

SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR WORKING
GROUP ON EDUCATION,
EMPLOYMENT AND
SOCIAL POLICY

January – December 2020





THROUGH
DIALOGUE **TO**
EU

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AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP
ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY
IN THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020**

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ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ НА СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ, СОЦИЈАЛНА ПОЛИТИКА И ВРАБОТУВАЊЕ 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 PARTICIPATON	21
PART 4: CSO CAPACITY	27
PART 5: EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK	31
5.1 Plenary sessions	32
5.2 Basic information on IPA III programming (2021-2027)	37
5.2.1 Strategic response and action fiche for education, employment and social policy	41
PART 6: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	42
6.1 Findings from monitoring sector working groups	42
6.1.1 SWG meetings	43
6.1.2 Trainings	44
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	47
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN TERMS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	48
BIBLIOGRAPHY	49



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.

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.



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 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

SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY

FORMED: 2017

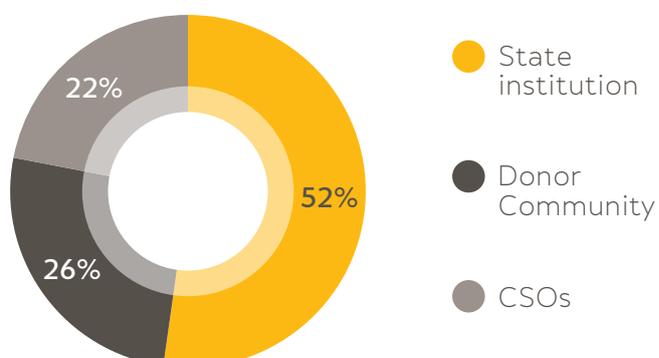
NUMBER OF MEMBERS: 97, institutions x 51 members, civil society organizations x 21 members and donor community x 25 members

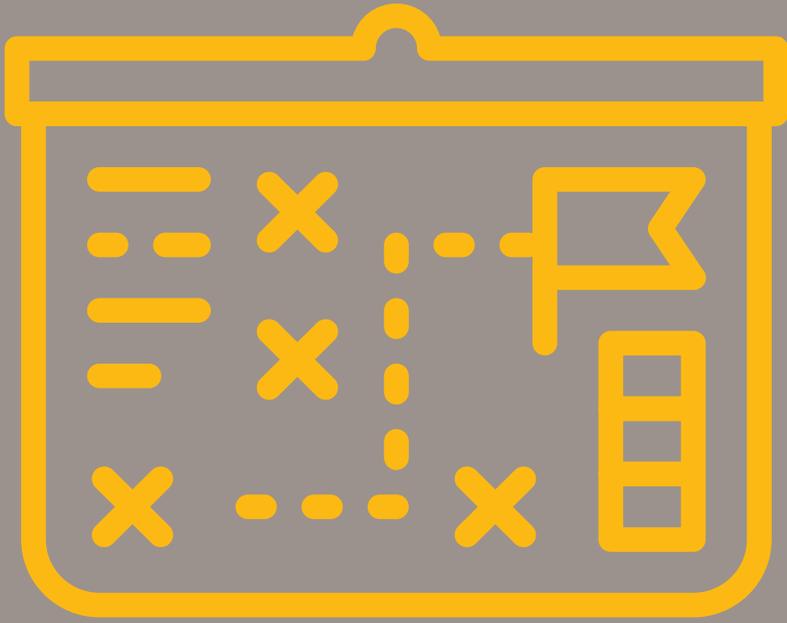
NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2020: two plenary sessions, 18.06.2020 and 16.11.2020

SWG CHAIR: Minister of Education and Science and Minister of Labour and Social Policy

CHART 1.

Distribution of various representatives in SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy





METHODOLOGY APPROACH

For the purpose of this report, the project team relied on several research methods:

- free access to public information;
- focus group with civil society representatives participating in this sector working group;
- interviews with coordinators from the ranks of civil servants at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Education and Science
- direct monitoring at SWG sessions.

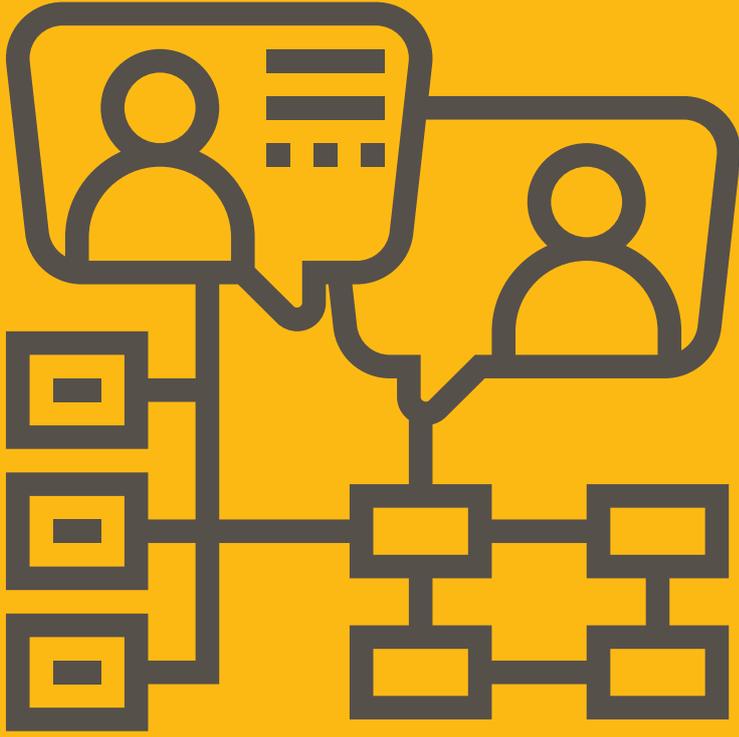
Both line ministries were addressed with a total of 22 information requests to which project researchers received timely responses in compliance with the legislation on free access to public information. As regards the focus group with civil society representatives, the project team organized a focus group² with total of two representatives from civil society organizations, although ten representatives were invited. In addition, the project team interviewed³ two coordinators from the ranks of civil servants, responsible for this sector group.

According to the monitoring methodology, performance of sector working groups is analysed 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
- IPA.

² Focus group with civil society representatives in SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy was held on 06.05.2021.

³ Interview with two coordinators from the ranks of civil servants was conducted on 19.05.2021.



PART 1

SECTOR POLICIES

Key strategy documents that govern operation of this sector working group include the Education Strategy 2018-2025 and the Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme 2020-2022. In 2020, these documents were not discussed within the sector group.

On the other hand, relevant documents that were subject of changes within this sector group include amendments to laws on primary and secondary education. These amendments, adopted in September 2020, anticipate a possibility for the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia to take direct decisions in emergency situations about the type of instruction organized at schools, and additional provisions on inclusion of all children in primary and secondary education. Such change is an immediate result of the COVID-19 crisis that started in March 2020 and is still underway. In order to ensure better coordination and a possibility for the government to intervene, measures were proposed to facilitate organization of the instruction process under a combined method (online instruction and physical attendance when allowed by the epidemiological situation). In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science and the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Plan for Organization of the Instruction Process in Primary and Secondary Schools for the School Year 2020/2021. This plan



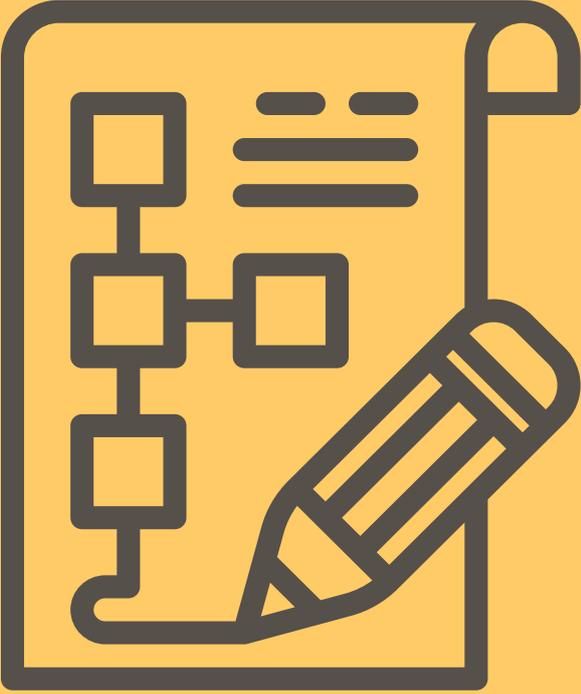
anticipated a combined model of formal education, i.e. combination of physical attendance and distance learning in primary and secondary schools. According to the plan, first to third grade pupils were allowed to attend instruction with physical attendance, while those in fourth to nine grade could follow instruction online and with physical attendance. Except for these rapid transformations, no additional changes were made to relevant legislation and strategy documents in the field of education.

As regards the sector on employment and social policy, **no significant changes are observed from the situation noted in the 2019 Shadow Report from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Groups.** The strategic framework under the Revised Education and Social Reform Programme 2020-2022 is complemented with additional strategy documents whose validity expires in 2020. They include:

- | National Strategy on Employment 2016-2020;
- | National Strategy on Alleviating Poverty and Social Exclusion 2010-2020;
- | Strategy on Formalization of Informal Economy 2018-2022 and Action Plan 2018-2020;
- | Revised Action Plan on Youth Employment 2016-2020; and
- | National Strategy on Equality and Non-Discrimination 2016-2020.

Complementary to the revised programme is the National Strategy on Deinstitutionalization of the Republic of North Macedonia 2018-2027 which, unlike other strategies enlisted above, does not expire in 2020.

To present, there are no announcements for evaluation and revision of strategies and creation of new strategies, nor does the sector group have any insight about next steps for creation of new action plans and strategies.



PART 2

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

In 2020, the rules of procedures remained unchanged, leaving the sector group's rules adopted in 2017 still in effect. They were developed by the two ministries, in cooperation with the Secretariat for European Affairs, and included consultations with SWG members. As noted in the 2019 report, this sector group has clear rules of procedure that regulate its operation, developed throughout the years, and reflect specific competences of this sector group. Specificity of SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy lies in the fact that the group has two co-chairs, i.e. ministers of education and science and of labour and social policy, but on the other hand, topics covered by this group are wide and broad, justifying the high number of participants in this sector working group.

Advantages in implementation of the rules of procedure concern possibilities for participation of non-state institutions, such as civil society organizations and other types of organizations that are important for these sectors. Although article 3 of the rules of procedure does not specifically enlist that such organizations are considered formal members, in the practice, they are regularly invited and have an active role in



this sector working group. Moreover, firm methods that regulate communications, operational procedures, and rules for convening sessions and informing SWG participants provide a solid foundation for further operation of this sector group.

On the other hand, practical enforcement of certain provisions is often marked by underperformance, especially those concerning regular communication and time intervals for announcement, invitation and distribution of materials before scheduled sessions. An example thereof is article 12 that stipulates a period of 10 days for submission of invitations in advance of scheduled sessions for this sector working group. Invitations should be submitted together with materials that will be discussed at these sessions. In the practice, these provisions are not implemented. The most frequent reasons for such failure is coordination among ministries in respect to possible dates for SWG sessions, the need for additional time for finalization of documents by competent institutions and the need for additional coordination with SWG members from other state bodies.

An additional challenge is identified in respect to vagueness around the actual status of various SWG members. Under article 3, item 2, the rules of procedure stipulate that: “SWG members shall be appointed on proposal from ministries and other organizations enlisted in Annex 1”. However, the list given in the annex is comprised only of state bodies. On the other hand, item 3 from the same article stipulates that: “In addition, the sector working group shall be comprised of independent representatives from other relevant organizations (such as economic, social, academic and civil society organizations)”. This formulation creates certain gap in terms whether representatives of the civil society and other organizations are formal members or observers in this sector group. In the practice, uncertainty in respect to the formal status of SWG members means that oftentimes there is no continuity in civil society participation, i.e. there is frequent rotation among specific organizations that irregularly attend SWG meetings. Additionally, frequent rotation is also noted in respect to representatives from state institutions, especially after political and personnel changes to certain job positions within ministries and other state bodies.

Such organizational setup and legal gaps emerged during focus groups with civil society organizations and their representatives participating in this sector group. In particular, the list of SWG participants includes organizations that have not been contacted to take part in SWG work for longer period of time, but they are featured as SWG participants/members. On the other hand, those who regularly participate in SWG

work reported that, although the rules set forth straightforward procedures, oftentimes meeting invitations, and especially materials, are distributed late or beyond the deadline regulated under the rules of procedure.

This sector working group often communicates in electronic form, by sending direct invitations to members and interested participants from the civil society. In 2020, both plenary sessions were held online, via the platform WEBEX, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Although the rules of procedure do not anticipate such possibility, adaptation to current circumstances is a positive trend. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy regularly creates public information from SWG meetings, including decisions, minutes and agendas, and publishes such information on the ministry's official website. Proactivity in respect to transparency and availability of information to other societal actors is a positive example set by this sector working group.

Identified gaps in the rules of procedure and its enforcement are indicative of the need for changes to this document which, in the opinion of interviewed officers from state bodies, will be addressed in the next period.

2.2 ANNUAL PLAN

The rules of procedure for SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy do not anticipate development and implementation of annual work plans, and therefore there were no such plans and annual reports produced. On the other hand, according to the rules of procedure, the sector working group is obliged to hold two sessions annually, usually one meeting for each semi-annual semester. Most often, these meetings are conditioned by the dynamics of strategy documents produced by the two ministries, as well as deadlines for IPA II and IPA III programming.

Despite this, both ministries are in regular communication with the Secretariat for European Affairs which, according to the Regulation on IPA II Implementation, develops the draft plan for organization of SWG plenary sessions. This document is not publicly available, and therefore it cannot be assessed as separate annual plan.

Moreover, SWG coordinators reiterated that it is difficult to be guided by single plan for this sector group, having in mind the multitude of topics it covers. Except for this problem, an additional challenge is identified in frequent changes to SWG members from other state

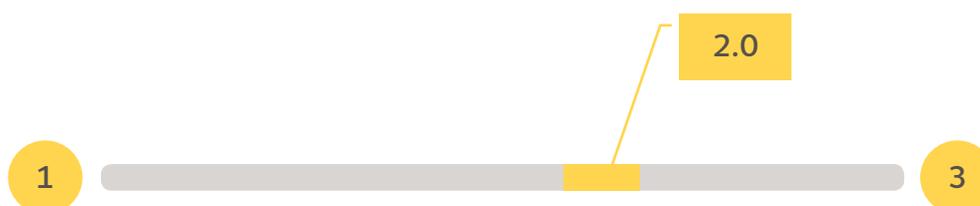
institutions and inability to anticipate upcoming important processes and policies that should be integrated in such annual plans.

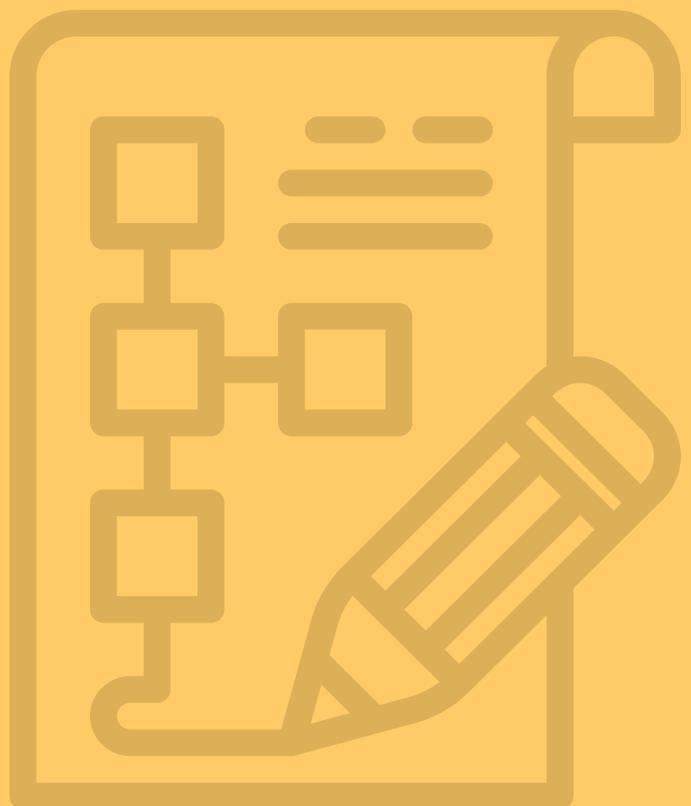


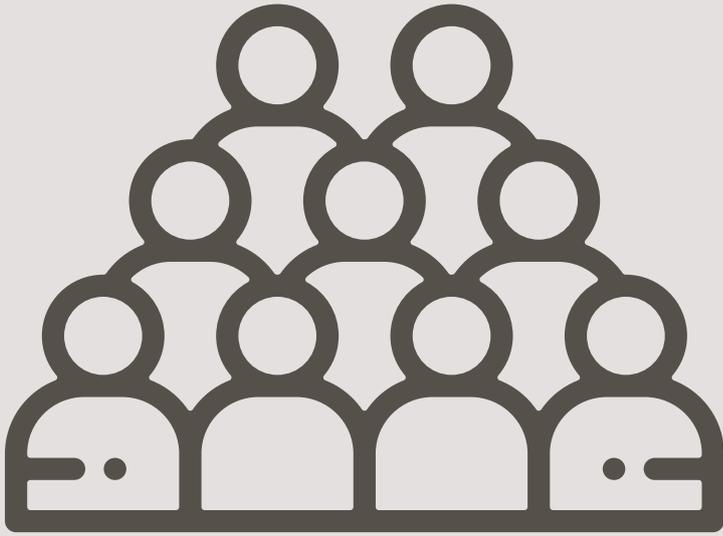
ASSESSMENT ON SWG FUNCTIONALITY

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 Education, Employment and Social Policy in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.0.







PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Compared to the situation in 2019, there are no significant changes in respect to participation of civil society organizations and other types of organizations. As noted in the analysis on SWF functionality, it remains unclear whether civil society representatives are formal members or they only participate in SWG work with their respective expertise.

Nevertheless, this setup from the rules of procedure does not prevent civil society representatives to participate in this sector working group. Civil society representatives are regularly invited to attend sessions, just as representatives from the donor community. Based on responses obtained from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, CSOs invited to take part in both plenary sessions organized by this sector group in 2020 are:

- Reactor – Research in Action;
- Macedonian Anti-Poverty Platform;
- Foundation Open Society – Macedonia;



- Federation of Trade Unions in Macedonia;
- Association of Employers of Macedonia;
- Macedonian Center for Civic Education;
- Foundation Step by Step;
- Nansen Dialogue Center - Skopje;
- Resource Center;
- Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA;
- Foundation Agro-Center for Education;
- IPA Mechanism;
- Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions of Macedonia;
- Business Confederation of Macedonia;
- Romalitico;
- REDI;
- Roma Education Fund – Macedonia;
- Sumnal; and
- INSOK.

Civil society representatives regularly attend sessions and participate in SWG work, with continued active participation in 2020. One of main problems identified by civil society representatives in this sector group is untimely distribution of invitation and materials for plenary sessions. Based on direct monitoring at SWG sessions, the research team also concluded that notification period for SWG members was relatively short. Hence, for the plenary session held on 18 June, SWG members received their invitations on 16 June. Moreover, session agendas include discussion and adoption of voluminous documents, leaving CSOs insufficient time to process relevant materials and organize consultations with the broader civil society. Although organizations are featured on official lists, oftentimes meeting invitations do not reach the actual members or are not even sent to these organizations.

As regards space for participation, SWG coordinators from line ministries and civil society representatives believe that the latter are not given sufficient space and freedom to actively participate in work of this sector group. Moreover, both sides believe that time allotted for consultations on strategy documents and agenda topics is relatively short and that the large number of members and participants in this sector working group significantly reduces possibilities for meaningful discussion at plenary sessions. Hence, proposals put forward by SWG coordinators concern greater involvement of civil society organizations in the early stages for developing strategy documents, instead of presenting them with these materials several days before SWG meetings.

As regards practices of this sector working group, a positive example that should be noted concerns the fact that CSOs independently organize consultations with the broader civil society and relay such comments at plenary sessions, as duly noted in the 2019 report. In addition, comments are traceable in respect to their implementation, by means of separate document with elaboration of reasons for their acceptance or rejection. In addition to direct participation and comments presented at plenary sessions, this sector group instituted the practice for electronic submission of remarks and comments by SWG members, which has proved to be exceptionally useful for SWG coordinators.

All in all, this working group has developed practices for civil society participation and allows space for participation of their representatives. However, there is space for improvements, especially in respect to broader consultations on documents, given that they are distributed late to organizations for these to be able to review them and adopt conclusions and comments based on data.

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

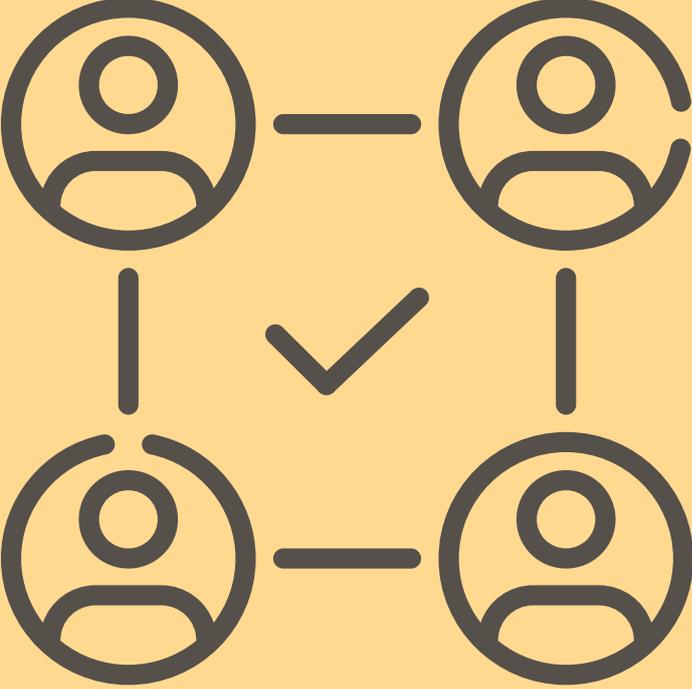
meetings, as well as opportunities afforded to CSOs to join discussions before, during and after meetings. All standards and indicators are assigned a numeric value, whereby 1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest score.



Average score for civil society participation in SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.5.







PART 4

CSO CAPACITY

Capacity of civil society representatives has not changed compared to 2019, primarily due to continuity of civil society organizations that participate in this sector working group over the last several years.

Civil society representatives involved in work of this sector group believe they are well prepared to contribute to its operation, especially in respect to strategy documents in the areas covered by this group. However, in their opinion, the civil society's potential is not fully utilized, primarily because of lack of sufficient time to develop their proposals (as a result of late distribution of documents) and to consult other organizations that are active in areas covered by this sector working group. On the other hand, SWG coordinators from state bodies believe that civil society representatives hold relevant expertise and capacity⁴, but the sector group's organizational setup does not allow excessive participation during meetings, which they agree are insufficient in number (only two plenary sessions annually). Moreover, they indicate a significant need for additional cooperation for the civil society to be bet-

⁴ Information obtained during interviews with SWG coordinators from state institutions, i.e. MES and MLSP.



ter familiarized and to contribute in creation and implementation of strategy documents.

According to SWG members,⁵ one of main problems related to effective utilization of CSO capacity is unpredictability of processes and lack of sufficient time for additional consultations with more organizations active in this sector. Due to the organizational setup of this sector working group, only small portion of knowledge possessed by civil society organizations could be transferred and channelled into specific proposals and comments. Nevertheless, when comments and remarks are made, they are often welcomed and receive attention from other SWG members and from line ministries. On the account of these challenges, civil society representatives often perceive their participation as being pro-form, meaning they are invited to attend sessions, but not to fully participate in discussions.

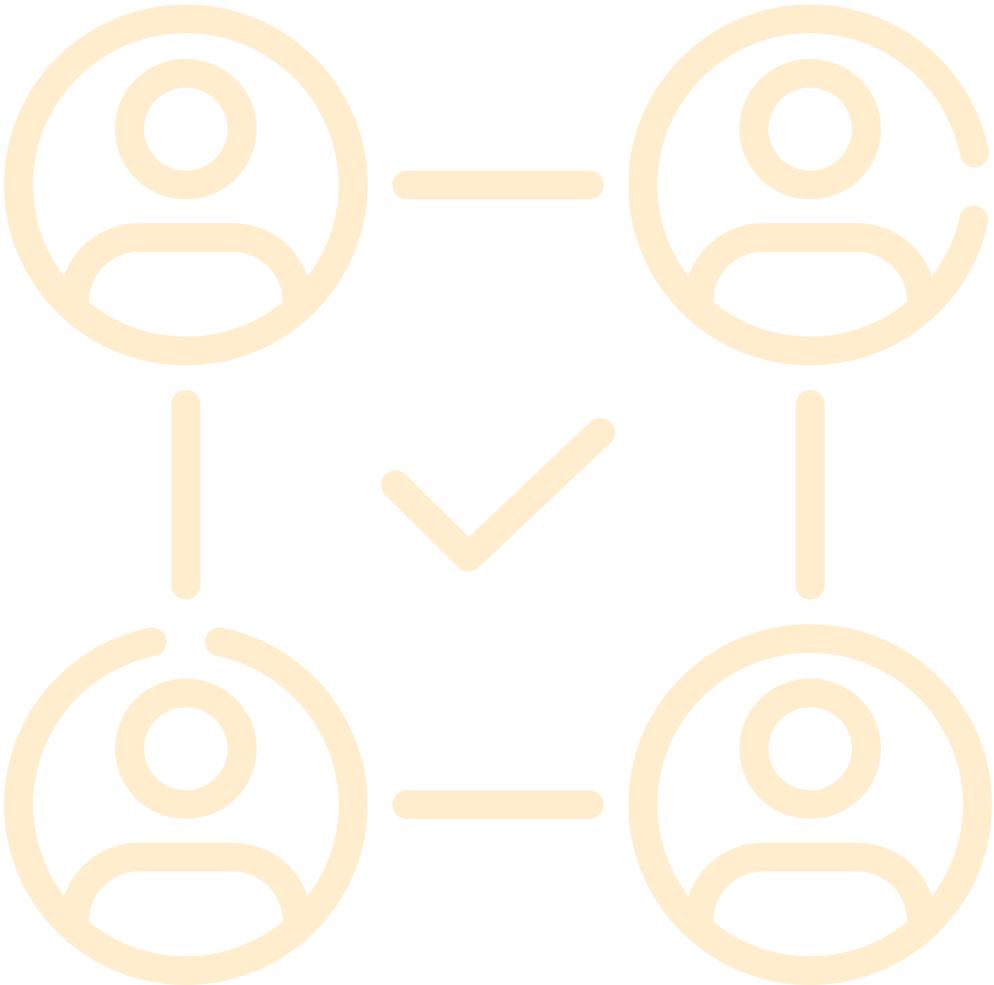
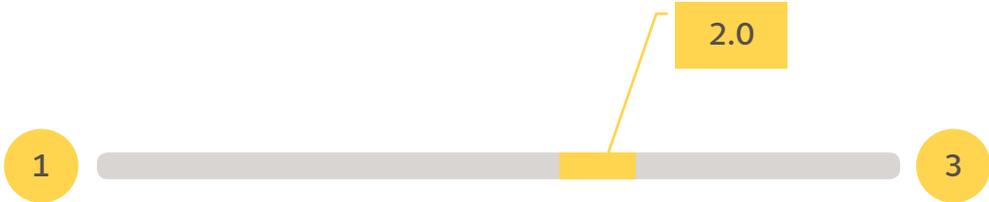
Although both ministries, i.e. co-chairs of this sector group, do not organize operational meetings prior to holding plenary sessions, there is a desire for establishing such practice, with possibility for involvement of civil society organizations at these meetings. This would facilitate more regular information dissemination to civil society organizations about upcoming processes, documents being created and timeframe of events in forthcoming months.

ASSESSMENT ON CSO CAPACITY

According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, **CSO capacity for contribution and participation in SWG** is measured against 5 standards and 2 indicators that focus on ability, knowledge and skills disposed by CSOs. Moreover, they concern proactivity on the part of CSOs in respect to organization of consultations and information sessions, production of analyses, research papers and policy briefs, as well as engagement in advocacy for important issues falling within SWG scope of work. All standards and indicators are assigned a numeric value, whereby 1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest score.

⁵ Information obtained during focus group with civil society representatives that participate in this sector group.

Average score for CSO capacity for contribution and participation in SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.0.





PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

According to the rules of procedure, SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy should hold at least two meetings annually, which was enforced by the co-chairs. The first meeting of this sector working group was held in June, while the second took place in November 2020. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, both meetings were held online, via the platform WEBEX, with the support from the Secretariat for European Affairs.

Invitations to civil society organizations for the first meeting held on 18.06.2020 were distributed on 16.06.2020, together with the agenda and documents to be reviewed at this session. More specifically, the document reconsidered was the strategic response to IPA III in the area of education, employment and social policy, including initial ideas for action fiches under IPA III for the years 2021 and 2022. The primary purpose of this meeting was coordination of priorities in this sector with the donor community about next steps and next years. In addition, SWG members were able to get familiarized with the new UN strategy framework for North Macedonia covering the period 2021-2025. As regards documents and materials, SWG members did not receive only draft action fiches.

The second meeting of this sector group for the year 2020 was held on 16.11.2020, with invitations sent to its members on 11.11.2020, together with the meeting agenda and documents. This plenary ses-



sion was focused on discussing the strategic response to IPA III developed by line ministries, including thematic priorities and indicators for education, employment, social policy, and Roma issues. The purpose of this meeting was to inform SWG members about next steps and planning processes at both ministries and documents they have produced in response to IPA III programming, but also to engage in closer coordination with the donor community and presentation of next priorities in this sector. This meeting was also marked by greater participation on the part of civil society organizations, especially in respect to development and monitoring of indicators defined in the strategic response.⁶ These were partially accepted by SWG co-chairs.

Effectiveness of the sector group remained at the same level noted in 2019. However, the research team noted greater focus on planning and developing strategy documents for the new IPA III programming cycle.

On the other hand, as noted in the section on sector policies, large portion of strategies in the sector on education, employment and social policy expire in 2020. The sector working group has still not evaluated outcomes from previous strategies and there are no announcements about when and how this sector group will engage in development of new strategy documents. Even SWG coordinators noted that the main challenge for this year will be coordination of all actors within the sector working group, in order to ensure greater participation, but also predictability of processes within the group.

5.1 GENERAL 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 perspective. IPA programming took place throughout the entire 2020 and was initiated with development of PAF indicators,⁷ 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 III⁸ by the European Union,

⁶ This conclusion was derived from direct monitoring at SWG sessions and based on minutes from SWG sessions held.

⁷ Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)

⁸ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) COM/2018/465 final.

and is coherent with other funds, programmes and instruments of the Union, primarily the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation 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

WINDOW 1: RULE OF LAW, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY	WINDOW 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACQUIS ALIGNMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Judiciary; ◆ Fight against corruption; ◆ Fight against organized crime; ◆ Migration and border management; ◆ Fundamental rights; ◆ Democracy; ◆ Civil society. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Good governance; ◆ Administrative capacity and acquis alignment; ◆ Good neighbourly relations and reconciliation; ◆ Strategic communication, monitoring, evaluation and audit.



WINDOW 3: GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY

- ◆ Environment and climate change;
- ◆ Transport, digital economy and energy.

WINDOW 4: COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH

- ◆ 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.⁹ 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 the 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 overall IPA III funds among beneficiary countries.

⁹ COM/2018/465

IPA III programming is pursued in two stages.

1. **Relevance assessment.** In this stage, the country develops summary action fiches with elaboration of proposed projects. The European Commission assesses these fiches 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.

CHART 2.
IPA III programming cycle



mission with 22 action fiches, of which 10 for the year 2021¹⁰ and 12 for the year 2022.¹¹

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 by the Secretariat for European Affairs, sector working groups developed and presented the European Com-

¹⁰ <https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/Dokumenti/Akciski%20fisea/2021.zip>

¹¹ <https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/Dokumenti/Akciski%20fisea/2022.zip>

TABLE 2. 2021 and 2022 action fiches for IPA III


ACTION FISHERS 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%
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 FISHERS 2022			
INDICATIVE TITLE OF THE ACTION	INDICATIVE BUDGET	CO-FINANCING RATIO	
		EU	MK
1. Private Sector Development ¹²	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. ЕУ за безбедни патишта	20 милиони евра	50%	50%

¹² Sector fiche with remaining funds under Component I from IPA I for the years 2012 and 2013

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 education, employment and social policy

The strategic response in the sector on education, employment and social policy is part of Window 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, Thematic priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health.

TABLE 3 . Strategic response and action fiche for education, employment and social policy

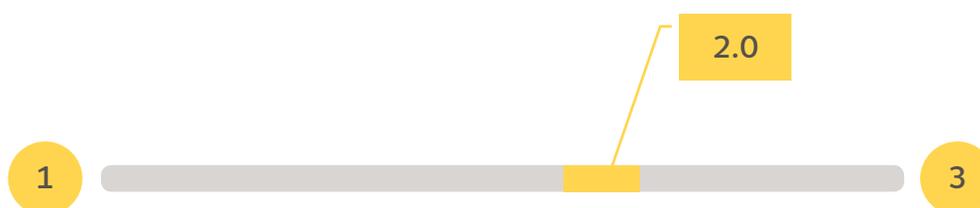
SWG	STRATEGIC RESPONSE	KEY THEMATIC PRIORITY	ACTION FICHE	ACTION FICHE OBJECTIVES
EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL POLICY	WINDOW 4: COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH Thematic priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health	(1) Raise the employment level, quality of jobs and productivity (2) Reduce poverty and social exclusion (3) Provide comprehensive, inclusive and integrated modern education	(2022) <i>EU for Quality Employment and Equal Opportunities</i> – 6.6 million euros, 91% EU co-financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ To strengthen safety and health at work ◆ To promote gender equality ◆ To establish monitoring and quality assurance system for social services and support to legal and policy reforms relevant for the EU accession process, especially accession negotiations under Chapter 19: Employment and Social Policy, and Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, concerning application of the principle of equal treatment of men and women, as established under the Equal Opportunities Directives.

ASSESSMENT ON EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK



According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, **effects from SWG work** are measured against 3 standards and 8 indicators that focus on changes effectuated by SWG work through planning and monitoring, and methods for foreign aid 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 Education, Employment and Social Policy in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.0.





PART 6

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

The obligation for gender mainstreaming in 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)¹³, the European Union’s Gender Action Plan (GAP II)¹⁴ and the broader EU acquis. As elaborated in the previous Shadow Report, GAP II stresses the need for gender mainstreaming in programs and assistance programmes,¹⁵ while IPA II treats gender equality as cross-cutting issue and as separate priority area for support.¹⁶

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

¹³ 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>

¹⁴ 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>

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ 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>



women's 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 women¹⁷ in the country are economically inactive, compared to 37.7% of men.¹⁸ Moreover, 77% of health sector employees in RNM are women,¹⁹ which means that women – at the time of crisis – found themselves in 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 women.²⁰ 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 SECTORS 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 report²¹ 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 promotion of gender equality by means of gender mainstreaming in development and implementation of sector policies.

17 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>

18 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>

19 ILO (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>

20 Ibid.

21 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, the 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 persons.²² Here, it should be noted that this training course is available only to administrative officers, but not to other groups of public sector employees.²³

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 or 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.

²² Ministry of Information Society and Administration. 2020 Report from the Register of Public Sector Employees. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2T3DTxW>

²³ Pursuant to Article 14 of the Law on Public Sector Employees ("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 the public sector institutions are categorized into four groups: administrative officers, officers with public authority, services providers and assistance/technical staff.



6.1.3 Gender analysis of policies

The Ministry of Education and Science (MES), as one of two line ministries competent for SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy, developed the gender responsive budget statement and budgeting for the period 2018–2020 in respect to the program for promotion of the education system from the aspect of gender equality (equal opportunities for women and men). This program anticipated two components: one aimed to increase participation of students (both male and female) in information technology, technical and technology, bio-technology, natural and mathematic studies, with a view to enhance employability and with due respect for gender equality, while the second component focuses on eliminating stereotypes and introducing gender sensitive instruction in the overall education system.

In the academic year 2020/2021, funds allocated for scholarships under the first component intended for female students account for 24,239,700 MKD, while scholarships for male students account for 9,591,300 MKD, which means that 75.80% of all scholarships for the indicated academic year have been awarded to female students.

In 2020, MES withdrew one textbook for the fifth grade subject in Macedonian Language after it has been established that it features discriminatory texts and examples that reinforce gender inequality. Moreover, the ministry has also revised sociology textbooks for II, III and IV year of secondary education. In 2020, MES organized revisions of textbooks for primary and secondary education in terms of gender equality and non-discrimination. Among 47 school subjects envisaged for revision, relevant procedures are completed for 29 school subjects, 11 of which concern secondary education and 18 concern primary education.

In 2020, MLSP as line ministry responsible for operation of SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy together with MES, developed a total of 6 gender analyses of primary education textbooks and one gender analysis of secondary education textbook. The purpose of these analyses is to detect gender stereotypes and discriminatory content in textbooks and to define guidelines and recommendations for new content that promotes gender equality and non-discrimination. In the course of the year, MLSP also developed the Report on Best Practices for Gender Responsive Budgeting in the Western Balkans and the Progress and Impact Analysis of the National Strategy on Gender Equality 2013-2020 and the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2018-2020 (NAPGE).



FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy remains unchanged compared to 2019. In terms of sector policies, 2020 was not a productive year, but it was successful in terms of adjustment to new requirements for IPA III programming. In 2021, efforts are needed to address gaps in respect to strategy documents and their currency, especially in the light of the fact that majority of them have already expired.

2. CSOs and non-state partners continue to play an important role in this sector working group. Their participation is visible and contributes to better performance by this sector group. However, SWG's rules of procedure need to be amended and complemented, and permanent members need to be nominated from the ranks of non-state and civil society organizations that would be able to more efficiently monitor work of this sector group and make additional contribution through consultations with other organizations profiled in areas covered by the sector group. Frequent changes to representatives from CSOs and state institutions in this sector group result in its reduced capacity.

3. In the next period, efforts are needed for development of specific mechanisms for civil society organizations to engage in more efficient and concerted participation in the sector working group, in order to share their knowledge and ideas at future SWG meetings. Moreover, timely information and dissemination of documents is of great importance for CSOs that already participate in this sector group, implying full enforcement of the rules of procedure, including greater dynamics of SWG meetings. This would ensure greater involvement on the part of civil society organizations, but also greater synchronization and synergies between representatives from state institutions and those from the civil society.

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 equality 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 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, thus 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 the 2019 Shadow Report are not fully taken into consideration, valid is the recommendation concerning 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.

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