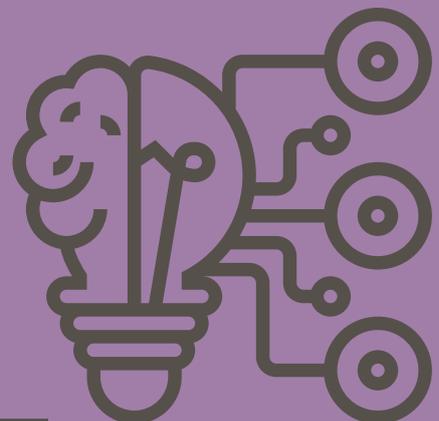


SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR
WORKING GROUP ON
COMPETITIVENESS
AND INNOVATION

January – December 2020





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This project is funded
by the European Union



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research in action



**SHADOW REPORT FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP
ON COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION
IN THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020**

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ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ
НА СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА КОНКУРЕНТНОСТ И ИНОВАЦИИ
ЗА ПЕРИОДОТ ЈАНУАРИ – ДЕКЕМВРИ 2020

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TABLE OF CONTENT



FOREWORD	5
GENERAL INFORMATION	7
METHODOLOGY APPROACH	9
PART 1: SECTOR POLICIES	11
PART 2: SWG FUNCTIONALITY	15
2.1 Rules of Procedure	15
2.2 Annual plan	17
PART 3: CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION	19
PART 4: CSO CAPACITY	23
PART 5: EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK	25
5.1 Basic information on IPA III programming (2021-2027)	26
5.1.1 Strategic response and action fiche for competitiveness and innovation	30
PART 6: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	35
6.1 Findings from monitoring sector working groups	36
6.1.1 SWG meetings	36
6.1.2 Trainings	37
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	39
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN TERMS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	39
BIBLIOGRAPHY	40



FOREWORD

The project “CSO Dialogue – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integrations” is committed to ensuring structural participation of the civil society that expresses the views of citizens to impact key sector-wide reforms under the EU accession process. The sector working groups (SWGs)¹ are perceived as exceptionally important mechanism for consultations and civil society participation, and a forum for development of national policies and design of reform processes in the country. Hence, the second edition of 12 shadow reports on performance of sector working groups in 2020 is an attempt to bring this mechanism closer to the citizens and to critically analyse their organizational setup, functionality and efficiency.

For the purpose of the second edition of 12 shadow reports on performance of sector working groups in the period January – December 2020, project researchers monitored 17 from total of 19 meetings held by these working groups. Findings from observing SWG meetings and analysing sector policies were discussed at 11 interviews conducted with IPA coordinators from line ministries responsible for relevant sector groups, and with 34 civil society representatives that participate in SWGs. Moreover, changes noted in 2020 compared to 2019 are supported by responses obtained to 312 freedom of information requests inquiring about SWG performance in the course of 2020.

The general assessment implies certain progress in SWG performance despite the extraordinary year which, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, has raised challenges for the overall society. Progress is primarily noted in respect to transparency in SWG operation, notably by means of

1 The sector working groups are a formal mechanism for consultations and cooperation among the executive authorities (ministries), civil society organizations, the donor community, and other interested parties. By the cut-off date for this report, 12 sector working groups with competences in different areas are established in the Republic of North Macedonia, in order to ensure the sector-wide approach.



greater access to published information that are of importance for SWGs. Furthermore, 2020 was marked by organization of 19 plenary sessions, compared to only 12 sessions held in 2019. However, despite the mild increase in the number of meetings, SWGs still do not meet pursuant to the frequency anticipated under the rules of procedure, which could guarantee a commitment to sector policies and reform implementation. SWGs demonstrated a satisfactory level of functionality, as stipulated in their respective rules of procedures, but these documents fall short in defining the role and position of civil society organizations within SWGs. Having in mind that the central focus of the project “CSO Dialogue – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integrations” is put on civil society organizations and their efficient involvement in policy shaping, this report stresses the need for advancing the role played by civil society organizations in sector working groups.

GENERAL INFORMATION



SWG COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION

FORMED: 2015

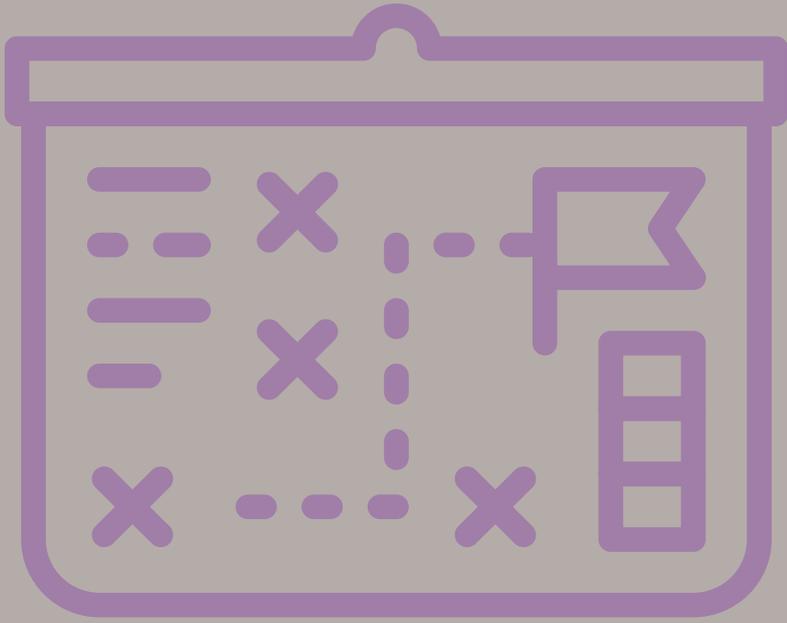
NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS: This information is not publicly available and was not secured under the instrument for free access to public information

CSO MEMBERS: 0

NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2020:

One plenary session, 22.06.2020

SWG CHAIR: Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Coordination of Economic Resources and Investments



METHODOLOGY APPROACH

For the purpose of this report, the project team combined several research methods for data collection, processing and analysis. Research work was comprised of desk analysis and field/online survey.

The desk research component included in-depth analysis of documents, laws and strategies that are of significance for this sector working group (*for more information see **BIBLIOGRAPHY***). Moreover, the project team submitted **22 freedom of information requests** to the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, competent for operation of this sector group. However, despite several attempts and follow-up inquires, all information requests remained unanswered.

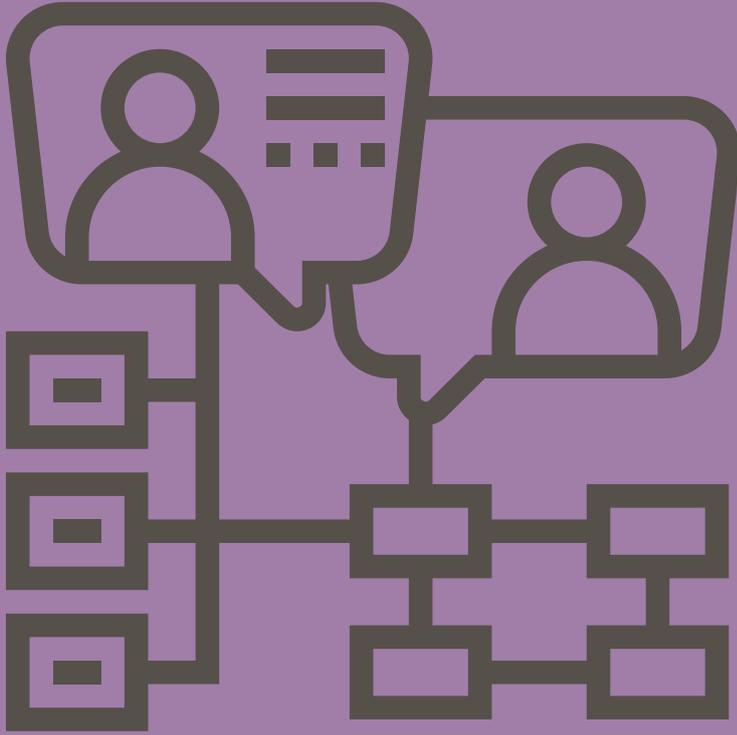
As regards field/online survey, the project team conducted one **interview**² with the coordinator from the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and one **interview**³ with representative from the Economic Chamber of RNM. At the same time, in the capacity of observers, project researchers attended the **single ne meeting** held by this sector group in the monitoring period.

According to the monitoring methodology, performance of sector working groups is assessed in respect to five segments:

- SWG functionality;
- civil society participation in SWG; ;
- CSO capacity for contribution and participation in SWG work;
- effects from SWG work; and
- PA.

² Interview with the coordinator from the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs was conducted on 11.05.2021.

³ Interview with representative from the Economic Chamber of RNM was conducted on 11.05.2021



PART 1

SECTOR POLICIES

In 2020 there were no strategy documents or legislation adopted within this sector. However, activities were taken on drafting two relevant legislative acts whose publication is postponed for early months of 2021.

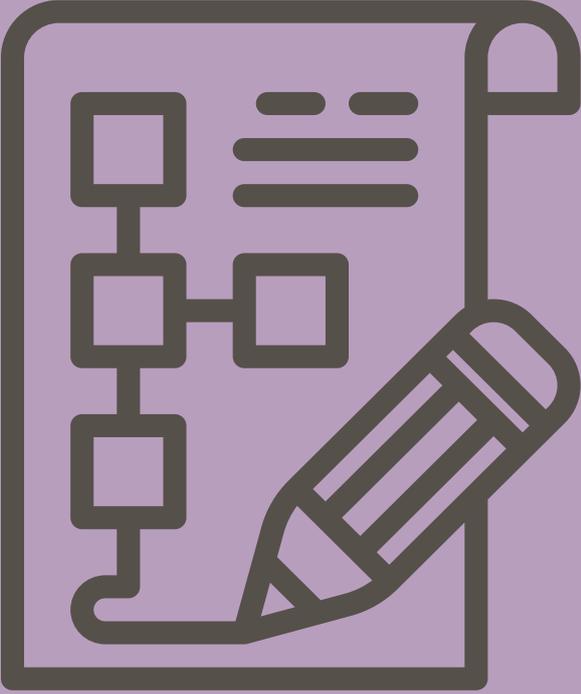
The first document concerns a new Proposed Law on Public-Private Partnerships whose text was published in the Single National Register of Legislation (ENER) in March 2021, allowing information and involvement of the public in development of this piece of legislation. Adoption of new law governing public-private partnerships, as proposed by the Ministry of Economy, is justified with the need to transpose the Directive 2014/23/EU on award of concession contracts and further alignment with best standards and international practices in this area, i.e. development of stable and consistent legislative framework on award of public-private partnership contracts, including concessions as type of public-private partnerships.

The second piece of legislation is the Proposed Law on Insolvency whose draft text was also published on ENER in March 2021. This draft law was developed by the Ministry of Economy, in cooperation with the International Financial Corporation – IFC (World Bank Group). Moreover, this law should enable protection for investors and their businesses, more flexible and streamlined procedure for small businesses, clarification of conditions for trustee participation in bankruptcy procedures. Also, it



features provisions on timely restructuring of enterprises that are facing difficulties in order to allow debtors to negotiate debt settlement options with their trustees. At the same time, the law is intended to transpose the Directive 2019/1023 of the European Parliament and the Council from 20.06.2019 on preventive restructuring frameworks, on discharge of debt and disqualifications, and on measures to increase the efficiency of procedures concerning restructuring, insolvency and discharge of debt, and amending the Directive (EU) 2017/1132 (Directive on restructuring and insolvency).

Although announced, the Smart Specialisation Strategy as a comprehensive model for sustainable economic growth was not finalized in 2020. The purpose of this strategy is to ensure coherence with and provide an added value to the industry policy, as well as strategies on competitiveness, innovation, research and development. Delays in strategy finalization was justified with state of emergency conditions brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic.



PART 2

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

SWG Competitiveness and Innovation has its own rules of procedure, but these are actually the general rules developed by the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) that should serve as baseline for operation of all sector working groups. The rules of procedure for this sector group are not publicly available.

This sector group does not have decision on its establishment because it was formed in 2015, under organization and upon initiative from SEA. SWG members elaborate the lack of separate decision on establishing this sector working group with the fact that the group is not part of the government and therefore they operate under the general decision for establishment of all working groups. All this has resulted in the fact that SWG Competitiveness and Innovation does not have a fixed composition of members from line ministries, other state institutions and the so-called non-state actors.

Minutes from the only plenary session held by this sector group in 2020 are not publicly available, and were not disclosed upon submission of request under the instrument for free access to public information to the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for



Economic Affairs, Coordination of Economic Sectors and Investments. The response obtained indicated that all information pertaining to operation of SWG Competitiveness and Innovation are published on official websites of the **Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, Coordination of Economic Sectors and Investments** and the **Secretariat for European Affairs**. Nevertheless, indicated websites do not host any documents related to work of this sector group. Otherwise, in addition to minutes from plenary sessions and operational meetings held by SWG Competitiveness and Innovation in 2020, information requests also inquired about the number of such sessions and meetings held in the past year, materials reconsidered at these meetings, meeting agendas, annual work plans for 2020 and 2021, 2020 annual work plan, indicators adopted for assessment of SWG performance, strategic responses related to work of this sector group, list of consulted civil society representatives, experts and external associates on issues pertaining to SWG scope of work in the course of 2020, etc. After having received the response in which the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs refused to disclose information and documents requested, the project team lodged an appeal before the Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information. The Agency approved our appeal and returned the case for repeated decision-making. Acting on the Agency's decision, the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs, through the General Secretariat of the Government, declared itself not to be holder of requested information and, pursuant to Article 18 of the Law on Free Access to Public Information, forwarded the information request to the Secretariat for European Affairs and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Such behaviour is rather surprising. However, the response obtained from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs wherein it informed that this ministry does not have own representative in SWG Competitiveness and Innovation and does not dispose with requested information did not come as surprise. In the case of forwarded request to the Secretariat for European Affairs, no response was disclosed in spite of the fact the law-stipulated deadline has long expired.

Based on the above elaborated, it could be concluded that this sector working group does not keep minutes from sessions held and does not make them publicly available.

2.2 ANNUAL PLAN

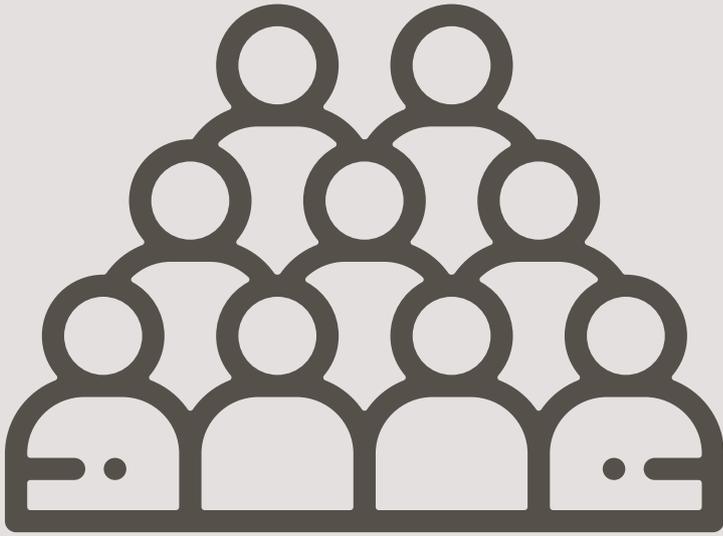
SWG Competitiveness and Innovation does not develop annual work plans that would be aligned with the indicative calendar for IPA programming and would be developed with participation of all SWG members. Hence, the sector group does not develop and adopt annual work reports that would reflect its achievements.

ASSESSMENT ON SWG FUNCTIONALITY

According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, **SWG functionality** is measured against 14 standards and 8 indicators that focus on creation of relevant work documents by SWGs (rules of procedure, annual plan and annual report) and their enforcement in the practice. All standards and indicators are assigned a numeric value, whereby 1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest score.

Average score for functionality of SWG Competitiveness and Innovation in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.0.





PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

In 2020, SWG Competitiveness and Innovation did not involve civil society organizations in its operation either as members or as observers. Representatives from this sector working group remain declaratively open to civil society participation, although - in their opinion - formal membership could be limiting. However, they still share a message that anybody wishing to participate in SWG work is free to address them and they will invite them to SWG meetings. This view, shared by the IPA coordinator, leads to the conclusion made about this sector group in the previous report whereby involvement of civil society organizations in SWG work has not been subject of interest and efforts have not been taken to inform civil society representatives about the sector group's work. In particular, efforts have not been made to announce an open call for civil society participation in this sector group or to communicate relevant mechanisms that would facilitate such participation, for example, the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society, which is an advisory body to the government tasked with promotion of cooperation and dialogue with and enabling development of the civil society in the Republic of North Macedonia.



Among the ranks of non-state actors, this sector working group includes representatives from four chambers of commerce:

- Economic Chamber of RNM;
- Association of Chambers of;
- Economic Chamber of Northwest Macedonia; and
- Organization of Employers of Macedonia.

Economic chambers have several representatives participating in work of this sector group and their attendance at SWG meetings depends on agenda items discussed. This is indicative of the fact that SWG membership is regulated at the level of institutions, not at the level of individuals.

Based on information provided by the interviewed representative from the economic chamber, in 2020 they were not invited to attend the only plenary session held by this sector group. On the other hand, representatives from the sector group attribute this situation to possible technical errors.

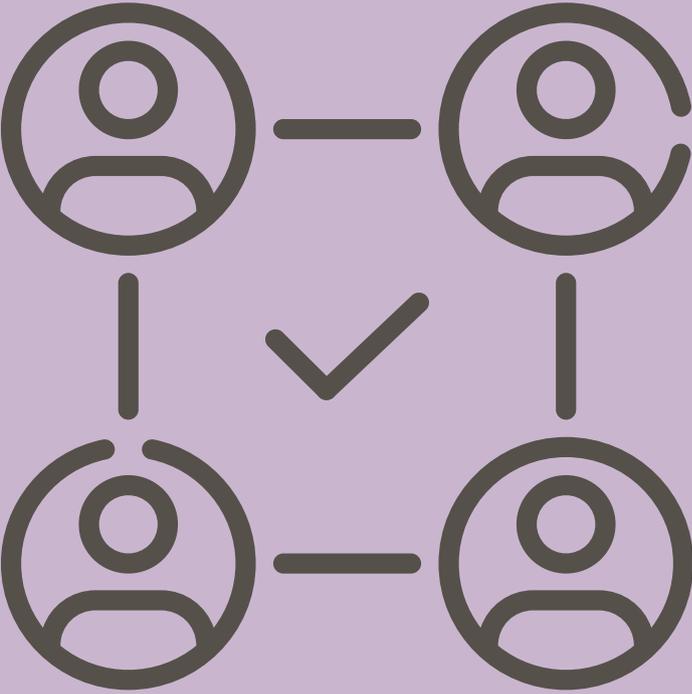
ASSESSMENT ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, **civil society participation in SWG** is measured against 9 standards and 3 indicators that focus on the number and the status of CSOs involved in SWG work. Moreover, they cover regular and timely delivery of invitations and necessary materials for SWG meeting, as well as opportunities afforded to CSOs to join discussions before, during and after meetings. All standards and indicators are assigned a numeric value, whereby 1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest score.

Average score for civil society participation in SWG Competitiveness and Innovation in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.0.





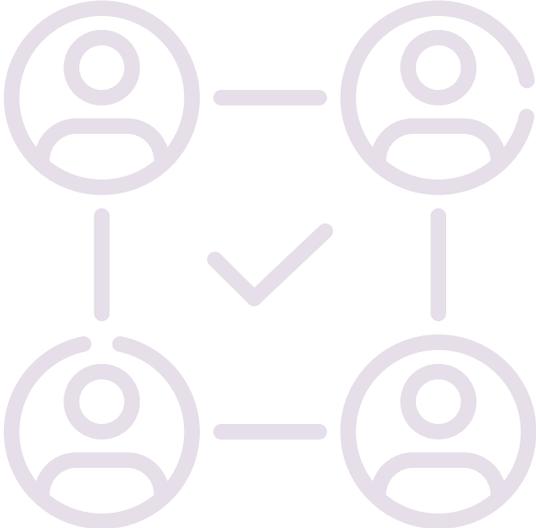


PART 4

CSO CAPACITY

This sector working groups does not have members from the ranks of civil society organizations in order to be able to assess their capacity.

Average score for CSO capacity for contribution and participation in SWG Competitiveness and Innovation N/A





PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

Although it should hold at least four meetings annually, in 2020 SWG Competitiveness and Innovation organized only one meeting. In particular, the meeting was organized online and took place on 22.06.2020. Agenda items discussed concern IPA III. In spite of having organized only one meeting, the IPA coordinator assesses that this sector group has successfully performed its work related to definition of IPA III priorities considering the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 crisis. Three relatively broad key priority areas are defined as strategic response for IPA III, Window 3: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority 2: private sector development. These are:

- private sector development, better business environment, technology standards...
- internationalization of companies, capacity building for greater company investments, attracting foreign direct investments, and
- innovation, research and development.

Representatives from this sector group claim they regularly monitor implementation of foreign aid and believe their main role concerns coordination with institutions in respect to identifying projects that will be supported by donors. Namely, this sector



working group is not perceived as mechanism for priority setting and strategy development, but rather as mechanism to discuss these matters.

It was emphasized that change in terms of the role of sector working groups that had taken place in the meantime had certain effect on current performance by SWG Competitiveness and Innovation. Notably, SWGs were formed to serve the purpose of setting the single list of projects under coordination by SEA. In the meantime, the sector-wide approach from IPA II was added to the existing structure of SWGs. Adequately, an addition was made to SWG work in the form of competences for IPA planning.

On the other hand, according to some economic chambers, this sector working should discuss policies and directions for encouraging competitiveness and innovation and for applying the triple helix model of innovation (this model of innovation refers to a set of interactions between academia, industry and government,) through cooperation with the business community, academia and state institutions.

In order to improve visibility of effects from work performed by SWG Competitiveness and Innovation, the IPA coordinator proposed the Secretariat for European Affairs to develop a calendar of activities for all sector working groups and to create a depository of documents relevant for SWG work.

5.1 BASIC INFORMATION ON IPA III PROGRAMMING (2021-2027)

The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) concerns the programming period 2021-2027. The European Commission introduced this instrument together with the new EU multiannual financial framework. IPA programming took place throughout the entire 2020 and was initiated with development of PAF indicators,⁴ followed by strategic responses and action fiches.

IPA III is introduced with adoption of the Regulation on Establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the Regulation on Implementing Rules and Principles for IPA III⁵ by the European Union, and is coherent to other funds, programmes and instruments of the Union, primarily the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooper-

⁴ Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)

⁵ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) COM/2018/465 final.

ation Instrument. According to its structure, IPA III is organized into 5 windows:

1. Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy;
2. Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication;
3. Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity;
4. Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth;
5. Territorial and Cross-Border Cooperation.

Each window is comprised of several thematic priorities, as follows:

TABLE 1:
IPA III windows and thematic priorities

<p>WINDOW 1: RULE OF LAW, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Judiciary; ◆ Fight against corruption; ◆ Fight against organized crime; ◆ Migration and border management; ◆ Fundamental rights; ◆ Democracy; ◆ Civil society. 	<p>WINDOW 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACQUIS ALIGNMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Good governance; ◆ Administrative capacity and acquis alignment; ◆ Good neighbourly relations and reconciliation; ◆ Strategic communication, monitoring, evaluation and audit.
<p>WINDOW 3: GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Environment and climate change; ◆ Transport, digital economy and energy. 	<p>WINDOW 4: COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health; ◆ Private sector development, trade, research and innovation; ◆ Agriculture and rural development; ◆ Fisheries.



WINDOW 5: TERRITORIAL AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

This window is comprised of a separate list of thematic priorities given in Annex 2 to the IPA III Regulation.⁶ Modalities for implementation of this component include:

- ◆ cross-border cooperation with IPA countries;
- ◆ participation in micro region strategies.

According to the IPA III Regulation, the European Commission proposes a programming framework for the period 2021-2027 that includes all priority areas eligible for funding. Based on this programming framework, each IPA III country develops its strategic responses, elaborating links between EU priorities and those under national and sector strategies, followed by development of projects in the next phase.

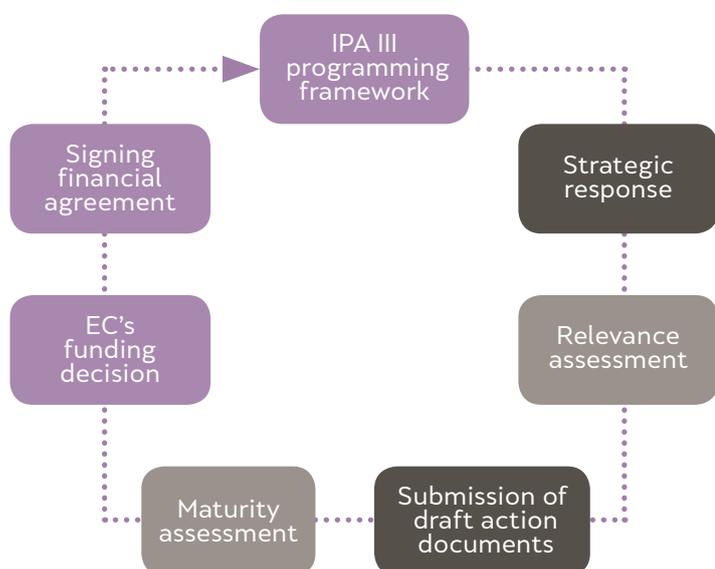
IPA III does not include specific financial allocations per beneficiary country. Actually, countries will have to compete for the total of 14.162 billion euros available on the basis of their capacity and project proposals. However, IPA III introduces the principle of fair share in order to ensure certain balance and proportionality in distribution of IPA III funds among beneficiary countries.

IPA III programming is pursued in two stages.

1. **Relevance assessment.** In this stage, the country develops summary action fishes with elaboration of proposed projects. The European Commission assesses these fishes in terms of their relevance.
2. **Maturity assessment.** This stage implies development of action documents, but only for projects that have passed the relevance assessment, followed by detailed elaboration. The European Commission assesses projects in terms of their maturity. After action documents are approved, the country presents the European Commission with tender documents for projects approved in both stages, followed by signing of financial agreements for individual action documents.

⁶ COM/2018/465

CHART 1.
IPA III programming cycle



The process for developing strategic and action documents for the years 2021 and 2022, but also for next programming years, is anticipated to take place within the existing sector working groups (SWGs), established under the sector-wide approach from IPA II.

In the second half of 2020, under coordination from the Secretariat for European Affairs, sector working groups developed and presented the European Commission with 22 action fishes, of which 10 for the year 2021⁷ и 12 and 12 for the year 2022⁸.

TABLE 2. 2021 and 2022 action fishes for IPA III

ACTION FISHES 2021			
INDICATIVE TITLE OF THE ACTION	INDICATIVE BUDGET	CO-FINANCING RATIO	
		EU	MK
1. EU for Efficient Judiciary and Enhanced Prevention of Corruption	10 million euros	85%	15%
2. Civil Society Facility	3 million euros	/	/
3. EU for Modern Administration	10 million euros	100%	0%
4. EU for Good Governance	9 million euros	89%	11%
5. EU Integration Facility	5 million euros	100%	0%
6. EU for Environmental Standards	12 million euros	83%	17%
7. EU for Clean Air	14 million euros	86%	14%
8. EU for Prespa	23,7 million euros	76%	24%

7 <https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/Dokumenti/Akciski%20fisea/2021.zip>

8 <https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/Dokumenti/Akciski%20fisea/2022.zip>



9.	Preparation of European Transport Corridors Projects	9,5 million euros	100%	0%
10.	EU for Green Growth	27,5 million euros	73%	27%
ACTION FISHES 2022				
INDICATIVE TITLE OF THE ACTION		INDICATIVE BUDGET	CO-FINANCING RATIO	
			EU	MK
1.	Private Sector Development ⁹	9,2 million euros	87%	13%
2.	EU in Support of the Fight against Organized Crime	5,2 million euros	88%	12%
3.	EU for Improved Border Management, Migration and Asylum Policy	7,8 million euros	90%	10%
4.	Civil Society Facility	3 million euros	/	/
5.	EU Integration Facility	10 million euros	100%	0%
6.	Union Programmes	15,4 million euros	50%	50%
7.	EU for Modern Waste Water Systems	53 million euros	50%	50%
8.	EU for Safe Roads	20 million euros	50%	50%
9.	EU for Quality Employment and Equal Opportunities	6,6 million euros	91%	9%
10.	EU for Health	5,9 million euros	85%	15%
11.	EU for Trade Facilitation	8,1 million euros	72%	28%
12.	EU for Development of Agriculture	6 million euros	83%	17%

5.1.1 Strategic response and action fiche for competitiveness and innovation

Strategic response in the sector on competitiveness and innovation is part of Window 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority 2: private sector development, trade, research and innovation.

⁹ Sector fiche with remaining funds under Component I from IPA I for the years 2012 and 2013.

**TABLE 3 . Strategic response and action fiche
for competitiveness and innovation**

SWG	STRATEGIC RESPONSE	KEY THEMATIC PRIORITY	ACTION FICHE	ACTION FICHE OBJECTIVES
COMPETITIVENESS AND INNOVATION	WINDOW 4: COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH Thematic priority 2: Private sector development, trade, research and innovation	(1) Preparation of the country to join the European internal market, better regulatory and institutional framework for business operation and investments (2) Increased competitiveness of enterprises, enhanced export and diversification, economy internationalization, while addressing challenges of circular economy/ green economy (3) Enhance research, technology development and innovation	(2021) EU for Green Growth – 27.5 million euros, 73% EU financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To invest in systematic, sustained effort to raise skills in domestic companies ◆ To upgrade methods and technologies and support a smart economy based on national research and innovation strategies and policies
			(2022) Public Sector Development ¹⁰ – 9.2 million euros, 87% EU financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Institutional capacity and competitive business environment ◆ Market sophistication, innovation and access to finance, and increased market and production efficiency
			(2022) EU for Trade Facilitation – 8.1 million euros, 72% EU financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Implementation of the EU acquis under Chapter 29: Customs Union ◆ Maintenance and business continuity of the Customs Declaration and Excise Documents Processing System (CDEPS) and all other customs IT systems

¹⁰ Sector fiche with remaining funds under Component I from IPA I for the years 2012 and 2013.

ASSESSMENT ON EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK



According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, **effects from SWG work** is measured against 3 standards and 8 indicators that focus on changes effectuated by SWG work through planning and monitoring, and methods for foreign coordination. All standards and indicators are assigned a numeric value, whereby 1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest score.

Average score for effects from work of SWG Competitiveness and Innovation in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.0.





PART 6

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

The obligation for gender mainstreaming in work of sector working groups (SWGs) arises from the national legislation, but also from the Country Indicative Strategy Paper for the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance 2014–2020 (IPA II),¹¹ the European Union’s Gender Action Plan (GAP II)¹² and the broader EU acquis. As elaborated in the previous Shadow Report, GAP II stresses the need for gender mainstreaming in programs and assistance programming,¹³ while IPA II treats gender equality as cross-cutting issue and as separate priority area for support¹⁴.

This year was hallmarked by the public health crisis, which furthered already existing gender gaps and inequalities. The COVID-19 pandemic had negative impact on women’s

11 European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II), Revised Indicative Strategy Paper for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2014-2020). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hxZE2W>

12 Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment: Transforming the Lives of Girls and Women through European Union (EU) External Relations 2016-2020 (GAP II). Available at: <https://bit.ly/2Quy3oo>

13 Ibid.

14 European Commission, Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA II), Revised Indicative Strategy Paper for the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (2014-2020). Available at: <https://bit.ly/3hxZE2W>



participation in the labour market in RNM, whose activity rate was already low before the crisis. According to the most recent data available, 62.3% of women¹⁵, in the country are economically inactive, compared to 37.7% of men¹⁶. Moreover, 77% of health sector employees in RNM are women,¹⁷ which means that women - at the time of crisis - found themselves at the frontline of this struggle. Women are more represented in sectors that have been most affected by the crisis. For example, 80% of textile industry workers are women¹⁸. Therefore, under conditions of pre-existing and deepened inequalities, addressing these issues by gender mainstreaming in work of all bodies and institutions, including SWGs, gains an even greater importance.

6.1 FINDINGS FROM MONITORING SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

6.1.1 SWG meetings

In the course of 2020, SWG meetings rarely included discussion on policy impacts in terms of gender equality as a cross-cutting theme. Information and data collected by the cut-off date for this report¹⁹ allow the conclusion that, as noted in the 2019 report, only two sector groups have integrated the gender perspective in their work: SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy and SWG Agriculture and Rural Development. This refers to the conclusion that SWGs have still not recognized their key role in promoting gender equality by means of gender mainstreaming in development and implementation of sector policies.

15 State Statistical Office (MAKStat Database 2019). Active population according to economic activity, gender and age. Economic inactivity of women. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yt39Ov>

16 State Statistical Office (MAKStat Database 2019). Active population according to economic activity, gender and age. Economic inactivity of men. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3yt39Ov>

17 LO (2020). Covid-19 and the World of Work NORTH MACEDONIA Rapid Assessment of the Employment Impacts and Policy Responses. Available at: <https://bit.ly/3mGGtV7>

18 Ibid

19 By the cut-off date for this report, information and data were collected from line ministries responsible for eight sector working groups: SWG Justice, SWG Public Administration Reform, SWG Local and Regional Development, SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy, SWG Home Affairs, SWG Transport, SWF Public Finance Management, and SWG Agriculture and Rural Development.

6.1.2 Trainings

Recommendations made under the 2019 Shadow Report concerned specially designed training for SWG members on gender mainstreaming that would be complementary to already existing gender equality training for administrative officers.

Namely, in 2017 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), with the support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN), developed an e-training course on gender equality intended to enhance knowledge of public administration employees. This training course is comprised of two modules, basic and advanced, and is administered by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) through the E-learning Management System, which is accessible only to administrative officers.

Defeating is the fact that, in 2020, this basic module of the gender equality training was attended by only three administrative officers and nobody attended the advanced module. For comparison, in 2019 the basic module was attended by 359 and the advanced module was attended by 54 administrative officers. From its introduction to present, the gender equality training was attended by a total of 11,017 administrative officers. However, this figure pales into insignificance against the fact that, by 31.12.2020, public sector institutions employ a total of 131,183 persons²⁰. Here it should be noted that this training course is available only to administrative officers, but not to other groups of public sector employees²¹.

In October 2020, under the Project for Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) and in cooperation with UN WOMEN, MLSP organized four one-day trainings on strategic planning, which featured gender mainstreaming elements. These trainings were attended by professional and management staff members and those involved in strategic planning and policy/program development at institutions, including coordinators and deputy coordinators for equal opportunities. In total, all four trainings were attended by 32 staff members from 13 line ministries and 1 state institution. In December 2020, a two-day online training was organized on gender mainstreaming in strategic planning and gender responsive budgeting, attended by 33 staff members from 14 line ministries.

20 Ministry of Information Society and Administration. 2020 Report from the Register of Public Sector Employees. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2T3DTxW>

21 Pursuant to Article 14 of the Law on Public Sector Employee ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no. 27/14, 199/14, 27/16, 35/18 and 198/18 and "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 143/19 and 14/20), job positions of employees in public sector institutions are categorized into four groups: administrative officers, officers with public authority, service providers assistance/technical staff.



FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The unique bureaucratic labyrinth encountered by the project team in their effort to obtain more information on SWG Competitiveness and Innovation speaks volumes about limited transparency exercised by this sector group. In particular, the effort to obtain basic information and documents on work performed by this sector group involved as many as four institutions (General Secretariat of the Government, SEA, MFA and Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information), lasted over a period of three months and ended unsuccessfully. Hence, measures need to be taken to increase transparency in operation of this sector working group.

2. The sector working group should develop and publish annual work plans, annual work reports, information on its composition, meeting agendas, meeting minutes, information from consultations organized with stakeholders, etc.

3. Having in mind the absence of any activities aimed at involving civil society organizations in work of this sector group, measures should be taken to ensure their participation by means of a transparent process.

FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN TERMS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

1. Most SWGs have still not recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme in their work. Although some line ministries have engaged in gender analysis of particular policies or have performed gender-responsive budgeting for individual programs, oftentimes these documents



are not discussed and are not taken into account at SWG meetings. Hence the need for gender mainstreaming in work of all SWGs and use of gender analyses on state-of-affairs in specific sectors as baseline for policy development, implementation and evaluation.

2. It is recommended for e-training on gender equality to become part of the framework of generic competences and annual training programs, thereby underscoring its mandatory implementation and ensuring greater coverage in terms of trained administrative officers. Moreover, it is equally important for training materials to be regularly, timely and continuously updated, in order to avoid the risk of outdated content. While implementation of specially designed training course on gender mainstreaming in strategic planning represents a step forward, it is still early to assess its effects. It is recommended for participants in such trainings and workshops to mandatorily include SWG members. In order to ensure that such training gains an even greater importance, it would be desirable to evaluate knowledge of training participants and to regulate organization of such trainings on regular instead of ad-hoc basis.

3. Given that recommendations from 2019 Shadow Report are not fully taken into consideration, valid is the recommendation for involvement of coordinators and deputy coordinators for equal opportunities in SWGs, including civil society representatives with expertise and experience in the field of gender equality, as support for gender mainstreaming in all SWGs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ◆ Desk analysis of documents relevant for SWG Competitiveness and Innovation
- ◆ Interviews with the IPA coordinator and members of the business community that participate in SWG Competitiveness and Innovation

