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Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Accession Process

Country assessment report

Skopje, 2022

Partner Organisation

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Title:

Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Accession Process - Country assessment report

Publisher: Reactor-Research in Action

For the publisher: Tanja Ivanova

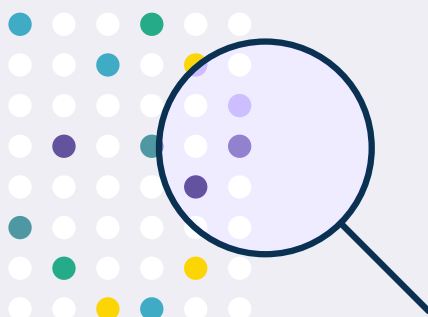
Editor: Tanja Ivanova

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North Macedonia 2022, covering the period of 1 January 2021 - 31 December 2021

Free/Non-commercial Copy

Organisation compiling the report: Reactor – Research in Action



This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union and co-funded by Sweden. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Reactor - Research in Action and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union or Sweden.

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INTRODUCTION

The Government of North Macedonia and the European Union (EU) have made a number of commitments for furthering gender equality, which also apply to the processes related to the EU Accession process of the country. Utilising official policy indicators and a tailor-made methodology shared across the Western Balkan (WB) countries, this assessment report monitors and informs on the progress made in furthering gender equality in relation to the mentioned commitments and the key EU Accession processes and political dialogues in 2021. This national report is part of a regional action which aims to provide the governments of WB, including North Macedonia, and the relevant EU officials with insights on the current state of affairs and potential recommendations on further improvements of the gender perspective of these processes, as well as to inform women's rights organisations' (WCSOs) and support additional evidence for their advocacy towards a more gender transformative EU Accession process. Reactor – Research in Action (Reactor) conducted the monitoring for the first reference year (2021) for North Macedonia and compiled this assessment brief using the methodology developed by the partner organisations of the EU Action¹ Furthering Gender Equality through the EU Accession Process. Most of the indicators included in the shared methodology are also included in the [Joint Communication on the new Gender Action Plan III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in External Action accompanied by its Objectives and Indicators](#), also known as the EU Gender Action Plan III (GAP III). This monitoring attempt focuses on two different levels and monitors key relevant actors at the EU and national WB country level responsible for mainstreaming a gender-perspective in the EU Accession process. For North Macedonia, the main national government and EU bodies are: the European External Action Service (EEAS), the European Union Delegation to North Macedonia, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) and their Department on Equal Opportunities. Another important body, which has slightly different but important responsibilities and focus, is the State Statistical Office (SSO), and it was also consulted in this baseline assessment. 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.

1 A 4-year EU and SIDA co-founded regional action led by Reactor – Research in Action and implementing partner organisations: Kvinna till Kvinna – North Macedonia office, Kosovo Women Network from Kosovo, AWEN from Albania, Rights for All from Bosnia, and Women's Rights Centre from Montenegro.

FINDINGS

CRITERION A. COUNTRY REPORTS ARE GENDER-MAINSTREAMED

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

This part of the report analyses the extent to which the North Macedonia Country Report 2021 has been gender mainstreamed. The Country Report mentions gender 22 times, it references women/girls 34 times and boys/men 4 times. The 2021 Report for North Macedonia notes that women are among the categories most severely affected by the pandemic, while also mentioning that there is improvement in terms of gender mainstreaming and women's rights in North Macedonia. Yet, it gives no further information and it remains unclear in which areas this improvement is noted.

The Country Report for 2021 as a key official document for monitoring national reforms as part of the EU Accession process has a limited reference to gender equality at overall level and references to the situation of women are included in four out of thirty-three chapters: Chapter 19 (Social Policy and Employment), Chapter 23 (Judiciary and Fundamental Rights), Chapter 24 (Justice, Freedom and Security)

² "Official recommendations" were defined to include those in grey boxes, and "other recommendations" as those in other sections, phrased as: "North Macedonia needs to..."

and Chapter 26 (Education and Culture). Additionally, there is a reference to gender equality in the summary of the report and the Fundamentals of the accession, specifically in 2.1 Functioning of Democratic Institutions and Public Administration Reform and 2.3 Economic Development and Competitiveness.

Reactor's analysis of the 2021 Report, which also informed a wider regional gender analysis³, showed limited presence of recommendations related to gender equality and women's rights with only two (2) official recommendations included in Chapter 19 and Chapter 23:

- 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 (Chapter 19);
- Implement all the provisions of the Law on the Prevention and Protection against discrimination and allocate the necessary resources enabling the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination to become fully functional (Chapter 23).

There are also nine (9) other recommendations for improvement of the situation incorporated in the narrative of the Chapters, mainly in Chapter 23.

Though none of the Chapters could be considered as fully gender mainstreamed, we can safely conclude that there are two chapters that involve a gender perspective to some extent. For example, in Chapter 23 reference to gender equality is included under the Fundamental Rights section, while it is completely missing in Functioning of the Judiciary and Fight against Corruption. Chapter 19 is gender mainstreamed and it includes a separate section on gender equality and non-discrimination. There are two other chapters – 24 and 26, which include very limited references to gender equality.

The Report is generally lacking sex-disaggregated data and statistics.⁴ In some parts, the Report is focused on noting the situation rather than setting concrete recommendations for future improvements. For instance, the 2021 Report provides data disaggregated by sex on the mayoral candidates for the local elections, as well as for the composition of the Parliament and Government. Nevertheless, the data is not critically addressed, and it does not inform official recommendations. Another example is the data on employment rates in Chapter 19, which is gender-disaggregated but it does not address intersectional inequalities, such as the employment gap among rural women and men. On the other hand, it is positive

3 Giulia Pasquinelli, Kvinna till Kvinna (2022). Gender Analysis of the 2021 European Commission Country Reports for The Western Balkans: A Stitch in Time Saves Nine, page 28; available at: <https://kvinnatillkvinna.se/wp-content/uploads/2022/04/KvinnatillKvinna-GENDER-ANALYSIS-OF-EC-2021-Country-Reports-Western-Balkans.pdf>

4 <https://kvinnatillkvinna.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/TheKvinnatillKvinnaFoundation-Gender-Analysis-of-2021-EC-Country-Reports-for-the-Western-Balkans.pdf> (accessed on 23.03.2022)

that the 2021 Report clearly remarks the importance of data collection and gender statistics noting that “proper gathering and analysis of gender statistics requires the enhancement of the capacity of relevant institutions and improved coordination”.

While in some areas the input from WCSOs has been considered, like in the case of online sexual harassment, some of the input was not incorporated in the Report, for example on the situation on women’s political participation, especially in the context of local elections⁵, and gender legal recognition that concerns the LGBTIQ community. Based on the findings behind this monitoring, including interviews and focus group discussion with WCSO representatives, we can safely conclude that WCSO recommendations are accepted to a moderate extent. WCSOs have been continuously advocating for the inclusion of different gender equality issues in the Country Report and a number of WCSO representatives regularly prepare inputs focusing on general gender equality issues or specific sub-sectors that comprise the focus of their work (rural women, LGBTI rights, health and reproductive rights, etc.). Several WCSOs participate in the EUD’s annual consultations, primarily focusing on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. While a few representatives also attend sessions on other topics, these sessions lack a gender equality focus. Limited time constraints prevent resourceful debates and hinder the widespread inclusion of the gender perspective across all report chapters, a concern voiced by WCSOs based on direct observations and feedback. It is important to note here that WCSOs input is often generalised and /or simplified, while omitting important details and recommendations that would drive sooner progress. All consulted actors confirm there is a moderate inclusion of the WCSOs input in the country report for 2021, which demands for further improvements in this respect on both sides – stronger consideration of the gender equality principles across all the different areas covered by the report on the side of EU and a more specific, direct and short input on the side of WCSOs that comprises of *‘wording that is ready to be included in the report’*.⁶ The report is generally missing a better and more inclusive approach to intersectionality issues throughout the different chapters.

5 <https://reactor.org.mk/en/publication-all/local-elections-2021-review-of-candidate-lists-for-mayors-and-selected-representatives-from-gender-aspect/>

6 Both EU sources and WCSO interviews and discussions confirm this can be an issue and taking it into account may contribute to improving the gender mainstreaming of the whole report.

CRITERION B. STABILISATION AND ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE MEETINGS INCLUDE GENDER ISSUES

1. % of SAA Committee meetings with gender equality issues on the agenda	Cannot be concluded
2. % of Sub-Committee meetings with gender equality issues on the agenda	16% (1 out of 6)
3. Extent to which women's organisations were consulted by the EU ahead of the sub-committee meetings	Minimally
4. Extent to which SAA committee and sub-committee meetings conclusions attend to gender equality issues	Minimally

For 2021, there is very limited publicly available data on SAA committee and sub-committee meetings, i.e. four different press-releases on:

(1) the SAA Subcommittee between the European Commission and North Macedonia on Justice, Freedom and Security, which had its [16th \(virtual\) meeting on 17-18 November 2021](#) to assess the progress made in aligning with the EU acquis in the areas covered by chapters 23 and 24, as well as implementation of the SAA in these areas,

(2) the [18th meeting of the Stabilisation and Association Committee between the European Union and the Republic of North Macedonia](#), which preceded the mentioned subcommittee (took place virtually on 29 June 2021) and welcomed the important decision taken unanimously by EU Member States in March 2020 to open accession negotiations with North Macedonia, while focusing on the progress achieved (including in key areas such as the judiciary, fight against corruption and organised crime, the intelligence services, public administration, in an inclusive and transparent manner) and the state of play in relation to the political and economic criteria, alignment with the EU legislation (acquis), as well as implementation of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement. There are no further details on the agenda, number and type of participants, nor any information on the inclusion of (W)CSOs and their input⁷.

(3) [11th meeting of the Public Administration Reform Special Group \(23 September 2021\)](#), that focused on the progress made in key areas of public administration principles: the strategic framework for public administration reform, public service and human resource management, policy development and coordination, as well as accountability and delivery of public services, and

⁷ Press release available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/18th-meeting-stabilisation-and-association-committee-between_en?s=229

(4) 18th meeting of the EU – Republic of North Macedonia sub-committee on Trade, Industry, Customs and Taxation (16 December 2021) where the representatives of the European Commission were informed about the progress of the reforms between the two Subcommittees and about the current and future activities that are being undertaken, in order to further harmonize the legislation and institutional strengthening of the Customs Administration.⁸

The SAA Committee note mentions the fundamentals and the difficult circumstances of the COVID-19 pandemic, but does not explicitly state any gender related topics on the agenda. The SAA Sub-committee on Justice, Freedom and Security also focused on judicial reforms, fight against corruption, home affairs and fundamental rights, wherein there is a short information that important and relevant laws were welcomed by the EC and their implementation was encouraged (i.e. adoption of the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and the setting-up of the Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, as well as the adoption of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence are mentioned as such).⁹ According to the brief information found, the latter two sub-committees did not discuss gender-specific issues at all.

According to the lists of working documents shared with COWEB¹⁰, there are three other sub-committee meetings held in 2021 for which there is no publicly available information to be found online:

- EU – Republic of North Macedonia 17th meeting of the subcommittee on Transport, Environment, Energy, and Regional Development (Virtual, 18 March 2021)
- EU – Republic of North Macedonia 17th meeting of the subcommittee on Agriculture and Fisheries (VTC, 18 May 2021)
- EU – Republic of North Macedonia 18th meeting of the sub-committee on Economy, Financial Issues and Statistics (5 October 2021)

The official written response¹¹ received by the national body in charge (SEA) is incomplete and it briefly claims “there is a regular dialogue between the national institutions and the EU on the reforms and progress in the related areas within the regular meetings of the SAA bodies (the Subcommittee on Justice and Internal Affairs and the Subcommittee on Innovation, Information Society and Social Policy)”

8 Press release also available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/18th-meeting-stabilisation-and-association-agreement_en

9 Press release available at: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/16th-meeting-stabilisation-and-association-agreement_en?s=229

10 The following documents include brief information on the listed meetings: https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/EU/XXVII/EU/07/65/EU_76567/imfname_11099133.pdf, https://www.parlament.gv.at/PAKT/EU/XXVII/EU/05/90/EU_59035/imfname_11061957.pdf, <https://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-5566-2022-INIT/en/pdf>

11 Despite the wide time frame for the fieldwork activities, this institution and the NIPAC did not agree to participate to an interview, as foreseen by the methodology. Instead, they opted for a written response (stating lack of time as the main reason behind)

providing no further details to feed the above indicators. Reactor's further quest for more evidence to feed this criterion reveals highest scarcity of publicly available information when it comes to the SAA committee meetings. Additionally, Reactor's direct advocacy and participatory experiences¹² reveal that WCSOs are not consulted nor included in a timely and systematic manner in the SAA processes. CSO and WCSO involvement is usually project based and not timely and structural.¹³

CRITERION C. EU STRATEGIC ENGAGEMENT AT COUNTRY-LEVEL ON GENDER EQUALITY IS IN PLACE

1. Country-level Implementation Plan for GAP III agreed and transmitted to HQ (Brussels) (indicator 5.1 GAP III)	Yes
2. Gender Country Profile conducted / updated	No ¹⁴
3. Fully-fledged gender analysis conducted / updated	No ¹⁵
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
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
6. Extent to which EU Delegation consulted civil society including women's organisations for the development of the Country-level Implementation Plan	Fully

12 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/>

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

14 Interview with the GFP in the EUD confirms that a gender country profile was not conducted/ updated as it was agreed to wait for the foreseen gender country profile that UNWOMEN announced but by the time of concluding this report this document was not officially announced nor publicly available.

15 Updated and dedicated feedback from (W)CSOs on the gender equality situation in the country was used as a background information to feed the CLIP. This document is available at: <https://reactor.org.mk/en/publication-all/input-to-the-consultation-process-for-developing-the-gap-iii-country-level-implementation-plan-in-north-macedonia/>

7. Extent to which EU Delegation engages in dialogue on gender equality with civil society including women's organisations (indicator 7.2)	Moderately
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

The Country-level Implementation Plan for GAP III for North Macedonia was agreed and transmitted to Brussels successfully, though with a slight delay.¹⁶ As the gender focal point at the EUD confirmed during the interview, the CLIP was produced without an updated gender country profile and in the case of North Macedonia, a fully fledged gender analysis was also missing. Nevertheless, the EUD decided to use updated information from different sources, including national stakeholders and the civil society dealing with this topic. For that purpose, Reactor organised a round of consultations with national and local, including grass-root, organisations and used the updated and dedicated feedback from (W)CSOs in the whole country to create [a joint written input on the gender equality state of affairs](#) which was shared as a background information with the EUD to feed the CLIP. This was a successful example of cooperation between the EUD and the WCSOs that facilitated the preparation of this important document.

According to the written response by the key national stakeholders, during 2021, through the Gender Equality Facility project, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) drafted the strategic response to IPA III and defined the priorities in the field of gender equality, with a proactive contribution of the EUD. SEA considers this a basis for further support and development of the gender equality concept within the programming documents for IPA III. Again, no further details were provided by this body, and the SAA bodies and meetings were mentioned as the main touchpoints for a regular dialogue on the reforms and progress in the field of gender equality. Moreover, the other national body, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), informs that a dialogue is ensured through the national mechanisms for gender equality – the Sector on Equal Opportunities within this ministry and the coordinators for equal opportunities at national and local level. The face-to-face interview with the gender focal point at the EUD confirms that there is an ongoing dialogue in the different sub-areas under this criterion and that the frequency and intensity can vary depending on the topic. However, the need for structuring the dialogue on gender equality and formalising the mechanisms behind it is also confirmed and emphasised as such. Namely, diverse consulted sources confirm that this engagement is often not formally regulated, nor properly closely monitored and individual efforts of the designated people and representatives at different bodies remain the key drive in

16 Preparations for this document started during the spring of 2021 but it was finalized after the reference period in this report (i.e. beginning of 2022). However, by the time of concluding this report it was already approved and publicized accordingly at the following link: https://www.eeas.europa.eu/delegations/republic-north-macedonia/eu-gender-action-plan-iii-country-level-implementation-plan_en?s=229

this process. The EUD regularly meets with the representatives of the National IPA Coordinator (NIPAC) office and SEP, as well as maintains close relations with the MLSP and their respective departments but gender equality is not a common topic during these meetings, which often focus on the overall financial cooperation and programming and the main political challenges the country is facing. Nevertheless, the Gender Coordinator at the EUD makes consistent efforts to include gender equality references and messages in the meetings she is part of or through the EU speaking points drafted for the purpose of diverse meetings and events.¹⁷

Based on compiled information during the baseline period,¹⁸ EU Delegation engages in dialogue on gender equality with civil society including women's organisations to a moderate extent. Informal consultations exist but they were not structured in 2021. After the successful CLIP consultations, there were attempts and strong commitments to formalise the consultative process and make progress towards this indicator. The EU Delegation moderately engages in dialogue with the civil society on women, peace and security issues, which is closely related to the topic of gender equality and often intertwined.

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

1. Number and % of new actions that are gender responsive / targeted (GM1 + GM2) at country level (indicator 1.1 GAP III)	4/6 (67%)
2. Number and % of new gender targeted action (GM2) implemented from national allocation (indicator 1.2 GAP III)	0
3. Total funding in support of gender equality at country level (GM1 + GM2) (indicator 1.3 GAP III)	N/A
4. Amount of funding directed towards women's organisations and movements at country level (indicator 1.4 GAP III)	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

According to the declared overall action objectives, 4 out of 6 new actions foreseen for the new IPA III programming for 2021 are officially marked as gender responsive (GM1). However, a rapid gender analysis of the IPA III action documents for North

¹⁷ Reactor's interview with the Gender Coordinator at EUD, 2022.

¹⁸ More information is needed to provide specifics on the different segments behind these indicators. Such information is being collected by the EC during the time of writing of the report but could not be shared ahead of the publication of the first GAP III monitoring report.

Macedonia for 2021¹⁹, which takes into account general policy objectives and their targeting or compliance with the OECD-DAC gender equality policy makers²⁰, reveals that **only two of the six documents take gender targets into some consideration, though they do not fully comply to the basic criteria envisaged by the OECD-DAC gender equality policy makers.** Reactor made a rapid gender analysis of the 6 official action documents (AD) for the IPA programming for North Macedonia for 2021, and they are: (1) EU for Rule of Law and Anti-corruption, (2) EU against organised crime, in support of trade, (3) EU Integration Facility, (4) EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air, (5) EU for Prespa, and (6) EU for Green Economy. The last two documents - EU for Prespa, and EU for Green Economy - are gender sensitive to some extent and manage to include a small number of indicators or activities that specifically target women, while EU against organised crime, in support of trade and EU Integration Facility are marked as gender sensitive (GM1) but fail to meet the necessary criteria from the OECD DAC markers to achieve at least a GM1 status. The two remaining action documents - EU for Rule of Law and Anti-corruption and EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air - do not target gender policy objectives at all.

For each of the mentioned action document, there is a short graphic overview annexed at the end of this document²¹ that provides details on the thematic area, general policy objectives and their targeting or compliance with the OECD-DAC gender equality policy makers, followed by some general remarks on the key issues for consideration that demand further improvements and a brief analysis according to the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers.

There are not easily processable publicly available data to feed the indicators behind this criterion. Therefore, Reactor and partner organisations sent a joint request to all the European Delegations (EUD) in the Western Balkans to ensure better coordination in the data collecting activity behind the indicators at EU level. However, for the baseline monitoring period (2021), we could not collect all the specific information under Criterion D. Some of the information that feeds these indicators was being collected by the EC during the time of writing of the report and could not be shared ahead of the publication of the first GAP III Monitoring Report announced for the end of 2022.

19 North Macedonia - financial assistance under IPA III; action documents available as annexes at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/overview-instrument-pre-accession-assistance/north-macedonia-financial-assistance-under-ipa-ii_en

20 The OECD tracks and analyses development financing in support of gender equality and women's rights, using the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) gender equality policy marker. More information available at: <https://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-gender-equality-marker.htm>

21 See Annex 2. Rapid Gender Analysis of final action documents,

CRITERION E. THE EU LEADS BY EXAMPLE

1. Number and % of women in senior and middle management positions in the EU Delegation/Office (indicator 10.1 GAP III)	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
3. % of management trained on women, peace and security in EU Delegation and CSDP mission (indicator 10.2)	N/A
4. Number of Gender Adviser / Gender Focal Points in the EU Delegation and CSDP mission	1

Based on the consulted sources, there is no officially available information on the number of women in senior and middle management positions in the EUD to North Macedonia. The same applies for the other two indicators referring to the training of staff on gender equality and WPS. There is a local focal point that deals with the topic of WPS at the EUD in Skopje but training on this topic is not mandatory prior to deployment²². Since this indicator is taken from GAP III, we should be able to feed this indicator with more information once the first report on GAP III is published by EU.

In consultations with the Gender Equality Coordinator at DG NEAR,²³ we understood that the headquarters of DG NEAR do not have an official database for tracking the training related indicators above. DG INTPA was pointed out as a possible source, but it was also mentioned that there is no EU HR system monitoring this indicator. Sporadic information can be gathered (though this may take a lot of time) by analysing EUD and HW reports based on the reporting survey/questionnaire that DG NEAR sends at the end of each reporting period.

The EUD to North Macedonia does not have a full-time dedicated gender adviser/gender focal point. The currently appointed Gender Focal Point at the EUD is simultaneously a focal point for civil society in general (her primary role) and she handles all civil society relations as well as gender related issues. She has been trained on gender equality and GAP III and she participated to several internal trainings throughout 2021.

²² Meeting with the Gender Equality Coordinator at DG NEAR, 2022.

²³ Ibid.

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

1. Extent to which gender equality is addressed in the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA)	Minimally
2. Extent to which key laws on gender equality and EU Accession are open for public consultation	Moderately
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
4. Extent to which new sectoral strategies are publicly available	Fully
5. Extent to which new sectoral strategies mainstream gender equality	Moderately
6. % of sector working groups (or the like) with women's rights organisations included/represented	25% (in 3 out of 12 SWGs in 2021)

Reactor's direct involvement²⁴ in evidence-based advocacy towards the [National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis 2021 – 2025 \(NPAA\)](#) and a detailed text analysis of the document confirm that the NPAA is gender mainstreamed to a minimal extent. While the document involves general references and commitments to gender equality and inclusion in a number of different chapters, as well as mentions a significant number of strategies that are further analysed briefly, it does not specifically relate these references and commitments to clearly planned activities and substantial allocated budgeting. 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, which mentions allocations amounting at 0.05% of the sub-total for this budget section (i.e. 7,356,000 out of 16,772,222,000 foreseen for the period 2021/2022).²⁵

²⁴ Provision of written input and participation to online consultations during the first quarter of 2021

²⁵ 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

It can be worth mentioning that group discussions with (W)CSOs reveal that only few organizations provide input to the NPAA or use it as a 'tool' for advocacy. The reasons behind this are lack of knowledge and awareness on the side of smaller (W)CSOs, but also not enough (timely) information shared by the SEA and other responsible institutions.

Key laws on gender equality and EU Accession are open for public consultations to a moderate extent. Some processes are inclusive of (W)CSOs and WCSO representatives are invited to participate to the working groups during the drafting of these laws and there is often an open invitation to the plenary sessions of the Commission for Equal Opportunities within the Parliament once draft laws and strategies are available for consultation. What is generally missing and lowering the score of the country in this respect is lack of timely, continuous, and meaningful WCSO involvement, as well as systematic mechanisms for transparent, fair and timely inclusion. During 2021, much of the prior involvement of WCSOs in working groups for different laws and strategies of relevance was put on hold and WCSOs had similar lukewarm experiences in the case of drafting key legislation: initial inclusion in the drafting processes and working meetings was then followed by a longer period with no official feedback that would end with a draft document appearing in the parliament, which doesn't involve the input and comments from WCSOs previously shared during the long process of drafting the specific legislation.²⁶ An important example that can be mentioned here is the new National Strategy on Gender Equality that was initially foreseen to be completed at the start of 2021 and foreseen to cover the period 2021 – 2024.²⁷ Neither the final draft nor the proposed text took into consideration the long hours of consultations, oral and written inputs by WCSOs and it was kept away from the public for several months before it was introduced as a final draft for an open session of the Committee for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men at the Parliament (Sept 2021). WCSOs participated in this session and provided feedback again. However, since the document was in its final stage no significant amendments could be accepted. Since the draft lacks measurable indicators, it was agreed that this will be addressed and resolved once the new Law on Gender Equality²⁸ is adopted. When it comes to specific laws that tackle gender equality or are crucial for women's empowerment and labour rights, the situation was rather unfavourable in 2021 as most of these processes were put on hold due to hindered functionality of the Parliament (opposition blockages).

26 Reactor's experiences; also interviews and FGD with WCSOs, 2021/2022.

27 At the time of concluding this report, the new national strategy on gender equality was adopted by the Government but this document refers to the calendar year of 2021 which was marked by the mentioned plenary session of the Committee for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men at the Parliament and no further developments till the end of the year, which was also influenced by the frequent blockages of the parliament sessions by the opposition.

28 This Law is being prepared since 2019. At the time of concluding this report we received official information that it is being revised for the third time by external experts hired by support from OSCE, after the experts from TAIEX gave their official remarks and comments, which were fully in line with those provided by WCSOs much earlier throughout the process.

Furthermore, Reactor's experience and evidence gathered through observation and analysis²⁹ confirm that inputs by women's organisations in line with the EU Acquis on gender equality are moderately considered. While some direct inputs to stakeholders (written or in the form of consultations) are taken into consideration, crucial recommendations can be omitted in the final documents, often without any structured feedback by the responsible institutions. The only way for WCSOs to ask for feedback is to directly participate in the working meetings where inputs and documents are discussed in more details.

New sectoral strategies are publicly available online on the respective ministries' websites. They are available either in Macedonian and Albanian or in Macedonian only, and rarely in English as well. While analysing strategies, we paid attention only to those available online and published during 2021³⁰. Out of 14 strategies that were analysed, only a bit more than half of them mainstream gender equality to some extent. More specifically, 8 of the strategies published in 2021 have paid attention to gender mainstreaming although not all in a satisfactory manner.

The most gender mainstreamed strategies from 2021 are: The National Strategy on Agriculture and Rural Development³¹, The National Employment Strategy³², National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration³³, and The Healthcare Strategy³⁴. All these strategies contain specific plans for dealing with women-specific issues and take note of statistical data disaggregated by gender.

Furthermore, two of the strategies moderately pay attention to gender equality, only while listing planned programs and protocols related to the field of work of responsible institutions but without going into detail on the specific approach when gender is considered. These strategies are: Strategy For Regional Development³⁵ and The National Drugs Strategy³⁶. The strategy for Development of the Probation Service in RNM³⁷ and the Strategy for Safety and Health in the Workplace³⁸ only mention gender disaggregated data either while discussing availability of human resources within the respective institution (the former) or in one instance as a vulnerable group (the latter strategy).

29 FGD and interviews with WCSOs, 2022, but also text analysis of the relevant legal documents.

30 The IPA document contains a myriad of different strategies. However, the vast majority is published either earlier or later than 2021, thus not meeting the requirement for analysis.

31 The National Strategy On Agriculture and Rural Development

32 The National Employment Strategy

33 National Strategy For Combating Trafficking In Human Beings and Illegal Migration

34 The Healthcare Strategy

35 Strategy For Regional Development

36 The National Drugs Strategy

37 Strategy for Development of the Probation Service in RNM

38 Strategy for Safety and Health in the Workplace

Finally, out of the 14 strategies published in 2021, six neither mention, women, gender equality, nor do they include gender disaggregated data or gender specific plans and strategies. Those strategies are:

- » Public Debt Management Strategy³⁹
- » Strategy to Strengthen the Capacity for Conducting Financial Investigation and Asset Confiscation 2021-2023 and the Action Plan for its implementation⁴⁰
- » National Strategy for Fight Against Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism⁴¹
- » Strategy for building resilience and management of hybrid threats⁴²
- » Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia⁴³
- » National Strategy for Social Enterprises⁴⁴

Although the national bodies⁴⁵ point at the procedures stipulated in the Rules of Procedure of the Government, which imply all laws must be published on the Electronic National Register of Regulations (ENER) for public consultations, and left open for at least 20 days, Reactor's practice and WCSO feedback confirms that this system is ineffective, i.e. comments left on this platform are not taken into consideration and no feedback is received through ENER.⁴⁶ And while national bodies believe "civil society organizations are regularly consulted during the preparation of legal and strategic documents"⁴⁷, practical WCSO experiences show that reality is more complex. The below elaboration on the SWG work further implies systematic improvements are needed in this respect.

At present, there are 12 Sector Working Groups (SWGs)⁴⁸ that cover the following policy areas: justice, home affairs, public administration reform, public finance management, competitiveness and innovations, regional and local development, agriculture and rural development, transport, environment and climate action,

39 Public Debt Management Strategy

40 Strategy to Strengthen the Capacity for Conducting Financial Investigation and Asset Confiscation 2021-2023 and the Action Plan for its implementation

41 National Strategy for Fight Against Money Laundering and Financing Terrorism

42 Strategy for building resilience and management of hybrid threats

43 Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia

44 National Strategy for Social Enterprises

45 Written response on interview questions to government bodies, 2021

46 FGD with WCSOs (2021) confirms what Reactor has already evidenced before, through different analyses and project activities.

47 Written response on interview questions to government bodies, 2021, as well as direct meetings and consultations Reactor had throughout the fieldwork period.

48 In 2015, the Government of North Macedonia formed eight sector working groups (SWGs) and in the years that followed, four additional SWGs were established.

education, employment and social policy, Roma integration and health.⁴⁹ Members of the SWGs are representatives from the national institutions, from the donor community and embassies, as well as from the civil society. However, civil society participation is not uniform and formalised in all SWGs; in some SWGs, CSOs have a member status, yet in other SWGs they can only participate as (silent) observers. There are also a few SWGs in which CSOs have neither been represented nor invited to participate in any way, throughout the years. Some improvements were noted in 2021; for example, for the first time ever, civil society representatives were invited to participate in the plenary meeting of the SWG on transport.⁵⁰ Yet, there was no civil society participation in other five SWGs, four of which did not hold any meetings throughout 2021.⁵¹ Women's rights organisations were represented in three out of 12 SWGs in the reference year: SWG on Public Finance Management (as observers), SWG on Education, Employment and Social Policy and SWG on Health. Nonetheless, even when CSOs are included, they face obstacles for meaningful participation such as untimely distribution of invitations and materials and relatively short time allotted for consultations and live discussion on sectoral documents and foreseen agenda topics, while priority is given to the dialogue between the national institutions and the EC representatives.⁵²

It is also worth noting that SWG meetings in North Macedonia rarely include discussion on policy impacts in terms of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme.⁵³ SWGs have still not recognized their key role in promotion of gender equality by means of gender mainstreaming the development and implementation of sector policies, as well as IPA programming. Sector policies and priorities, IPA action documents, as well as SWG meetings are prepared by the public administration employees. Another important observation is that a number of (W)CSOs (mainly think tanks or policy oriented CSOs) that deal with gender equality topics participate in the work of SWG in a different role and they do not address gender equality as such (for ex., a well-established CSO that has strong gender expertise in their team is part of the SWG on public administration reforms but gender mainstreaming is not in their focus within this SWG⁵⁴).

49 Maleski, Blazhen. Kolekeski, Aleksandar. Bashevska, Marija (2020). Shadow Report from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Group for Education, Employment and Social Policy in the period January 2019 – February 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3GJrHHr>

50 Data regarding SWGs and civil society participation is not publicly available, and these findings are based on a more thorough overall political analysis and data obtained by freedom of information requests through another EU project - Structural Dialogue with EU, in which Reactor acts as a partner organisation.

51 SWGs on justice, home affairs, public administration reform and Roma integration did not hold any meetings in 2021. SWG on competitiveness and innovation did not invite any civil society representatives.

52 Maleski, Blazhen. Kolekeski, Aleksandar. Jolevska, Irina (2021). Shadow report from monitoring work and effects of the sector working group on education, employment and social policy January - December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3EdkKwU>

53 Ibid

54 FGD and interview with (W)CSO representatives, 2022.

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

1. Extent to which recommendations on gender equality included in the Country Report have been implemented by the government/institutions	Moderately
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The score refers to the implementation of the recommendations made in 2020 Report as the Government was able to work on them during 2021. Recommendations refer to both the official recommendations in the grey boxes and the recommendations included in the narrative of the Chapters. One ⁵⁵of the official (grey box) recommendations in the 2020 Report was implemented as the new Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination was adopted and the members of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination were appointed in January 2021. The other official recommendation regarding activation measures for long-term and low-skilled unemployed people, including women, persons with disabilities and Roma, remained the same in the 2021 Country Report indicating lack of progress or a continuous need for improvements in this regard.⁵⁶

Several other recommendations included in the narrative of the 2020 Report referring to integrating a gender perspective into the strategic documents of the country were implemented by the national authorities. For example, the Law on Prevention and Protection against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence was adopted and entered into force in May 2021. Additionally, the second National Action Plan for of North Macedonia for the implementation of UN Resolution 1325 - Women, peace and security 2020-2025⁵⁷ was prepared by the Ministry of Defence and adopted in 2021. The operational plans (OP) were also to be prepared and publicly available on different ministries' websites. The NPAA mentions⁵⁸ one operational plan for the implementation of this action plan, which is a reference to the overall responsible Ministry for the national plan (Ministry of Defence) and this OP is publicly available on the Ministry's website⁵⁹. While the responsible ministry informs that all the Ops

55 "swiftly re-adopt the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, ensuring it is in line with the EU acquis and European standards on non-discrimination that provisions of the previously adopted law, including the list of protected grounds, be preserved, and establish the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination"

56 Draft Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in North Macedonia (2021); available at: <https://mhc.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/draft-shadow-report-grevio.pdf> (an updated and final version of the report will be officially published in 2022.)

57 United Nations, Security Council, Resolution 1325 (2000), Adopted by the Security Council at its 4213th meeting, on 31 October 2000.

58 Secretariat for European Affairs, National Programme for the Adoption of the Aquis 2022-2025, section: Humanitarian Aid, page 837; available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/NPAA/NPAA%202021/NPAA%202021-2025.pdf>

59 <https://www.mod.gov.mk/storage/2021/06/OP-na-MO-za-implementacija-na-2-nacionalen-akciski-plan-2020-2025-1.pdf>

were prepared⁶⁰, the only ministry that has published their OP is the Ministry of Justice⁶¹ Other ministries do not have publicly available information on the separate implementation plans they need to prepare.

Moreover, many of the recommendations made in the 2020 Report, remained the same in the Country Report for 2021 indicating limited to moderate progress in this respective area. For illustrative purposes, a few important recommendations that remained the same include: the reference to the application of the principle of equitable representation and fair representation of men, women and ethnic groups across the public sector, another recommendation referring to the lack of data on incidents of sexual harassment in the workplace or a system to investigate such incidents, as well as two more referring to health inequalities and the need for adoption of a new multiannual strategy to combat HIV, and lack of progress in dealing with societal prejudice, hate speech, discrimination and widespread intolerance against LGBTI persons.

Moreover, some recommendations from 2020 that included references to women were modified and/or more generalised in 2021, while excluding separate marginalised groups and women as such. Among these are the recommendation on the remaining gap in the detention for people in irregular movements, and the one advising the country *‘to accelerate efforts to address recommendations of international monitoring bodies, notably with regard to the rights of persons in detention/prison; promote, protect and guarantee rights of persons with disabilities, children, and women’*. In the 2021 report, this recommendation excludes women as a reference, i.e. does not mention the separate marginalised groups listed in the previous report⁶².

It is also worth noting that, even though some recommendations were not implemented throughout the period in between the two reports, they were excluded from the narrative of the 2021 Country Report. This includes a crucial recommendation pertaining to the improvement of services for victims of gender-based violence (GBV) and domestic violence (DV), which requires immediate attention. The 2021 Report fails to include a specific reference addressing pressing issues such as the absence of shelters for victims of GBV and DV, the failure to meet minimum standards in existing shelters, the lack of comprehensive GBV data collection, and inadequate allocation of resources for the effective implementation of the Action Plan for the Istanbul Convention. Despite these challenges persisting in 2021, as confirmed by relevant shadow reports⁶³, they are absent from the report.

60 <https://www.mod.gov.mk/storage/2022/06/Prv-godisen-Izvestaj-za-implementacija-na-Vtor-NAP-MKD.pdf>

61 <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/Upload/Documents/MP%20Operativen%20Plan%20za%202021%20%20R%2013%2025%20R.PDF>

62 “address in a prompt and more systematic manner the recommendations of international monitoring bodies, especially with regard to the rights of persons in detention/prison; promote, protect and guarantee rights of persons in a disadvantaged or marginalised situations”

63 Draft Shadow Report on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in North Macedonia (2021); available at: <https://mhc.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/draft-shadow-report-grevio.pdf> (an updated and final version of the report will be officially published in 2022.)

Another important reference is also missing though it remains a crucial challenge in 2021 and it refers to the implementation of the Law on Termination of Pregnancy and lack of accessibility to medical procedures, contraception and information on sexual and reproductive health throughout the country. Last but not least, the recommendation pertaining to the legally regulated gender recognition procedures was also not included in the 2021 report.⁶⁴

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

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
2. Extent to which Multi-annual indicative Programme [IPA III Strategic Response] includes gender equality objectives	Moderately
3. Extent to which annual Indicative Programs or Action Documents contain a gender perspective	Moderately

Some CSO were consulted in the process of development of the IPA III Strategic Response yet diverse feedback shows that WCSOs were not consulted in a systematic, meaningful and timely manner. Both the Action Documents and the Strategic Response were available publicly only after their adoption and approval by the EU. SEA's official response says that WCSOs also had an opportunity to discuss and contribute to the documents through the sector working groups they participate in.⁶⁵ Yet, we need to point out again that the SWGs do not provide enough space for the civil sector to take part in the discussion and majority of SWGs do not include WCSOs in their official member list. A shadow report⁶⁶ concludes that gender equality policy impact was rarely addressed by SWGs in 2021 but modest progress could still be noted in respect to the number of SWGs that discussed documents with an integrated gender perspective. Based on this Shadow Report, four SWGs reviewed IPA III strategic responses or action documents with an integrated gender perspective. For comparison, in 2019 and 2020, the gender perspective was covered by only two

64 All of the findings in this and previous paragraphs rely upon two different primary data sources: a detailed text analysis of the two referenced reports as well as interviews and group discussions with (W)CSOs who follow the progress report in the specific narrow areas they specialize in.

65 Written response to the interview questions by SEA (2022);

66 Jolevska, Irina (2022). Shadow report on gender mainstreaming in sector working groups January – December 2021. Available at: <https://dijalogkoneu.mk/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/06/RODOVA-PERSPEKTIVA-2021-EN.pdf>

SWGs.⁶⁷ Additionally, WCSOs lacked information and awareness about the nature of these documents while they were drafted (2020) and only few organisations could contribute to their preparation (mainly EU affairs and structural dialogue oriented CSOs). SEA further informs that “the Strategic Response for IPA III, in terms of gender equality issues, was prepared based on the analyses and proposals of the project for Technical Support for Gender Equality in the Administration at the Central Level.”⁶⁸ SEA additionally informs that they do not have a specific insight into the scope of the consultations that were part of the SWGs. More information on the functioning of the SWGs in relation to gender equality is provided under Criterion F.

For 2021, there are a few gender equality priorities defined within the IPA III Strategic Response and IPA III Action documents⁶⁹.

In the IPA III Strategic Response there are total 22 mentions of *gender equality*. Apart from its inclusion as part of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development goals and within the listing of relevant strategies in the Annex, gender equality receives some attention in four Thematic priorities.⁷⁰ Furthermore, gender equality is mentioned in terms of a specific EU Action that aims to promote gender equality and participation of women in the political and economic life of the country. Finally, there is only one vague mention of *promotion of gender equality* within the document. On the other hand, *women* are mentioned slightly more frequently, with a total of 30 mentions. Women are predominantly referred to in the context of vulnerable groups and those at risk of poverty, often together with children and the Roma community. Women are also mentioned in six of the Thematic priorities⁷¹.

There is a similar approach in the IPA III Action Documents, discussed in more detail earlier under criterion D of this report and further analysed through a rapid gender assessment available at the end of this document as Annex 2.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid; an answer to whether they have taken into consideration the input from WCSOs

69 Ibid

70 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.

71 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.

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

1. The Country has an updated Gender Equality Index (GEI) at national level	No
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

This section analyses the extent to which sex-disaggregated data is collected by national statistical offices. The State Statistical Office (SSO) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) published the first National Gender Equality Index (GEI) for North Macedonia in 2019⁷². The GEI was calculated based on the methodology and framework developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) and it provides an overview of the situation in 2015. North Macedonia scored a 62 on the GEI in 2015, out of a maximum score of 100. The country lags significantly behind the EU (EU-28) average in the domains of Money and Time, while it lags the least in the domain of Health, with the domain of Power being the only one where North Macedonia outperforms the EU (EU-28) average. The good outcome in Power domain is partly attributable to the larger presence of women in Parliament, which is a result of the legally imposed quotas for electing members of Parliament from the underrepresented gender. As explained in the GEI report, the satellite domains violence and intersectional inequalities are missing in the 2019 edition due to lack of data. Although a second edition of the GEI for North Macedonia is expected to be published in 2022, to date, the GEI has not been updated.

The publication *Women and Men in North Macedonia*⁷³ is a compilation of gender statistics that the SSO produces, with twelve editions regularly published so far. The publication started as a biannual booklet and since 2012 the SSO began to publish annual editions. The last available publication presents gender disaggregated data divided in three thematic sections: Population and Health, Education and Communication, Labour Market and Social Welfare. Reactor's gender analysis of statistics in North Macedonia⁷⁴ found that there is a solid potential to broaden the overview of the available gender statistics within the publication and address the

72 Bashevska, 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

73 State Statistical Office. Women and Men in North Macedonia, 2020. Available at: https://www.stat.gov.mk/PrikaziPoslednaPublikacija_en.aspx?id=23

74 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

lack of data in crucial spheres such as unpaid labour, gender inequalities in time use, power and decision making, as well as gender-based violence. Moreover, there is a lack of data on key gender gaps – gender pay gap, gender pension gap and gaps in ownerships. Even though the publication is offering an overview of available gender statistics, interpretation of the underlying gender inequalities is limited and there is a lack of correlation between the introduction of gender equality policies and the variation in the data over time. Lastly, *Women and Men in North Macedonia* does not recognise the concept of intersectional inequalities as such.

Reactor's gender analysis of statistics concluded that current national practices narrowly recognize gender statistics as data disaggregated by sex and that further efforts and systematic deliberations are needed for the official statistics to reflect pressing gender issues, intersectionality, diversity and cognizance about potential gender biases in the processes of collecting, processing, storing and presenting statistical data.

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

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

This part of the report examines the extent to which national bodies responsible for EU integration include staff with gender expertise. In North Macedonia, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) is the national body tasked with coordination, professional activities and support related to EU integration. It was established as a separate expert service of the Government in 2005 through a transformation of the previous Sector for European Integration which functioned as part of the General Secretariat of the Government of North Macedonia.

According to information by the SEA, there are currently no employees within the SEA with gender expertise such as formal education on gender equality or more than three years of professional work experience on issues related to gender equality. Throughout the years, SEA staff received some training on gender equality. Namely, in 2019 one employee received training on gender responsive budgeting and, by 2021, 61 SEA employees have passed the basic or advanced module of the e-training

course on gender equality, developed by the MLSP and available on an e-learning platform operated by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA). However, it should also be noted that for the most part of 2021, this e-learning platform was not at all functional.⁷⁵ Lastly, in 2021, only 3 out of 83 (3,6%) SEA employees participated in a study visit for strengthening the capacities of the SWG on Justice in the area of gender equality. What remains a key challenge for this body is the frequent staff turnover and outflow of trained HR capacities, which also applies to gender expertise (an important recent example includes the new State Secretary within the Government, who used to be the General Secretary of SEA and the crucial gender equality focal point in this body until the last government changes occurred in 2021).

The twelve sector working groups (SWGs) in North Macedonia are the main mechanism for policy dialogue, IPA programming and donor coordination. A Shadow Report⁷⁶ found that Gender Focal Points in the ministries (i.e. Coordinators for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men) rarely participated in the work of SWGs in 2021 and majority of SWG work did not include external experts and civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality. Moreover, some line ministries do not acknowledge the need for involvement of Gender Focal Points, while others remain open to this issue⁷⁷. Additionally, some SWGs did not have any meetings in 2021 and therefore it is challenging to assess gender mainstreaming as individual segment of their work.

Reactor's gender analysis of the national statistical system found that the SSO of North Macedonia has no dedicated gender equality sector, department, or systematized full-time position for a dedicated staff member responsible for coordinating gender statistics across sectors. Usually project-based or needs based working groups with representatives from relevant sectors (and donors) are formed on ad hoc basis to compile needed and available gender statistics. Additionally, diverse sources confirm that the SSO also faces significant employee turnover and is generally understaffed. This is mainly due to lack of financial resources to retain highly skilled and trained staff and it also represents a significant challenge to the prospect of establishing a separate unit or dedicated focal point. It should be noted that relevant representatives of SSO are aware of the legal and strategic framework for gender equality that needs to be informed by gender statistics. Nevertheless, SSO representatives believe their institutional role is to simply generate gender statistics and they feel they lack authority or capacity to analyse or assess gender inequalities in terms of policy objectives.⁷⁸

75 Jolevska, Irina (2022). Shadow report on gender mainstreaming in sector working groups January – December 2021. Available at: <https://dijalogkoneu.mk/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/3/2022/06/RODOVA-PERSPEKTIVA-2021-EN.pdf>

76 Ibid.

77 Ibid

78 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

We could say that SSO has gender expertise to a minimal extent because of their continuous effort to publish sex-disaggregated statistics throughout the years and update their publication ‘Men and Women in North Macedonia’ on annual basis. Otherwise, ownership of gender expertise usually remains outside of the institution and there is one employee who coordinates the production of the Gender Equality Index (GEI), based on EIGE’s methodology, while MTSP remains the main carrier of this activity and key decision maker and the whole index is computed and produced by externally hired experts, supported and funded through UN Women projects⁷⁹.

79 Interview with SSO staff and meeting with UN Women and MTSP, 2021.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of the 2021 Country Report reveals that gender mainstreaming of different chapters is limited; while two chapters incorporate a gender perspective to some extent and include official recommendations regarding gender equality, no chapter can be considered as fully gender mainstreamed. Additionally, the Report does not address intersectionality issues comprehensively throughout different Chapters. Even though input from WCSOs was considered and included in the 2021 Report to a moderate extent, at times it was generalized or simplified.

In this baseline monitoring period, North Macedonia has made moderate, but limited progress in implementing the recommendations made in the 2020 Country Report. For instance, one of the two official (grey-box) recommendations was addressed, while other recommendations with a gender perspective included in the narrative of the Report remained unchanged. Notably, some recommendations on crucial issues related to GBV, reproductive health and legally regulated gender recognition procedures, were omitted from the Country Report for 2021 even though they were not implemented by national institutions.

The NPAA 2021-2027 is gender mainstreamed to a minimal extent. It contains general commitments to gender equality, with only one direct reference in the budget under the chapter related to social policy and employment. Key laws on gender equality and EU Accession are open for public consultation to a moderate extent and new sectoral strategies are publicly available online. The analysis revealed that out of 14 new sectoral strategies adopted in 2021, only eight have been gender mainstreamed to some extent. Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that gender expertise within national bodies such as the SEA and SSO is limited in scope.

WCSOs in North Macedonia face challenges in meaningful participation and timely inclusion in policymaking processes. In terms of the development of the IPA III Strategic Response and Action Documents, limited consultation with WCSOs was observed. Civil society participation in SWGs is inconsistent and gender equality as a cross-cutting theme remains insufficiently discussed.

The rapid gender analysis of the IPA III Action Documents for North Macedonia in 2021 reveals that while four out of six actions are officially marked as gender responsive (GM1), only two of them consider gender equality to some extent. The analysis further uncovered that none of the 2021 Action Documents fully comply with OECD DAC gender marker criteria to achieve at least a GM1 status.

The availability of publicly accessible data on SAA committee and sub-committee meetings in 2021 was extremely limited, with only four press releases providing partial information on the topics discussed. Gender-related issues were not explicitly mentioned and there was no information regarding the participation of (W)CSOs. The scarcity of information highlights the need for improved transparency, as well as for meaningful inclusion of (W)CSOs in all EU accession related processes.

Regarding the CLIP for GAP III in North Macedonia, it was successfully agreed and transmitted to Brussels, albeit with slight delays. The CLIP was produced without a gender country profile or a fully-fledged gender analysis. However, the EUD in North Macedonia made efforts to incorporate updated information from various sources, including national stakeholders and WCSOs, to inform the CLIP. This collaborative approach between the EUD and WCSOs serves as a successful example of cooperation that facilitated the preparation of this important document.

Lastly, during the baseline period, the EUD in North Macedonia engaged in dialogue on gender equality with civil society, including WCSOs, to a moderate extent. However, further improvements are necessary to formalize mechanisms for dialogue and ensure meaningful inclusion of civil society in processes related to gender equality and EU accession.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for the EU

- Enhance efforts for gender mainstreaming of all Chapters of the Country Report, including by incorporating gender-disaggregated data and by implementing an intersectional approach
- Continue efforts to incorporate recommendations in the Country Report that emphasize tangible outcomes and refrain from excluding recommendations on crucial gender equality issues if national governments have not taken measures to address or implement them in the previous year
- Strengthen collaboration and dialogue between the EU and WCSOs, ensuring their meaningful participation in the Country Report preparation process
- Enhance accountability and transparency by providing comprehensive and timely public information on SAA committee and sub-committee meetings
- Establish mechanisms for structured inclusion of civil society, particularly WCSOs, in the SAA processes
- Prioritize the development of an updated gender country profile and conduct comprehensive sector-specific gender analyses
- Ensure that gender equality objectives are integrated in IPA III action documents and establish a quality control system to ensure that action documents undergo a thorough evaluation to meet the OECD DAC gender-marker criteria before their final approval
- Ensure support to dedicated Gender Advisors/Focal Points and continuous training for them and other EUD staff on gender equality related topics.

Recommendations for national government/bodies

- Enhance efforts to advance gender equality by implementing both the official and other recommendations included in narrative of the EC Country Reports for North Macedonia;
- Continue with and reinforce efforts to integrate a gender perspective into all national strategic documents and policies
- Strengthen gender mainstreaming efforts within the NPAA and IPA III Strategic Response and ensure that action documents are correctly marked
- Strengthen civil society participation and gender mainstreaming efforts in SWGs and prioritise gender equality as a cross-cutting theme
- Ensure systematic, meaningful and timely consultation of civil society, particularly WCSOs, in all EU accession processes, including in the SAA committee and sub-committee meetings and in the drafting of both the IPA III Strategic Response and IPA III action documents
- Increase transparency and awareness regarding the IPA III Strategic Response and action documents to improve engagement of WCSOs

- Encourage dialogue and active participation of Gender Focal Points from line ministries in IPA programming processes
- Provide targeted capacity-building and training to stakeholders involved in IPA programming, emphasizing the importance of gender mainstreaming
- Continue publishing the Women and Men in North Macedonia publication, enhance efforts to broaden the scope of available gender statistics in crucial areas and ensure that the Gender Equality Index is published regularly
- Increase and 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.

ANNEXES

ANNEX 1. DATA SOURCES

In addition to the mentioned policies, documents and primary sources, Reactor consulted the following institutions and organisations (face-to-face or via email correspondence) to further feed this document:

- » European Union Delegation to North Macedonia
- » Secretariat for European Affairs
- » Ministry of Labour and Social Policy
- » Ministry of Internal Affairs
- » Ministry of Justice
- » Ministry of Finance
- » Ministry of Transport and Communications
- » State Statistical Office of North Macedonia
- » (W)CSOs.

ANNEX 2. RAPID GENDER ANALYSIS OF FINAL ACTION DOCUMENTS

This annex provides a rapid gender analysis of the 6 official action documents (AD) for the IPA programming for North Macedonia:

1. EU for Rule of Law and Anti-corruption
2. EU against organised crime, in support of trade
3. EU Integration Facility
4. EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air
5. EU for Prespa
6. EU for Green Economy

For each AD, there is a short table that provides details on the thematic area, general policy objectives and their targeting or compliance with the OECD-DAC gender equality policy makers; for an easier navigation of the reader, the table also includes the contents of the gender mainstreaming section (3.4), as given in the original document. This is followed by some general remarks on the key issues for consideration that demand further improvements and a brief analysis according to the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers.

No	Thematic Action	General policy objective with OECD -DAC gender equality policy marker			3.4 Gender Mainstreaming Section (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)
		Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born and child health	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Content (as worded in the document)
1	"EU for Rule of Law and Anti-corruption"	Not targeted	Not targeted	Not targeted	<p>"The Action will have a positive impact on the implementation of the legal provisions on girls' and women rights; Gender equality will be addressed directly through gender sensitive analysis, training, standards review, skills development and information, generated and streamlined during the implementation; Expected improvements in the data collection and overall case management system will encompass the introduction of gender aspects in the judiciary statistics; Gender balance will be ensured in all capacity building activities; The training programmes provided will consider proportionate enrolment and participation of women; The project related statistics (i.e. on beneficiaries) will be gender segregated when possible."</p>

General Remarks:

- » **OECD markers are not met** throughout the document elsewhere in other sections.
- » There is no further nor any specific description how the impact will be enriched. There is also lack of information on who will do the analysis and skills development, timeframe etc.
- » Segregation of data by gender or sex is not enough to accomplish any progress in terms of gender equality. Data collected

should be segregated by key gender indicators, not only by percentage of sex.

- » Proportion of women in the trainings is not enough to achieve equality. Apart from mentioned parity, there is no explanation nor examples on how the training programs will further the gender aspect in the judiciary system.

Fulfilment of the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers:

- ▼ The extent to which needed gender analysis is included in the Action's problem analysis – Not at all.
- ▼ Are there any activities designed to specifically target women? – No.
- ▼ Are the objectives towards gender equality included in the Action, i.e. in the log frame on the first pages and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis? – No.
- ▼ Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all (i.e. are there any indicators at the end that measure gender objectives)? -There is only one single indicator that mentions it should be gender disaggregated.
- ▼ Are all indicators, baselines, and targets involving people disaggregated by sex? - No.
- ▼ Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document?⁸⁰ - Not particularly. In general, the Constitutional Court is willing to improve the individual protection of human rights in line with the Constitution.

⁸⁰ 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

No	Thematic Action	General policy objective with OECD -DAC gender equality policy marker			3.4 Gender Mainstreaming Section (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)
		Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born and child health	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Content (as included in the document)
2	"EU against organised crime, in support of trade"	Significant objective	Not targeted	Not targeted	The country has put in place the legal framework to ensure gender equality through the adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men and the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination. The current legal framework actually prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation and prescribes that equal representation of men and women exists when one sex is represented with at least 40% per cent in bodies at all levels (state, municipal levels other institutions)

General Remarks:

- » **This Action claims to be gender sensitive and marks gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment as a specific objective**, yet **OECD markers are not met** throughout the document elsewhere/in other sections.
- » This document aims at strengthening the capacities to combat trafficking in human beings, the main victims of which are girls and women, as well as at improving crimes-related data including availability of sex and age disaggregated data on victims.
- » Under the trade component, the infrastructure investments consider the needs of children, women and people with disabilities.

Fulfilment of the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers:

- ▼ The extent to which needed gender analysis is included in the Action's problem analysis – Not at all or at least it does

not mention nor reference any gender analysis. There is only one sentence referring to data about women and children trafficking cases.

- ▼ Are there any activities designed to specifically target women? – No.
- ▼ Are the objectives towards gender equality included in the Action, i.e. in the log frame on the first pages and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis? – Yes and no. Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment is marked as significant objective but no further details are included nor any gender analysis is mentioned as such.
- ▼ Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all (i.e. are there any indicators at the end that measure gender objectives)? -There is only one single indicator that mentions it should be gender disaggregated.
- ▼ Are all indicators, baselines, and targets involving people disaggregated by sex? - No.
- ▼ Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document? - Not particularly. And it is crucial to mention it in this Action due to their strong involvement and significant CSO contribution in the thematic area, as well as the ongoing processes related to key laws and bylaws that the national CSOs and GE Machinery are working on. This cooperation and CSO inclusion should be foreseen and further elaborated and promoted.

No	Thematic Action	General policy objective with OECD -DAC gender equality policy marker			3.4 Gender Mainstreaming Section (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)
		Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born and child health	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Content (as included in the document)
3	"EU Integration Facility"	Significant objective	Not targeted	Not targeted	The action will promote equal opportunities for men and women through all projects supported under EUIF. This implies an analysis of the gender impact of each single project under EUIF as well as inclusion, where possible, of sex-disaggregated data and gender-sensitive indicators for measuring the success of projects, i.e. number of women and number and men benefiting from the action (absolute number and percentage of all final beneficiaries). EUIF supports a legislative and political process that is inclusive and supports the participation of women in political decision-making. In addition, projects promoting gender equality are selected with preference. In principle, EUIF will not support gender blind projects.

General Remarks:

- » **OECD markers are considered under:** Outcome 2: Improved effectiveness and visibility of the EU funds invested in the country (pg.10) and Output 2.1: Strengthened national capacity for management of the EU funds - Emergency response to threats such as COVID-19 and other viral diseases, migration, environmental threats, gender-based violence, fight against organised crime, etc.
- » There is no other consideration of the OECD markers throughout the document elsewhere.

Fulfilment of the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers:

- ▼ The extent to which needed gender analysis is included in the Action's problem analysis – Not at all. There is not a single reference to women or gender in the context section.
- ▼ Are there any activities designed to specifically target women? – There is one indicative action under one of the outputs but none of the outcomes or outputs are gender sensitive.
- ▼ Are the objectives towards gender equality included in the Action, i.e. in the log frame on the first pages and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis? – Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment is marked as significant objective but no further details are included nor any gender analysis is mentioned as such. There is one indicative action under one of the outputs but none of the outcomes or outputs are gender sensitive.
- ▼ Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all (i.e. are there any indicators at the end that measure gender objectives)? – No.
- ▼ Are all indicators, baselines, and targets involving people disaggregated by sex? - No.
- ▼ Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document? - Not particularly. In the Logical framework in the Assumptions column (pg.17) there is a reference to Output 2.1 that notes two general assumptions ((1) 'strong support for the accession to the European Union on behalf of the public administration, authorities, civil society, media and business and population at large', and (2) 'the fundamental reforms are well progressing and create a favourable environment for the alignment with the EU acquis and the implementation in practice of the new legislation') but none specifically refers to any systematic engagements.

No	Thematic Action	General policy objective with OECD -DAC gender equality policy marker			3.4 Gender Mainstreaming Section (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)
		Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born and child health	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Content (as included in the document)
4	"EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air"	Not targeted	Not targeted	Not targeted	It aims to decrease the air pollution, which affects primarily children and women. Further on, the action will invest in the heating systems of 70 public buildings, including many hospitals and schools, in ecological public transport, in parks and gardens. These facilities are largely used by women, children, and vulnerable people. The planned infrastructure is designed to reflect their specific needs.

General Remarks:

- » **The Action is labeling itself as aiming to be gender-sensitive** and the document claims to be aiming at turning into a pilot exercise for introducing a gender approach in infrastructure planning. However, these claims need to be taken with caution as the only reference to gender and women is in the short mainstreaming section, which is even shorter compared to the other action documents and not sufficient as such to substantiate the briefly mentioned 'gender-sensitive nature' of the document within this same section nor to provide any solid grounds for straightforward commitments.
- » **OECD markers are not met** throughout the document elsewhere in other sections.
- » Even though the Action claims to be gender-sensitive and to work on the reduction of air pollution while taking into account women, children and vulnerable groups, its logical framework does not contain any indicators, risks or assumptions that are inclusive of the mentioned groups. Moreover, further analysis of the document reveals that the heating system renovation will be applied in only 4 cities/towns (Skopje, Bitola, Kumanovo, and Tetovo), involving a total of 70 public buildings, which does not substantiate the claim that all population of women, children and vulnerable groups will be covered.

Fulfilment of the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers:

- ▼ The extent to which needed gender analysis is included in the Action's problem analysis – Not at all. There is not a single reference to women or gender in the context section.
- ▼ Are there any activities designed to specifically target women? – No.
- ▼ Are the objectives towards gender equality included in the Action, i.e. in the log frame on the first pages and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis? – No.
- ▼ Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all (i.e. are there any indicators at the end that measure gender objectives)? – No.
- ▼ Are all indicators, baselines, and targets involving people disaggregated by sex? - No.
- ▼ Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document? - Not particularly. There is no particular emphasis on the involvement of (W)CSOs in the Action. The document includes a general note that the CSO will be included in the extension of the urban green belts and in the policy dialogue on the Skopje district heating. It also mentions that CSO will be part of the SWG on Environment and Climate Change along with the authorities for sectoral policy dialogue. However, Reactor's detailed analysis of the previous work of SWGs under an EU-funded project reveals that this specific SWG is among the challenging ones when it comes to meaningful and timely CSO involvement.⁸¹

⁸¹ Maleski, Blazhen. Kolekeski, Aleksandar. Jolevska, Irina (2021). Shadow report from monitoring work and effects of the sector working group on education, employment and social policy January - December 2020. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3EdkKwU>

No	Thematic Action	General policy objective with OECD -DAC gender equality policy marker			3.4 Gender Mainstreaming Section (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)
		Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born and child health	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Content (as included in the document)
5	"EU for Prespa"	Significant objective	Not targeted	Not targeted	<p>The Action will address gender equality first, by encompassing a number of gender-sensitive indicators to measure the success of the projects. On the background of missing surveys and gender analysis in the targeted area and in the country, the action will collect baseline data and qualitative evidence to better understand the needs and priorities of men and women as regards the protection of the nature and nature-based economic activities. Moreover, the collection of sex-disaggregated data will allow the EU Delegation and all implementing partners to detect early if project activities create further imbalances and underrepresentation in environmental decision making and economic activities to apply the timely mitigation measures.</p> <p>Secondly, the Action is expected to promote green jobs and nature-centered economic activities in agriculture and tourism. In North Macedonia, the percentage of women owning land and production tools is very small and, although no data exist for the target region, it can be expected that this problem is even more acute in the border regions. Therefore, the project will actively promote equal opportunities by ensuring the access to EU funding for women and girls. Special focus is put on engaging women in agricultural activities and support has been envisaged for cooperatives of women. The two planned call for proposals (i.e. direct financial support for sustainable eco-tourism and the grant scheme for youth and other civil society organizations) will have specific provisions (quotas) to ensure the participation of young people (under 45 years old) and women.</p> <p>During the implementation, equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming will be ensured through gender sensitive analysis, training, review of standards, skills development and information. In addition, all implementing partners will be requested to provide monitoring data recording the participation of men and women by age in terms of expert inputs and staff hired by the project.</p>

General Remarks:

- » **This Action aims to be gender sensitive and marks gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment as a significant objective**, yet **OECD markers are not always met** throughout the document. (more details below)
- » The Rights Based Approach paragraph mentions that this Action will actively promote equal opportunities by ensuring access to EU funding for women and men, young people and persons with disabilities. It also mentions that by creating nature-centred living, encouraging sustainable business practices and activities, the project will create jobs, decrease the marginalisation of vulnerable people and will provide a development perspective. However, there is no specific description how the impact will be achieved, and the list of stakeholders does not include any gender expertise at overall level. There is also lack of information on who will do the gender sensitive analysis, training, review of standards, skills development etc.
- » Moreover, the gender mainstreaming section mentions that “the percentage of women owning land and production tools is very small and, although no data exist for the target region, it can be expected that this problem is even more acute in the border regions.” It's important to mention here that there is data on property and land ownership at national level that can be further processed⁸² and the responsible institution – the national Cadaster Agency should have the possibility to extract such data for the designated region based on the unique personal number of the owners that includes a code on the person's sex.⁸³ It is also important to bear in mind that successful policies and programming need to utilize available statistical data and be evidence-based to better meet the needs of the target population groups. The same section also mentions that “the project will actively promote equal opportunities by ensuring the access to EU funding for women and girls.” However, the indicators are not often in line with this commitment.
- » Monitoring data recording the participation of men and women by age in terms of expert inputs and staff hired by the project is not enough to accomplish any progress in terms of gender equality (especially not enough to support the claims on gender equality being a significant objective).

82 Table representing data on ownership segregated per municipality and owner's sex. (2019) National Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, available in Macedonian only at: https://www.katastar.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/rodova_ednakvost/izvestai/Tabela_so_broj_i_procent_na_zapisani_prava_pol_i_po_katastarsko_oddelenie_2019.pdf

83 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), page 67; available at: https://reactor.org.mk/en/wp-content/uploads/sites/4/2022/08/rodova_analiza_en-1.pdf

Fulfilment of the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers:

- ▼ The extent to which needed gender analysis is included in the Action's problem analysis – Not at all. There is no reference to any sources used nor any gender aspects in the problem analysis. There is only one specific reference to women under the Area of support #3: Sustainable business and food systems in rural areas, which mentions that 40% of the unemployed people in the targeted region are women.
- ▼ Are there any activities designed to specifically target women? – None of the activities designed mention women as a separate target group, even though the gender mainstreaming section includes information that the Action will include direct financial support for sustainable eco-tourism and grant scheme for youth and other civil society organisations through public calls with specific provisions to ensure the participation of young people (under 45 years old) and women. This section also mentions that it will promote equal opportunities and put a special focus on engaging women in agricultural activities, envisaging support for cooperatives of women. The latter is one of the two commitments on inclusion of women that is specifically included in the measuring indicators, but activities do not specifically elaborate this.
- ▼ Are the objectives towards gender equality included in the Action, i.e. in the log frame on the first pages and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis? – Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment is marked as significant objective, but no further details are included, nor any gender analysis is mentioned as such. One or two activities is specifically gender sensitive and there are three specific indicators targeting women and a few indicators mention data to be disaggregated by sex (however, both baseline and target values for these are provided at total level only).
- ▼ Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all (i.e. are there any indicators at the end that measure gender objectives)? - Yes
- ▼ There are three specific indicators targeting women in particular: Output 2.1. Increased share of environmentally friendly agriculture - Number of Women associated to the women cooperative (baseline 20 (2020) target 50 (2025)), Output 2.2 Sustainable tourism products promoted and diversified - Number of supported hotels/service providers, traditional houses (sex disaggregated data for women owners/ managers) (baseline 0 (2020) target value 20 (2025)), and Output 3.1. Strengthened strategic vision on the development of Prespa Transboundary Area - Number of new youth/women initiatives focused on the preservation and development of the Prespa area (baseline value 0 (2020), target value 7 (2025)). And the only listed sources of verification are 'UNDP Reports' (for the first two) and 'Funded project reports' (for the third indicator).

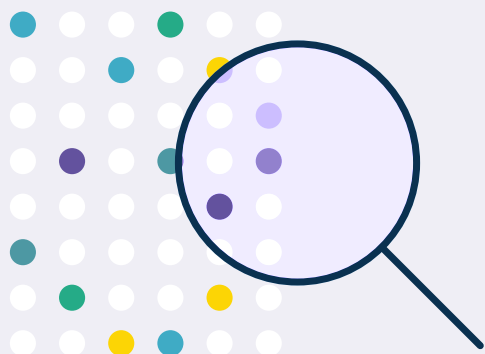
- ▼ Moreover, several other indicators mention that data needs to be disaggregated by sex in their description only, while their baseline and target values are set at total level only and do not provide significant information that can be used to measure the impact of the Action on the gender equality progress and inclusion of women or other vulnerable groups mentioned under the gender mainstreaming and people-based approach sections.
- ▼ Are all indicators, baselines, and targets involving people disaggregated by sex? - Some of the indicators involve indicators that mention they have to be disaggregated by sex, but baselines and targets measure women in only three specific indicators mentioned above. For example, the indicator 'Number of full-time equivalent green jobs (sex and age-disaggregated data) in Resen municipality', included under Impact: To promote the Green Agenda for the Western Balkans in the transboundary Prespa lake area in line with the "no persons and regions left behind" principle, does not include any baseline nor target values that can allow for monitoring the progress in terms of gender equality (the given values are: TBD at the beginning of the action (baseline) and 15% increase (target)).
- ▼ Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document? - Not particularly. Although the AD mentions it will continue to engage representatives of NGOs and civil society, it doesn't specifically mention women's rights groups nor NGEMs. Under the Activity 3.1.2 Improving the participation of local communities in the sustainable development of the region, the document foresees 'grant schemes for youth and other CSOs for development activities addressing environmental, social or economic challenges identified by the local communities as priorities, encouraging the participation of the local communities in decision-making process and mobilising local resources in support of the sustainable local development'. There is no particular emphasis on women's rights groups but this activity claims that it will offer direct financial support for sustainable eco-tourism and the grant scheme for youth and other civil society organisations) will have specific provisions (quotas) to ensure the participation of young people (under 45 years old) and women.

No	Thematic Action	General policy objective with OECD -DAC gender equality policy marker			3.4 Gender Mainstreaming Section (in line with the EU gender equality strategy 2020-2025)
		Gender equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment	Reproductive, Maternal, New-born and child health	Inclusion of persons with disabilities	Content (as included in the document)
6	"EU for Green Economy"	Significant objective	Not targeted	Not targeted	<p>The Action is gender sensitive.</p> <p>First, it will address gender equality by encompassing a number of gender-sensitive indicators to measure the success of the projects. On the background of missing surveys and gender analysis in the country, the action will collect baseline data and qualitative evidence to better understand the needs and priorities of men and women as regards the economic and agriculture activities. Moreover, the collection of sex-disaggregated data will allow the EU Delegation and all implementing partners to detect early if project activities create further imbalances and underrepresentation in decision making and economic activities in order to apply timely mitigation measures.</p> <p>Second, the funding for businesses will involve special financial incentives to women owners or managers of enterprises.</p> <p>Third, under the agriculture-related output, special focus will be put on involving women. In North Macedonia the percentage of women owning land and production tools is very small. Therefore, the Action will actively promote equal opportunities with a special focus on engaging women in self-support cooperative activities.</p> <p>During the implementation, equal opportunities and gender mainstreaming will be ensured through gender sensitive analysis, training, review of standards, skills development, and information. In addition, all implementing partners will be requested to provide monitoring data recording the participation of men and women by age in terms of expert inputs and staff hired by the project</p>

- » **This Action aims to be gender sensitive** and marks gender equality and women's and girl's empowerment as a **significant objective**, yet **OECD markers are not always met** throughout the document. (more details below)
- » The only reference it mentions regarding women is under the description of the second area of support – agriculture, where the Action mentions it is in line with the Strategy of Women Entrepreneurship Development (2019-2023) but it doesn't include any gender reference in the problem analysis.

Fulfilment of the minimum criteria for DAC gender markers:

- ▼ The extent to which needed gender analysis is included in the Action's problem analysis – Not at all.
- ▼ Are there any activities designed to specifically target women? – There is one specific activity – Activity 1.2: Investing in green businesses, which mentions that 'the facility will be gender-sensitive as regards the beneficiaries but also as regards the investments (all investments will be assessed for their gender impact).' None of the other activities is specifically designed to target women in their description.
- ▼ Are the objectives towards gender equality included in the Action, i.e. in the log frame on the first pages and do they address the needs identified in the gender analysis? – Gender Equality and Women's and Girl's Empowerment is marked as significant objective but no further details are included nor any gender analysis is mentioned as such.
- ▼ Are indicators to measure changes towards gender equality included in the document at all (i.e. are there any indicators at the end that measure gender objectives)? – There is one indicator under Output 1 that addresses gender in its description only: Output 1 Established Greening Business Facility - Indicator for No of supported companies (breakdown per economic sector / gender of management and ownership (male/female) / geographic location / type of "greening"). However, both baseline and target values are set at total (0 for 2020, 300 for 2025)
- ▼ Are all indicators, baselines, and targets involving people disaggregated by sex? - No.
- ▼ Is engagement of women's rights groups and NGEMs foreseen anywhere in the document? - Not particularly. However, the Action has the potential to decrease the marginalisation and provide a development perspective for Roma people, as well as other vulnerable categories. Also, there is general note for involving CSOs ("The civil society organisations have been engaged in the discussions of the national sector priorities, primarily during the preparation of the relevant strategic documents. Representatives of Civil society will be involved into the implementation of this Action, as the harmonisation of the national legislation with EU acquis involves a wide range of stakeholders on the basis of open dialogue, allowing stakeholders and those who are potentially affected to be involved into the process"). However, the main forum for the engagement of the CSOs are the working meetings of the SWG, which was involved in the programming of this Action, and it will be involved in its implementation.



Gender Mainstreaming in the EU Accession Process

Country assessment report

North Macedonia

2022

Partner Organisation **REAC—OR**
research in action