement and limited progress in this area.

In 2021 the EC noted that “the promotion of equality and condemnation of discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes against LGBTIQ people needs to be enhanced in practice”. Furthermore, no progress was observed in the investigations into attacks against LGBTIQ activists and the LGBTIQ support centre. In 2022, the National Strategy for Equality and Non-discrimination 2022-2026, which includes antidiscrimination measures for LGBTIQ individuals, was adopted. However, it is crucial to allocate appropriate resources for its effective implementation. Consulted sources also confirm that national strategies are frequently prepared without considering the fiscal implications⁷⁵, which potentially affects their operationalisation. This recommendation by the EC was also repeated in the 2022 Country Report, suggesting lack of progress in this regard.

Finally, the 2021 Country Report highlighted the limited progress on inclusion of Roma. During the monitoring period, some progress was made in addressing these recommendations. Specifically, the Strategy for Roma inclusion 2022-2030 was adopted, along with the Action plan for the protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the human rights of Roma women and girls 2022-2024. Additionally, an adviser to the President of the Government in charge of Roma inclusion issues was appointed. As in the baseline monitoring period, several recommendations were excluded from the 2022 Report although they had not been fully addressed by national authorities. For instance, all references to Resolution 1325 and WPS issues were omitted. On the other hand, after continuous advocacy by WCSOs through the year, the recommendation regarding legal gender recognition based on self-determination was reinstated.

74 Interview with an MLSP representative, 2023.

75 Ibid.

CRITERION H. PROGRAMMING OF IPA III AT NATIONAL LEVEL PRIORITISES GENDER EQUALITY

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. Extent to which responsible government bodies consulted women's organisations for the development of the Multi-annual Indicative Programmes [IPA III Strategic Response]	Minimally	Minimally	0
2. Extent to which Multi-Annual Indicative Programme [IPA III Strategic Response] includes gender equality objectives	Moderately	Moderately	0
3. Extent to which annual Indicative Programs or Action Documents contain a gender perspective	Moderately	Moderately	0

The IPA III Strategic Response was revised in June 2022, and it is available on SEA's website⁷⁶. The official written response to whether the SEA has consulted WCSOs and included their input stated that the UN Women led Gender Equality Facility project was consulted⁷⁷. SEA's answer, as well as feedback from several WCSOs, implies that (W)CSO participation and consultation while preparing the revised Strategic Response was very limited.

The revised version of the Strategic Response does not have a lot of adjustments from a gender mainstreaming perspective. Women and gender are mentioned slightly more times than in the previous version, 34 and 36 times respectively. This improvement is due to the inclusion of a new AD for the programming year 2023 – EU for Fundamental Rights, which aims at fighting discrimination and ensuring the protection of and the social integration of children and women, LGBTI, people with disabilities and minorities⁷⁸. As in the previous version, gender equality is addressed

⁷⁶ <https://www.sep.gov.mk/page/?id=1120>

⁷⁷ Official written response to freedom of information request of the SEA number 17-1473/2 from August 18th, 2023. An answer to whether WCSOs were consulted for the revision of the IPA III Strategic Response.

⁷⁸ It should be noted that the EU budget for 2023 in the amount of 80 million EUR was used to address and mitigate the consequences of the energy crisis and the planned ADs for 2023 were transferred for financing to the EU budget for 2024. More information available at SEA's website on the following link: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/page/?id=1120> (information available only in Macedonian)

in four Thematic priorities⁷⁹ and women are mentioned in six of the Thematic priorities⁸⁰.

As elaborated under Criterion D, in 2022, three out of five ADs have gender equality as a significant objective and in one of these five documents, gender equality is a principal objective. The AD EU for Modern Wastewater Systems has been marked with GM0, following the OECD DAC gender equality policy marker⁸¹, which means it does not target gender equality. Three ADs have been marked as gender sensitive with GM1⁸² (EU Integration Facility, EU for Modern Public Administration and EU for Improved Border and Migration Management), and in one AD gender equality is the principal objective and it is marked with GM2 (EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality). As in the previous report covering 2021, Reactor made a rapid gender analysis of the official ADs which is available as Annex 3 at the end of this report. It provides a brief analysis of their compliance with the minimum recommended criteria for the OECD gender equality marker.

In general, GM1 marked documents do not fully comply with the gender marker minimum criteria. In most cases, references to women and gender are included in the mainstreaming section and, generally, there are very few related objectives and indicators to measure changes towards gender equality. In the baseline monitoring period, it was reported that only two of the six documents factored in gender-related targets to some extent, though they did not fully adhere to the gender marker criteria. In comparison, in 2022 improvement can be noted as the country has had its first approved IPA III AD with gender equality as its principal objective. Namely, out of five ADs, one is a GM2 document and in most part complies with the OECD DAC minimum criteria (EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality). One document is gender-sensitive to some extent and includes several activities that specifically target women (EU Integration Facility). Slight improvement compared to 2021 has been noted in this document⁸³. Notably, an additional indicative activity specifically targeting women has been added in 2022 which further translates some of the general commitments from the mainstreaming section into tangible actions. Similar to the prior report, the ADs marked with GM1 aim to have a positive impact on advancing gender equality but fail to meet in full the minimum recommended criteria.

79 Thematic priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health; Thematic priority 2: Administrative capacity and EU acquis alignment; Thematic priority 4: Strategic communication, monitoring, evaluation, and communication activities; Thematic priority 5: Fundamental rights.

80 Thematic priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health; Thematic priority 2: Administrative capacity and EU acquis alignment; Thematic priority 3: Fight against organised crime/security; Thematic priority 5: Fundamental rights; Thematic priority 6: Democracy; Thematic priority 7: Civil society.

81 The OECD tracks aid in support of gender equality and women's rights using the OECD-DAC gender equality policy marker – a qualitative statistical tool to record development activities that target gender equality as a policy objective. More information available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>

82 Meaning gender equality is a significant objective.

83 Action document approved both for 2021 and 2022.

The G2 marked AD - EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality in most part follows the OECD DAC minimum criteria. The Action is focused on promoting gender equality, developing services for prevention and protection from gender-based violence, as well as improving maternal health care and women health care in two pilot regions in North Macedonia. Gender inequalities are analysed extensively in the context part of the AD and the analysis relies upon sex-disaggregated data. There are indicators that measure changes toward gender equality which are disaggregated by sex where relevant, though this could be further improved. While developing the AD in 2021, consultations with civil society were organised as part of an EU funded national project⁸⁴, where (W)CSOs, including Reactor, provided their input⁸⁵. Additionally, WCSOs will be able to participate in the implementation of the Action as contracting parties.

CRITERION I. SEX-DISAGGREGATED DATA IS COLLECTED BY NATIONAL STATISTICAL OFFICES

	Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1.	The Country has an updated Gender Equality Index (GEI) at national level	No	No ⁸⁶	0
2.	Whether National Statistical Offices publish a report with easily accessible sex-disaggregated data that is sufficient for the public's use (based on Women & Men publication)	Extensively	Extensively	0

Despite the expected update during this monitoring period, the National Gender Equality Index (GEI) for North Macedonia was not published in 2022. The available edition was the GEI published in 2019 by the State Statistical Office (SSO) and the MLSP⁸⁷. It was calculated based on the methodology and framework developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and it provided an overview of the situation in 2015. According to this GEI, North Macedonia scored 62 out of a maximum score of 100, while lagging significantly behind the EU average in the domains of Money and Time. The domain of Power was the only one where North

84 EU funded national project: CSO DIALOGUE – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integration, more information available at: <https://reactor.org.mk/en/wp-all/www-dijalogkoneu-mk/>

85 Even though Reactor did not receive feedback from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy on the uptake of their proposals, by analysing the document we observed that some of the issues that Reactor raised were addressed.

86 The GEI was updated and published during the drafting of this report, but after the cut-off date for this monitoring period.

87 Bashevka, Marija (2019). Gender equality index for North Macedonia 2019: measuring gender equality. Available at: https://www.mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/dokumenti/2019/Gender%20Index_ENG.pdf

Macedonia outperformed the EU average which is partly attributable to the larger presence of women in Parliament as a result of the legally imposed quotas for the underrepresented gender. As explained in the 2019 GEI report, the satellite domains Violence and Intersectional inequalities were missing from the edition due to the lack of data.

While finalising this report, the second GEI for North Macedonia was published in July, 2023⁸⁸. The updated GEI is based on the latest available data for 2019 and North Macedonia scored 64.5 points which is an increase of 2.5 points compared to the previous GEI.

The publication *Women and Men in North Macedonia* is a compilation of gender statistic produced by the SSO⁸⁹. The most recent available publication during the monitoring period was *Women and Men in North Macedonia, 2020*⁹⁰. This publication presents gender disaggregated data divided in three thematic sections: Population and Health, Education and Communication, Labour Market and Social Welfare. As reported during the baseline monitoring period, Reactor's gender analysis of statistics in North Macedonia⁹¹ found that there is potential to enhance the scope of available gender statistics within the publication. Even though the publication provides an overview of available gender statistics, interpretation of the underlying gender inequalities is limited⁹². It should include more and timely data in crucial spheres, such as unpaid labour, gender inequalities in time use, power and decision-making, as well as gender-based violence. There is also lack of correlation between the introduction of gender equality policies and changes observed in data over time⁹³.

It is worth noting that the thirteenth edition of “*Women and Men in North Macedonia*” was published in 2023, during the drafting phases of this report. While there is still a lack of data on crucial gender gaps, this edition covers more areas compared to previous ones and attends to intersectional inequalities to some extent.

88 Bashevskaja, Marija (2023). Gender Equality Index for North Macedonia 2022. Available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija_1_en.aspx?rbr=886

89 Publications available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PublikaciiPoOblast_en.aspx?id=23&rbrObl=37

90 State Statistical Office (2021). *Women and Men in North Macedonia, 2020*. Available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPublikacija_en.aspx?id=23&rbr=829

91 Tanja Ivanova, Vaska Leshoska, Irina Jolevska (2021). *Gender Statistics and Gender Mainstreaming of the Statistical System of North Macedonia – Gender Analysis*. Reactor - Research in Action (2022); available at: https://reactor.org.mk/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/08/rodova_analiza_en-1.pdf

92 Ibid.

93 Ibid.

CRITERION J. NATIONAL BODIES RESPONSIBLE FOR EU INTEGRATION INCLUDE STAFF WITH GENDER EXPERTISE

Indicators	2021	2022	Rating
1. Extent to which gender expertise exists in the government body responsible for EU integration	Minimally	Minimally	0
2. % of staff trained on gender equality in the national body responsible for EU integration	3,6% (3 out of 83 employees in 2021)	6% (6 out of 100 employees in 2022)	0.5
3. Extent to which Gender Focal Points are consulted in the IPA programming	Minimally	Moderately	0.5
4. Extent to which gender equality expertise exists in national statistical offices	Minimally	Moderately	0.5

The situation concerning gender expertise in the SEA remains the same as in the baseline monitoring period and there is no dedicated GFP⁹⁴. Both interview and official written responses confirm that very few employees have had formal education or had the opportunity to work on gender-related issues and gender mainstreaming. Limited existing gender expertise is primarily derived from previous experience and informal training.

In the baseline monitoring period, only 3,6% of SEA employees received gender equality training. Additionally, it was noted that by 2021, 61 SEA employees have completed either the basic or advanced modules of an e-training course on gender equality. This course was developed by the MLSP and accessible on the e-learning platform for public administration employees operated by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA). However, in the official written response, the SEA highlights that the licence and the capacity for the server of the e-learning platform have expired and this issue has not been resolved to date. Consequently, since the beginning of 2020, no new administration employees have been able to access these two e-training courses on gender equality. In 2022, the SEA had 100 employees of which 58 were women and 42 men. Regrettably, only 6 out of these 100 employees received training on gender equality through the previously mentioned UN Women GEF Project⁹⁵.

94 Written response to interview questions by the NIPAC.

95 Written response to interview questions by the NIPAC and Official written response to freedom of information request of the SEA number 17-1473/2 from August 18th, 2023

Regarding the inclusion of the GFPs in IPA programming, the response from the NIPAC stated that this is not obligatory, and it is left to the discretion of the relevant ministry. To assess the extent to which GFPs were included in IPA programming in 2022, freedom of information requests were sent to the line ministries responsible for preparing and coordinating the work of the 12 SWGs in North Macedonia. Analysing their responses, it was observed that in 2022, GFPs were included in IPA programming to a moderate extent. Specifically, five out of the 12 ministries reported that they had consulted IPA programming issues with their GFP ⁹⁶. As a result, the score for this indicator has improved from the baseline monitoring period, moving from minimal to moderate.

The previous monitoring report noted that the SSO does not have a dedicated gender equality sector, department or systematized full-time position responsible for coordinating gender statistics across sectors. During the initial monitoring period, it was concluded that the SSO demonstrated minimal gender expertise, primarily manifesting through the consistent publication of sex-disaggregated data in the Women and Men in North Macedonia publication, while the core gender expertise largely resided outside the institution. However, diverse sources indicate that the SSO has made moderate progress in terms of gender expertise, though there is ample room for improvement. The SSO engaged in meaningful work during the year, including updating the GEI and producing the thirteenth edition of the Women and Men publication (which covers more areas and incorporates certain intersectionality aspects), even though these publications were finalised and published in 2023. Furthermore, in 2022, the SSO conducted two surveys, one on the situation of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence from January to March and another focusing on the safety of women in the family and society from July to September⁹⁷. However, to date, the results from these two surveys are not publicly available.

Despite the noted progress, the SSO continues to face persistent challenges, such as high employee turnover and understaffing, which is also regularly addressed in the Country Reports. These ongoing issues could potentially deter SSO's efforts to further enhance its gender expertise. Finally, as in the baseline monitoring, the ownership of gender-related analyses remains primarily external⁹⁸.

96 Three of the ministries did not involve GFPs in IPA programming in any capacity and four ministries did not provide a definitive response to this question.

97 GREVIO Baseline Monitoring Report North Macedonia (2023). Available at: <https://rm.coe.int/baseline-evaluation-report-on-north-macedonia/1680ac76ab>

98 They are typically produced by external experts supported and funded through UN Women projects.

CONCLUSION

When comparing the findings from this report to the baseline monitoring, we could conclude that some progress was achieved, but it was minimal and crucial challenges remain. For instance, even though the 2022 Country Report incorporated slightly more references to gender and women and the number of recommendations included in the narrative rose, the number of official (grey box) recommendations stayed the same. Additionally, the percentage of chapters that are considered as gender-mainstreamed remained at only 6%. Both in 2021 and 2022, the input from WCSOs was moderately included in the Report, but it was often shortened, and key recommendations were omitted.

As for the SAA processes, the lack of transparency regarding the meetings of these structures continued being a concern in 2022 as well. Slight improvement has been observed in the percentage of Sub-Committee meetings that addressed gender equality issues to some extent, rising from 16% in 2021 to 33% in 2022. Improvement is also noted in the criterion related to the IPA programming at country level, as North Macedonia had its first AD approved where gender equality is a principal objective. However, both in 2021 and 2022, the rapid gender analysis of the GM1 marked ADs revealed that, in general, they do not fully comply with the OECD DAC gender marker minimum criteria. During this second monitoring period, there was also improvement in the inclusion of GFP in IPA programming as well as moderate progress in the gender expertise of the SSO.

Backsliding has been noted in the implementation of recommendations included in the Country Report. While in 2021 one of the official gender equality related recommendations was addressed, in this monitoring period minimal progress was achieved and most of the recommendations were reiterated in 2022.

A large portion of the findings from the baseline monitoring remained relevant and valid in this monitoring period. For instance, the NPAA was not revised in 2022 and therefore this document is still considered as gender mainstreamed to a minimal extent. Additionally, the GCP as well as the GEI were not finalised and published before the cut-off date for this report. The newest edition of Women and Men in North Macedonia was also published after this monitoring period ended, in 2023. The extent of gender expertise in the SEA did not change from the baseline monitoring and remained minimal.

WCSOs continued to face meaningful challenges regarding their participation in different aspects of the accession process. Their involvement in both the preparation of the Strategic Response and its revised version was limited. Draft laws on gender equality and EU accession were available for public consultations and women's organisations were included in some of the working groups for drafting of these laws, but what was lacking was proper follow up and feedback on the uptake of their comments and recommendations. New sectoral strategies were fully publicly available during this monitoring period as well. However, the conclusion remains that they are moderately gender mainstreamed, with more than half of the strategies not mentioning gender and women at all or merely referencing gender equality in the form of general commitments.

Both in 2021 and in 2022, the EUD engaged in dialogue on gender equality issues with national institutions and with WCSOs to a moderate extent. There was not enough information available to assess the dialogue between the EUD and women's organisations on WPS issues. Finally, diverse sources suggested that there is a growing need to strengthen and enhance the interinstitutional dialogue between different national institutions, especially between the SEA and the Sector for Equal Opportunities within the MLSP.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the EU:

- Progressively enhance efforts for gender mainstreaming of all chapters of the Country Report and continue with efforts to increase the number of official (grey-box) recommendations on crucial gender equality issues
- Ensure that gender disaggregated data is included in the Country Reports and where official data is lacking use reliable and relevant data from (W) CSOs
- Continue with the good practice of consulting diverse WCSOs in the preparation phases of the Country Reports and enhance efforts to utilise their input without excluding relevant observations and
- Increase transparency of the SAA processes by providing publicly available information on the meetings of the SAA Committee and Sub-Committees, including making the agendas available beforehand, as well as the meeting conclusions after each meeting
- Consult with women's organisations ahead of the meetings of the SAA structures as per the good practice for including WCSOs in the Country Report preparation process
- Prioritise the development and regular update of the GCP, continue conducting comprehensive sector-specific gender analyses, collaborate with WCSOs and utilise their input to inform the revised version of the CLIPs
- Foster dialogue with civil society and women's organisations on gender equality and enhance efforts to engage in dialogue with WCSOs on WPS issues
- Ensure that gender equality objectives are integrated in IPA III ADs and establish a quality control system to ensure that ADs are marked correctly as per OECD DAC gender marker criteria
- Improve OPSYS to track more accurately the amount of funding in support of gender equality at country level, as well as the amount directed towards women's organisations and movements
- Ensure support to dedicated Gender Advisors/Focal Points and continuous training for them and other EUD staff with accompanying guidelines and job descriptions that include gender equality principles and contribute to the gender mainstreaming of the national EU accession, programming and policies.

Recommendations for the national government

- Increase efforts to implement both the official (grey-box) recommendations related to gender equality and other recommendations included in the narrative of the Country Reports
- Continue with and reinforce efforts to gender mainstream all national strategic documents and policies
- Improve gender mainstreaming of the NPAA and the IPA III Strategic Response, ensure that ADs are correctly marked and that they meet the requirements of the OECD DAC gender marker criteria
- Provide targeted capacity building and training to professionals involved in IPA programming and SWGs with emphasis on gender mainstreaming and OECD DAC gender marker
- Improve WCSO participation in SWGs and prioritise gender equality as a cross-cutting theme
- Ensure systematic, meaningful and timely consultation with civil society, particularly with WCSOs in all EU accession related processes, enhance efforts to include local (W)CSOs in these processes and ensure their diverse perspectives are considered
- Consult with WCSOs ahead of the meetings of the SAA structures and increase transparency by publishing the agendas and conclusions of the meetings of the SAA Committee and Sub-Committee meetings
- Ensure (W)CSOs are consulted, and their input is included in the NPAA, IPA III Strategic Response, ADs, sector strategies, as well as key laws on gender equality and EU accession and provide feedback on the uptake of their proposals.
- Continue with and increase the good practice of consulting the gender focal points in line ministries on IPA programming
- Foster interinstitutional dialogue on gender equality and EU accession, specifically between the SEA and the Sector for Equal Opportunities within the MLSP
- Improve the collection of sex and gender disaggregated data to address key gender gaps and intersectional inequalities and ensure that the GEI is regularly updated
- Continue publishing regularly the Women and Men in North Macedonia publication and enhance efforts to broaden the scope of available gender statistics in crucial areas such as unpaid labour, gender inequalities in time use and GBV and ensure that data on key gaps, as the gender pay gap and gender pension gap, are regularly collected and updated
- Strengthen gender expertise within national institutions, especially within the SEA and the SSO by providing ongoing training on gender equality that goes beyond the e-learning course
- Allocate adequate financial resources to address staff turnover and understaffing issues within the SSO.

ANNEX 1. DATA SOURCES

In addition to the policies, documents and primary sources mentioned herein, this report was informed by consultations with the following institutions and organisations, either through data requests, via email correspondence or through face-to-face interviews:

- Secretariat for European Affairs
- National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC)
- Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
- Ministry of Internal Affairs
- Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
- Ministry of Health
- Office of the Deputy of the Prime Minister in charge of economic affairs, coordination of economic sectors and investments
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
- Ministry of Justice
- Ministry of Local Self-Government
- Ministry of Information Society and Administration
- Ministry of Transport and Communications
- Ministry of Finance
- Helsinki Committee for Human Rights
- Rural Coalition
- Association for protection of workers rights Glasen Tekstilec Shtip
- HZ Mother

ANNEX 2. BRIEF ANALYSIS OF SAA SUB-COMMITTEE MEETINGS

This Annex contains an overview and a brief analysis of the six Sub-Committee meetings that were held in 2022.

1. The **17th meeting of the Sub-Committee on Internal Market, Competition, Health and Consumer Protection** took place online, on February 9th, 2022). Various topics were discussed, including the importance of aligning national legislation with the EU acquis in the area of state aid, anti-trust and mergers, trade secrets, patients' rights in cross-border healthcare, private-public partnership, securities markets and investment funds. The meeting agenda and conclusions did not specifically mention or address gender equality.
2. On the **18th Sub-Committee on Transport, Environment, Energy and Regional Development** (virtual meeting held on March 17th, 2022) participants discussed the European Green Deal and its Green Agenda for the Western Balkans, as well as the main developments and challenges in the areas of environment, climate action, transport, regional policy and coordination of structural instruments, as well as energy. There was no specific reference to gender equality in the agenda and conclusions.
3. The **18th Sub-Committee meeting on Innovation, Information Society and Social Policy** (held on April 28th, 2022) included four areas of discussion: Education and Culture, Information Society and Media, Social Policy and Employment and Research and Innovation Policy. All discussion topics on the agenda under Social Policy and Employment touch upon gender equality issues. Furthermore, the agenda had a separate discussion point on anti-discrimination and equal opportunities. It included updates on gender equality, the progress in implementing the Law for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, as well as the development of the new Strategy for Equality and Anti-Discrimination 2022-2026. The conclusions under Social Policy and Employment are all related to and relevant for advancing gender equality. For example, North Macedonia was urged to finalise and adopt the new Labour Law. The urgent adoption of the Labour Law and its harmonisation with the EU acquis, especially with the Work-Life Balance Directive, has been an important advocacy point for WCSOs in North Macedonia for a number of years. On the other hand, there was no conclusion reflecting the need to finalise and adopt the new Law on Gender Equality (LGE). Similarly to the draft Labour law, the LGE has been trapped in the drafting phases since 2019. Furthermore, the public debates on the draft text of the LGE began in the final months of 2022, and it has become one of the primary targets of the anti-gender movement in North Macedonia ever since.
4. On the **18th meeting of the Sub-Committee on Agriculture and Fisheries** (held on May 17th, 2022) recent developments in the agriculture and rural development sector were discussed, as well as the alignment of agriculture policies and legislation with the EU acquis in different areas. No

agenda points or meeting conclusions refer to women or gender equality specifically.

5. On the **19th meeting of the Sub-Committee on Economic and Financial Issue and Statistics** (held on October 6th, 2022) the most important economic developments and reforms that took place in 2022 were discussed. Among the topics of discussion were the economic impact of Russia's war in Ukraine with its consequences in terms of energy crisis and inflation, the newly adopted Organic Budget Law (OBL) and the need to adopt relevant secondary legislation, labour market measures to formalise the informal economy, as well as the urgent need to ensure that the State Statistical Office is adequately staffed. Even though gender equality is not specifically mentioned in the agenda and meeting conclusions, there are references to the OBL, as well as on labour market developments. One of the conclusions reached during the meeting, under Economic policy, is the implementation of the new OBL, which, in turn, incorporates gender equality and gender-responsive budgeting as one of its key principles. Under labour market developments, women are not specifically mentioned; the conclusion refers to low-skilled unemployed persons and people in vulnerable situations.
6. On the **19th meeting of the Sub-Committee on Trade, Industry, Customs and Taxation** (virtual meeting held on 1 December 2022) detailed trade statistics were exchanged and North Macedonia was urged by the European Commission to strengthen the administrative capacity to enforce the legal framework and to continue aligning its legislation with the EU acquis. There were no agenda points nor meeting conclusions that specifically attend to gender equality issues.

ANNEX 3. IPA III ACTION DOCUMENTS

This Annex provides a rapid gender analysis of the 2022 IPA III Action Documents (ADs) for North Macedonia:

1. [EU Integration Facility](#)
2. [EU for Modern Public Administration](#)
3. [EU for Improved Border and Migration Management](#)
4. [EU for Modern Wastewater Systems](#)
5. [EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality.](#)

The rapid gender analysis is based on the OECD DAC gender marker minimum criteria:

- The extent to which needed gender analysis was included in the Action's problem analysis.
- Are there any activities designed to specifically target women?
- Are there objectives towards gender equality included in the Action and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis?
- Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all?
- Are all indicators, baselines and targets involving people disaggregated by sex?
- Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document?⁹⁹

⁹⁹ This is optional and not required but it's important for us to see if there are any official or unofficial mechanisms for involving WCSO and national gender equality mechanisms in the different priority sectors, so we can advocate for their inclusion.

OECD DAC Criteria	Integration Facility	Modern Public Administration	Improved Border and Migration Management	Modern Wastewater Systems	Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality
Gender marker	GM1	GM1	GM1	GM0	GM2
Gender analysis sufficiently included in problem analysis?	Not at all	Minimally	Not at all	Not at all	Extensively
Any activities designed to specifically target women?	Yes	No	No	No	Yes
Are objectives towards gender equality included?	No	No	No	No	Yes
Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included?	No	No ¹⁰⁰	No	No	Yes
Are all indicators, baselines and targets involving people disaggregated by sex?	No	No	No	No	No ¹⁰¹

100 Only one indicator mentions gender while referring to the upgraded information system for human resource management, which is envisioned to provide a breakdown of public employees by different categories, including by gender: Upgraded information system for human resource management allowing quality information on the public service profile (providing breakdowns of public employees per gender, age, level of education, education background, ethnicity).

101 Indicators that measure changes toward gender equality are disaggregated by sex where relevant, although this could be further improved.

OECD DAC Criteria	Integration Facility	Modern Public Administration	Improved Border and Migration Management	Modern Wastewater Systems	Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality
Engagement of WCSOs/NGEMs foreseen?	Not specifically (civil society mentioned in general and as part of SWGs)	Not specifically (civil society mentioned in general and as part of SWGs)	Not specifically (civil society mentioned in general and as part of SWGs)	Not specifically (civil society mentioned in general and as part of SWGs)	Yes, the document was developed in an inclusive process and WCSOs will participate in the implementation as contracting parties

1. **EU Integration Facility** is a GM1 document, meaning that gender equality is a significant objective. Although this AD is aiming to be gender sensitive, it does not fully comply with the OECD DAC gender marker minimum criteria, as illustrated in the table above. In the gender mainstreaming section, it is foreseen that equal opportunities will be promoted by all projects supported under this AD. Analysis of the gender impact is foreseen for major projects, as well as inclusion, where possible, of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators. It is noted that this AD aims to support an inclusive legislative and political process, as well as to support the participation of women in political decision-making. Additionally, it is foreseen that projects promoting gender equality would be selected with preference and that this Action, in principle, would not support gender-blind projects. There are two activities related to gender equality included under Outcome 1, Output 1.3, one regarding the participation of women in democratic processes and policy dialogue, and another one for emergency response to threats where gender-based violence is included¹⁰².

On the other hand, there is no gender analysis included in the Action’s problem analysis, there are no objectives towards gender equality per se, nor indicators that measure changes towards gender equality. Additionally, indicators are not disaggregated by sex or gender. The Action puts an emphasis on sector policy dialogue within SWGs but WCSOs and NGEMs are not specifically mentioned. Slight modifications in the identified areas could improve the AD and make it significantly more gender sensitive.

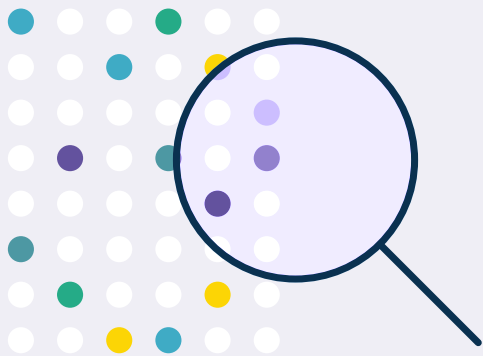
102 Under Outcome 1: Accession process backed-up in its entirety, Output 1.3: Improved capacity of the national institutions to implement the legislation aligned with the EU acquis and progress on the fundamental and structural reforms in support of the country’s accession:
- Enhancing the participation of women, minorities and non-majority communities, and vulnerable groups in democratic processes and policy dialogue;
- Emergency response to threats such as COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, challenges arising from irregular migration, environmental threats, gender-based violence, fight against organised crime, etc.

- 2. EU for Modern Public Administration** is a GM1 marked document. This Action is aiming to be gender sensitive, but, in general, the document focuses on gender equality predominantly in the mainstreaming section. It is noted in the AD that the activities will positively impact the integration of a gender perspective and that the administration's general reorganisation will streamline the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Additionally, targeted improvements in statistics are expected to promote gender-segregated data in line with EU standards which should contribute to gender sensitive policy and investment making. Digitalisation as a tool for fostering gender equality and the National GEI are mentioned as well. The principle of equal pay for equal work and the 2012 Strategy for Gender Responsive Budgeting are mentioned. It is also noted that the Ministry of Finance has amended the budget instructions accordingly in view of introducing a gender budget analysis and that different gender budget initiatives are continuously implemented, but without any further explanation in this regard. The document also mentions the newly adopted Organic Budget Law (OBL), which introduces gender equality and gender responsive budgeting as one of its key principles. However, there are no specific objectives towards improving gender equality included and the document does not have a specific component relating to gender budgeting.

The involvement of civil society is foreseen within the SWG on public administration reform and the document includes indicators related to the participation in SGW and the number of yearly meetings. However, the engagement of WCSOs or NGEMs is not specifically mentioned.

- 3. EU for Improved Border and Migration Management** is also a GM1 marked document which means that gender equality is a significant objective. The rapid gender analysis revealed that in this document, gender equality is considered only in the mainstreaming section and mostly in the form of general commitments. It is noted that the data collected through the asylum registration systems would be disaggregated by sex and age and that the needs of women and vulnerable groups would be identified in a timely manner, with no further clarification in the document. This AD does not include any objectives, outputs, activities, nor indicators related to gender equality. As in the other analysed ADs, the engagement of civil society is foreseen almost exclusively through the SWGs and WCSOs are not specifically mentioned in this document as well.
- 4. EU for Modern Wastewater Systems** is the only GM0 marked AD for 2022 in North Macedonia. Therefore, this Action does not target gender equality. Women and gender equality are mentioned only in the mainstreaming part of the document. It is noted that this Action would indirectly contribute to advancing gender equality by investing in wastewater treatment facilities. These facilities would benefit women and girls by reducing health and sanitation risks, as the document claims that they are usually more exposed to contamination due to water pollution.
- 5. EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality** is the first AD in North Macedonia where gender equality is a principal objective and is marked with GM2. This document in most part follows the OECD DAC minimum criteria. 11.000.000 EUR are allocated to this AD and there is also co-funding foreseen in the amount of 120.000 EUR.

The Action is focused on promoting gender equality, developing services for prevention and protection from gender-based violence, as well as improving maternal health care and women health care in two pilot regions in North Macedonia. Gender inequalities are analysed extensively in the context part of the AD and the analysis relies upon sex-disaggregated data. There are indicators that measure changes toward gender equality which are disaggregated by sex where relevant, even though this could be further improved. While developing the AD in 2021, consultations with civil society were organised as part of an EU funded national project, where (W) CSOs, including Reactor, provided their input. Additionally, it is foreseen that WCSOs will participate in the implementation of the Action as contracting parties.



Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Accession Process

Country assessment report

North Macedonia

2024

Partner Organisation

REAC—OR
research in action