

SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR WORKING
GROUP ON HEALTH

January – December 2020





THROUGH
DIALOGUE TO
EU

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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 work plan and annual work report	17
PART 3: CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION	21
PART 4: CSO CAPACITY	25
PART 5: EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK	29
5.1 Plenary sessions	29
5.2 General information on IPA III programming (2021-2027)	30
5.2.1 Strategic response and action fiche for health	34
5.3 Operational meetings	35
5.4 COVID-19 and IPA II projects	35
PART 6: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	39
6.1 Findings from monitoring sector working groups	40
6.1.1 SWG meetings	40
6.1.2 Trainings	40
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	43
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS IN TERMS OF GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	44
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45



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

SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON HEALTH

FORMED: 2020

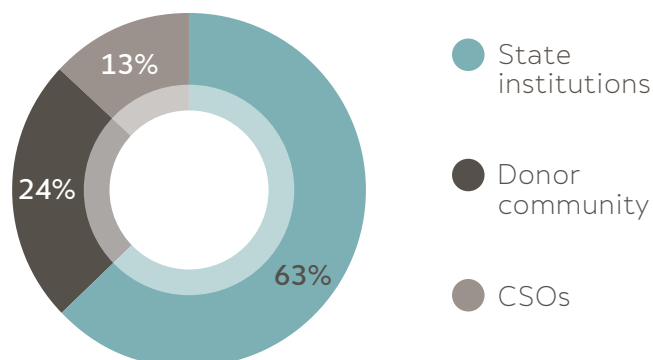
NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS: 62, institutions x 39 members, civil society organizations x 8 members, and donor community x 15 members

NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2020: three meetings, 28.02.2020, 29.06.2020 and 30.11.2020

SWG CHAIR: Minister of Health

SWG CO-CHAIR: Deputy Minister of Health

CHART 1.
Distribution of various representatives in SWG Health



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 **25 freedom of information requests** to the Ministry of Health as the institution competent for operation of this sector group. However, despite several follow-up attempts, no responses were provided to these inquiries.

As regards field/online survey, the project team **interviewed**² the coordinator from the Ministry of Health, and organized a **focus group**³ with civil society representatives that participate in this sector working group. The focus group was attended by six from total of eight civil society representatives. At the same time, in the capacity of observers, project researchers attended **three meetings** 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;
- effects from SWG work; and
- IPA.

2 Interview with the coordinator from the Ministry of Health was conducted on 05.05.2021

3 Focus group with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Health was held on 29.04.2021



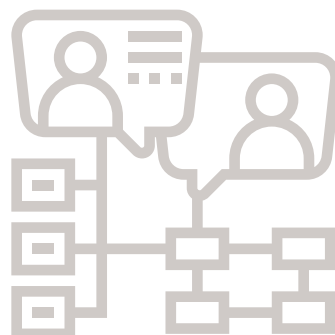
PART 1

SECTOR POLICIES

At the moment, the Ministry of Health works on developing the **Health Strategy 2020-2030**. According to information obtained during the interview with MoH representative, IPA II funds have been reallocated for development of this strategy, which should serve as key strategy document for the health sector over the next 10 years. MoH announced that the draft version of this document will be completed in the second quarter of 2021, followed by presentation, review and finalization within SWG Health.

European Commission's 2020 Progress Report for North Macedonia

Under the EC's Progress Report for North Macedonia, healthcare is covered under Chapter 28: Consumer and Health Protection. Hence, in its 2020 report, under Chapter 28, the European Commission notes that North Macedonia remains **moderately prepared** in this area. In the reporting period, **no progress was made** in respect to consumer and health protection.



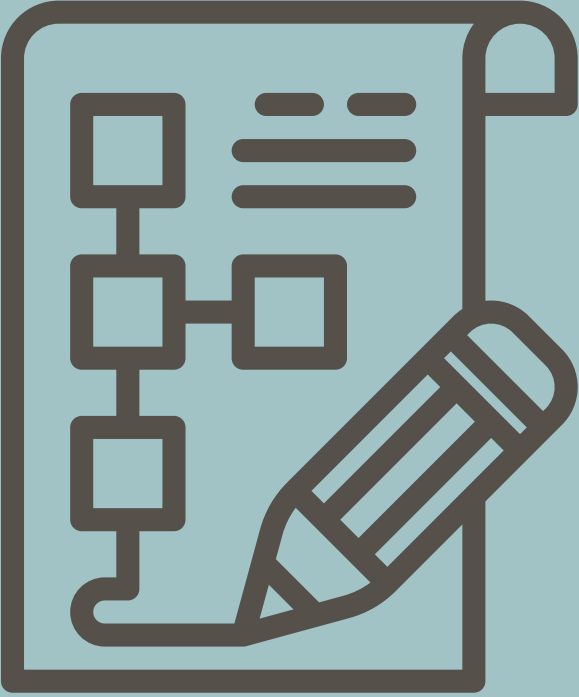
**TABLE 1:**

*Key findings from EC's Progress Report for RNM
in respect to healthcare*

KEY FINDINGS	
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Action plan to strengthen communicable diseases surveillance, prevention and control is adopted; ◆ New national strategy for anti-microbial resistance control 2019-2023 is adopted; ◆ Further efforts are needed, notably in respect to alignment with EU standards, in order to ensure sustainability of surveillance and crisis management system;
BLOOD, TISSUES, CELLS AND ORGANS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Proper funding and further commitment is still needed in order to align the national rules with the EU acquis.
PATIENTS' RIGHTS IN CROSS-BORDER HEALTHCARE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ National legislation is still not aligned with the EU acquis.
HEALTH INEQUALITY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ The active healthcare program allows several target groups access to healthcare; ◆ The government still needs to adopt a new multi-annual strategy to combat HIV.
CANCER SCREENING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Funding for cancer screening is insufficient; ◆ Data from the national and regional cancer registers are not publicly available; ◆ There is no national program on breast and cervical cancer screening.

MEDICINES FOR HUMAN AND VETERINARY USE	◆ There was no progress in the reporting period.
MENTAL HEALTH	◆ There is no progress in the reporting period.
HEALTH PROMOTION, NUTRITION AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY	◆ There was no progress in the reporting period.
RARE DISEASES	◆ National registers on rare diseases are operational, but need adequate funding.





PART 2

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

SWG Health is the newest sector group formed in early 2020. Prior to its formation as separate sector group, health was part of SWG Education, Employment and Social Policy where, having in mind the intensity of health-related topics, it received rare and incomplete attention. For the purpose of this report, the project team submitted 25 freedom of information requests to the Ministry of Health, but did not receive any response by the cut-off-date. In communication with MoH representatives, it was indicated that due to the increased scope of work on the account of the public health crisis they were unable to timely respond to these inquires.

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

SWG Health operates on the basis of provisions stipulated in the rules of procedure⁴ and decision on its establishment.⁵ As is the case with other sector working groups, SWG Health uses the standard rules of procedure developed by SEA and adjusted to the needs of this sector group. In 2020, the rules of procedure did not undergo any

4 Rules of Procedure for SWG Health, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gmoUHe>

5 Decision on establishing SWG Health, available at: <https://bit.ly/3v4yEv2>



changes from their adoption. The annex to the rules of procedure features **the list of SWG members** and their contact information. This list was subject to only one change, i.e. addition of one civil society organization.

As regards enforcement of provisions from the rules of procedure for SWG Health, this sector group is the only one to have complied with the number of meetings stipulated in the rules of procedures, i.e. it organized three meetings in the course of 2020, while it is obliged to hold at least two meetings annually. Nevertheless, based on topics discussed at SWG meetings it could be concluded that the entire 2020 was solely focused on strategic documents for IPA III, without engaging in development and implementation of other strategies and policies that are of exceptional importance for this sector. Such work approach corresponds only with portion of competences enlisted in the rules of procedure.

More information on enforcement of provisions from the rules of procedure in respect to SWG meetings is available in **PART 5: EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK.**

Transparency in SWG operation is another important provision from the rules of procedure. However, the Ministry of Health's website⁶ does not host any information related to SWG work, such as the founding documents (rules of procedure and decision on establishment), as well as minutes and materials discussed at SWG meetings. At the same, MoH has not taken any activity to fully inform the public about SWG work by using social networks, publishing press releases, organizing media conferences, etc. This situation is completely understandable having in mind the health crisis in which MoH played a crucial role in terms of information dissemination about current developments.

Views shared by **representatives from the Ministry of Health** during the interview concern the fact that it is a great honour and challenge that health finally got a separate sector working group. Having in mind that this is only the first year from its establishment, as well as the health crisis that characterized the entire 2020, these representatives believe they have had a truly successful year. It was indicated that they plan for plenary sessions to focus on discussing key priorities of MoH, as well as most important strategy documents in this area.

CSOs that participate in this sector group stress that changes are needed to the rules of procedure in order to facilitate a more system-

⁶ Official website of the Ministry of Health, available at: <http://zdravstvo.gov.mk/>

ized approach that would clearly set out the role of CSOs and expectations about their contribution.

2.2 ANNUAL WORK PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK REPORT

Annual plans and annual reports are not anticipated as activity under the rules of procedure for SWG Health, but if these are created in transparent and inclusive manner, they could serve as important incentive for more efficient and more organized work by this sector group.

In 2020, SWG Health did not develop annual plan and annual report. Taking into account that this was the first year of operation for this sector group, it could be somewhat expected that it did not adopt 2020 annual plan, but in the future serious reconsideration should be made of instituting such practice.

The importance of creating annual work plan was also stressed by CSOs that participate in this sector group. According to statements made during the focus group with civil society representatives, creation of such document early in the year will help increase accountability for operation of the sector working group. A reminder of results that are expected to be achieved in the course of year would facilitate monitoring of efficiency in SWG work.

At the same time, they underscore the importance of mandatory involvement of all SWG members in development of these plans, because that would allow them a much clearer image about expectations for their contribution in SWG work.

MoH representatives agree that annual plan should be adopted and should precise SWG meetings, but believe that this process should be led by SEA as the institution responsible for improving the planning process, in coordination with DEU.

ASSESSMENT ON SWG FUNCTIONALITY

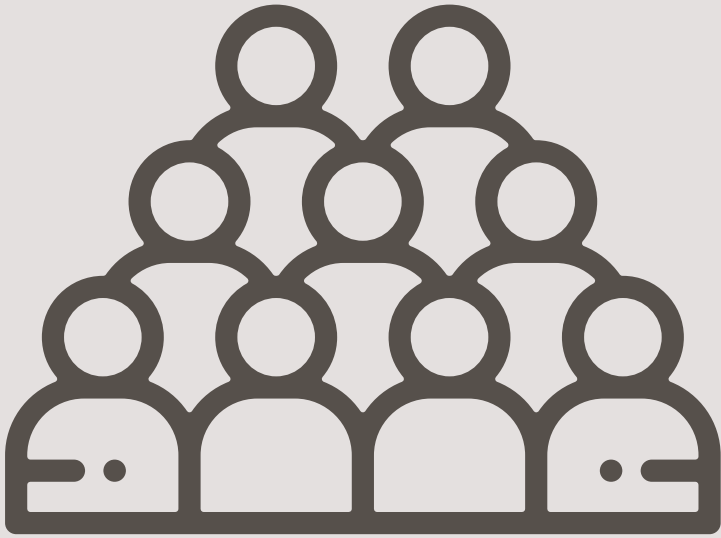


According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects from sector working groups, **SWG functionality** is measured against 14 standards and 8 indicators that focus on creation of relevant work documents by SWGs (rules of procedure, annual plan and annual report) and their enforcement in the practice. 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 Health in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.0.







PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

The procedure for selection of civil society representatives in SWG Health did not take place through the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society,⁷ which was the practice with other SWGs formed in the same time period. Selection of CSOs that will be part of this sector group was made by the Ministry of Health, led by cooperation in the past years. In their opinion, it is a matter of truly experienced organizations that could adequately help in SWG activities. At the same time, the decision on such approach was conditioned by the short timeframe for formation of the working group before the already scheduled first plenary session.

The list of civil society organizations is enclosed in the annex to the rules of procedure for SWG Health, but it lacks detailed information about persons representing CSOs in this sector group. Moreover, this list was subject to minor change in the course of 2020 with additional invitation for another civil society organization⁸ to join the sector

⁷ Official website of the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society, available at: <https://nvorobotka.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/66>

⁸ Association for Fight against Cancer BORKA



group, thereby **increasing the number of CSOs with the status of observers to eight:**

- Foundation Open Society – Macedonia;
- HERA – Health Education and Research Association;
- HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje;
- Association ESE;
- Center for Regional Research and Cooperation “Studiorum”;
- Association for Support to People Living with HIV – STRONGER TOGETHER;
- Association for Rare Diseases “Life with Challenges”;
- Association for Fight against Cancer – BORKA.⁹

Civil society representatives, as well as representatives of the donor community, participate in work of this sector group with the status of **observers**. According to MoH, the status of observers assigned to civil society representatives is taken as practice from other SWGs formed before, but they indicate that such status does not affect rights and obligations of these representatives. Hence, MoH expressed openness to discuss amendments to the rules of procedure in order to change the status of CSOs if such approach will affect their involvement and efficiency in SWG work.

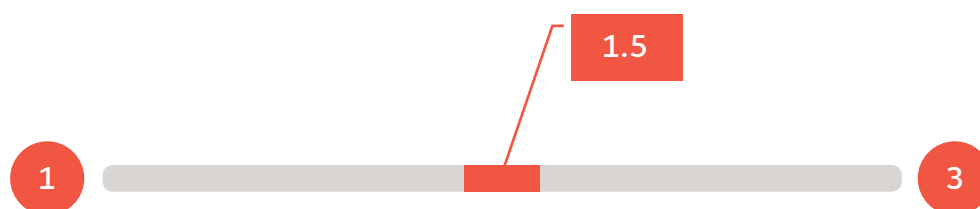
Invitations for all three plenary sessions held in 2020 were timely distributed to civil society representatives, i.e. 10 days before the scheduled meeting. At the same time, invitations for all three meetings included all **necessary documents**, i.e. agenda and materials to be reconsidered at these meetings. After SWG meetings, **minutes** were regularly distributed to all SWG members.

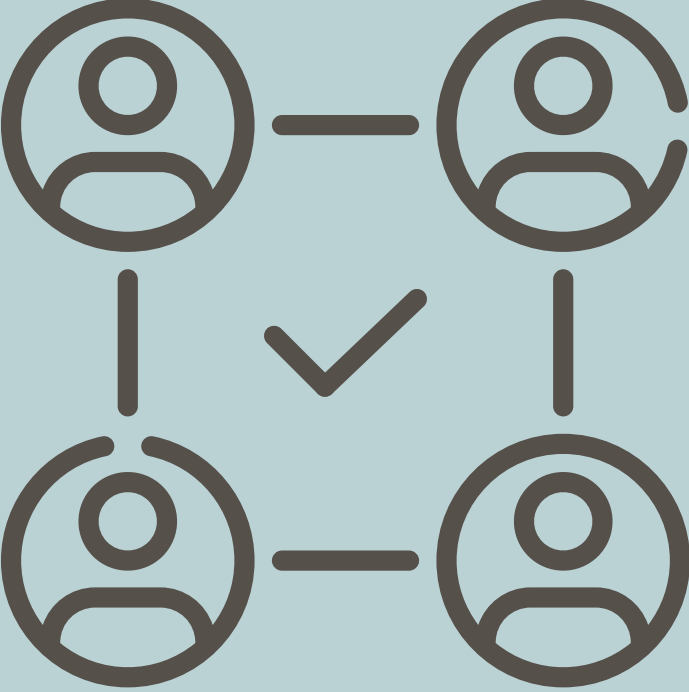
⁹ Websites of CSOs that participate in SWG Health: Foundation Open Society - Macedonia, HERA – Health Education and Research Association, HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje, Association ESE, Center for Regional Research and Cooperation “Studiorum”, Association for Support to People Living with HIV – STRONGER TOGETHER, Association for Rare Diseases “Life with Challenges”, Association for Fight against Cancer BORKA

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 Health in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.5.





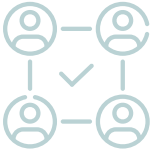
PART 4

CSO CAPACITY

At the moment, **civil society representatives** perceive work of this sector group as mainly technical, which prevents their actual involvement in SWG work. According to them, the role of CSOs within this sector working group is merely decorative in order to formally comply with standards anticipated by the EU in respect to formation of this type of working groups.

In conversations with civil society representatives, they underlined several reasons that provide basis for such perception. First, in their opinion, SWG meetings are overly technical and the focus is put on institutions. As a positive side they refer to the fact that during and after SWG meetings space is allowed for comments and proposals by CSOs, but to present they have not received any feedback about the status of their proposals. This was the case in respect to comments submitted for Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) indicators, for which CSOs were not informed whether their proposals are taken into account or not.

Another challenge indicated by civil society organizations that participate in this sector group concerns the number of meetings held and topics discussed in the course of 2020. According to them, under a dynamic of



three meetings annually without additional communication between meetings does not allow the conclusion on efficient performance by this sector working group or full implementation of the sector-wide approach that requires broad discussion of sector policies.

However, in spite of their remarks concerning SWG operation, civil society representatives indicate that it is important for them to be involved in this body, considering the potential of this sector group.

Views shared by MOH representatives on these issues are slightly different. As regards comments for certain documents, they indicated that, in the future, the situation will be better if CSOs engage in more frequent coordination among them and submit comments that are previously aligned. Most CSOs work in specific areas and oftentimes their comments concern only topics of their interest, without taking into account the broader picture about topics discussed. As positive example, they refer to UN Agencies which, in addition to working in different areas, after having organized a discussion on PAF indicators, have submitted joint comments that were of great help in improving these indicators.

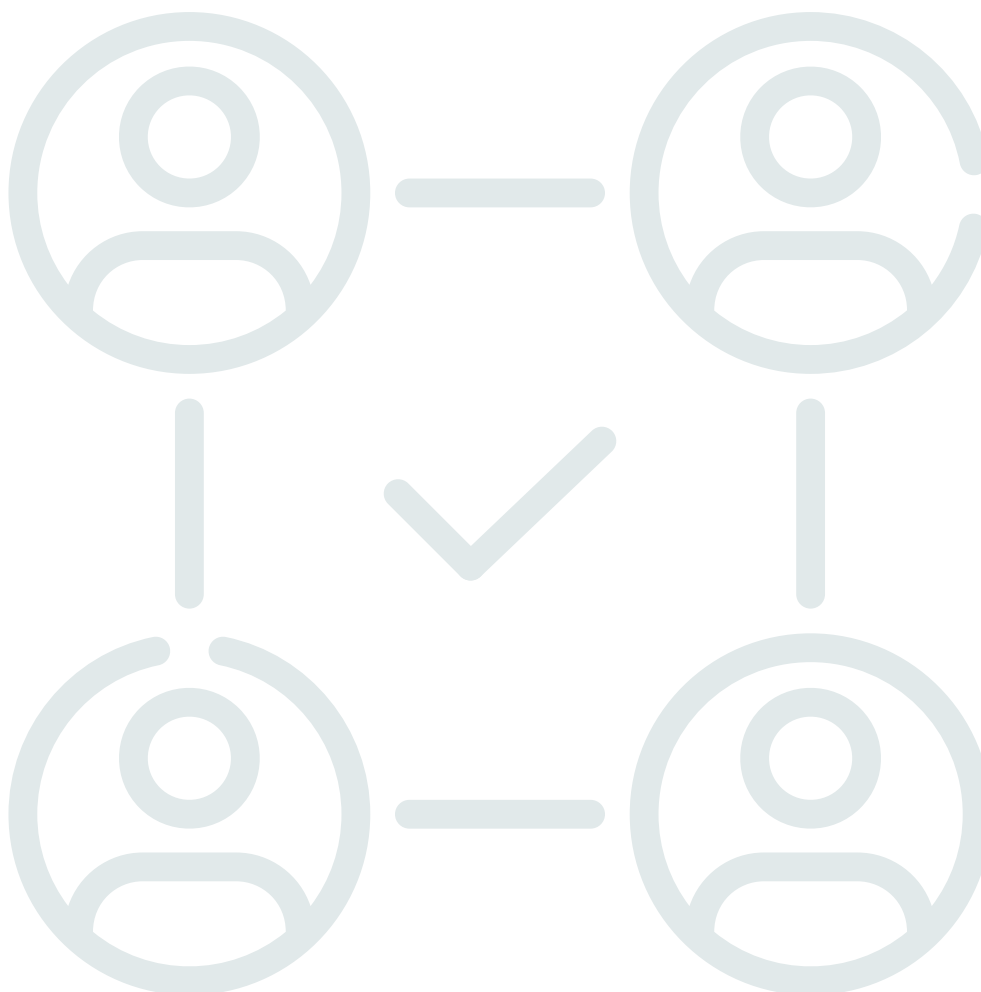
As regards topics discussed at SWG meetings, they understand concerns shared by CSOs and indicate that, at the moment, they are working on the **Health Strategy 2020-2030** which will be presented and discussed with all SWG members at the next meeting. Such approach allows optimism that, in the future, SWG meetings will feature greater discussion of actual policies, which was among key remarks made by civil society representatives.

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.

Average score for CSO capacity for contribution and participation in SWG Health in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.5.





PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

5.1 PLENARY SESSIONS

SWG Health held three plenary sessions, making it the sector group with the highest number of meetings in 2020. **The first** and founding meeting took place on 28.02.2020 at the Government of RNM,¹⁰ on the topic “secondary and tertiary healthcare”. This meeting was used to familiarize members with founding documents for this sector working group (rules of procedures and decision on establishment), and to present findings from the project “Analysis on Efficiency of the Secondary and Tertiary Healthcare System in the Republic of North Macedonia”, funded by the EU.

Due to the public health crisis, the other two meetings were held as online events, via the platform **WEBEX**, with technical support from the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA).

The second meeting took place on 29.06.2020 and included presentation and review of action fiches and strategic responses for IPA III related to the health reform:

- **Window 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority: Health.**

¹⁰ Video recording from the first meeting held by SWG Health, available at: <https://bit.ly/2RJ8PmE>



The third meeting was held on 30.11.2020 and included discussion of PAF indicators in the health sector.

Representatives from institutions, donor community and civil society organizations were invited and attended all three meetings.

5.2 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 framework. IPA programming took place throughout the entire 2020 and was initiated with development of PAF indicators,¹¹ 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 III¹² by the European Union, and is coherent to 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.

¹¹ Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)

¹² Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) COM/2018/465 final.

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

TABLE 2:
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.
<p>WINDOW 5: TERRITORIAL AND CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION</p>	
<p>This window is comprised of a separate list of thematic priorities given in Annex 2 to the IPA III Regulation.¹³ Modalities for implementation of this component include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ cross-border cooperation with IPA countries; ◆ participation in micro region strategies. 	

¹³ COM/2018/465



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.

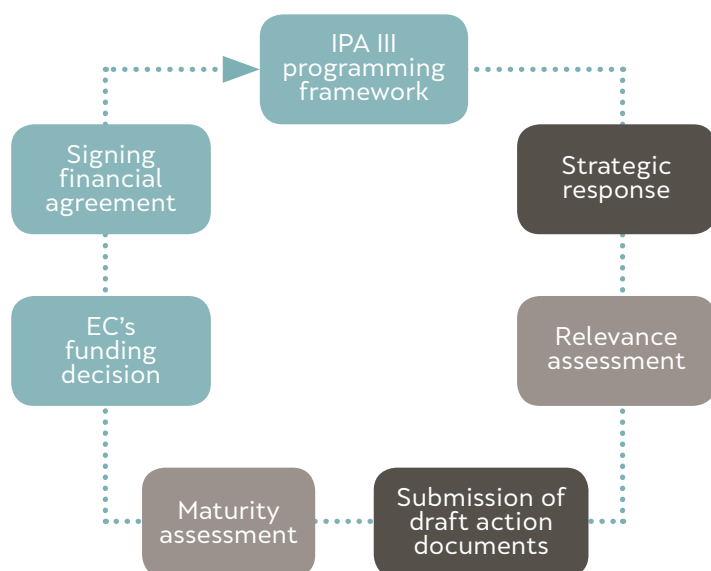
IPA III does not include specific financial allocations per beneficiary country. Actually, countries will have to compete for the total of 14.162 billion euros available on the basis of their capacity and project proposals. However, IPA III introduces the principle of fair share in order to ensure certain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



CHART 2.
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 ac-

tion fishes, of which 10 for the year 2021¹⁴ and 12 for the year 2022.¹⁵

TABLE 3 . 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%

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

15 <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 ¹⁶	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%

5.2.1 Strategic response and action fiche for health

The strategic response for the health sector is part of Window 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health

¹⁶ Sector fiche with remaining funds under Component I from IPA I for the years 2012 and 2013.

TABLE 4 . Strategic response and action fiche for health

SWG	STRATEGIC RESPONSE	KEY THEMATIC PRIORITY	ACTION FICHE	ACTION FICHE OBJECTIVES
HEALTH	WINDOW 4: COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH Thematic priority 1: Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health	(4) Improve health and wellbeing of the population and improve healthcare by ensuring sustainable and quality patient-centred healthcare system	(2022) <i>EU for Health</i> – 5.9 million euros, 85% EU financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Improve perinatal care services ◆ Prevention and control of non-communicable diseases ◆ e-Health

5.3 OPERATIONAL MEETINGS

In 2020, SWG Health did not organize any operational meetings. However, MoH representatives recognize the need for this type of meetings that should serve as preparatory meetings for plenary sessions. At the same time, they expressed full openness for these meeting to be attended by all SWG members, including civil society representatives.

5.4 COVID-19 AND IPA II PROJECTS

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to reallocation of funds from IPA II projects to finance relief measures tackling the health crisis. According to information obtained from MoH representatives, at the start of the pandemic, SEA has successfully managed to reallocate 5,000,000 euros of remaining IPA II funds under the EU Integration Facility for projects focused on strengthening the healthcare system and protection from communicable diseases, i.e. fast response to COVID-19. At the moment, this project is in final stage of implementation. The entire process was managed by the EU Delegation, under the centralized management system, and implied procurement of equipment for healthcare facilities in RNM.

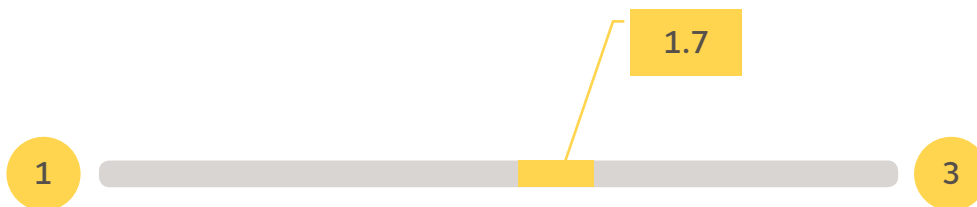
In addition, during the health crisis, the EU secured assistance in equipment (protective medical gear, ventilators, generators, etc.) for RNM. Also, in the period May – August 2021, RNM should receive a donation of 119,000 Pfizer/Biontech vaccines from the EU. Delivery of vaccines is underway.

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 higher score.

Average score for effects from work of SWG Health in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.7.





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)¹⁷, the European Union’s Gender Action Plan (GAP II)¹⁸ 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,¹⁹ while IPA II treats gender equality as cross-cutting issue and as separate priority area for support.²⁰

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

17 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>

18 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>

19 Ibid.

20 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 women²¹ in the country are economically inactive, compared to 37.7% of men.²² Moreover, 77% of health sector employees in RNM are women,²³ 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 women.²⁴ 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 report²⁵ 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.

6.1.2 Trainings

Recommendations made under the 2019 Shadow Report concerned specially designed training for SWG members on gender mainstreaming that

21 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>

22 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>

23 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>

24 Ibid.

25 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.

would be complementary to already existing gender equality training for administrative officers.

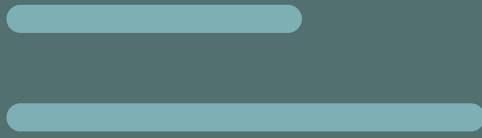
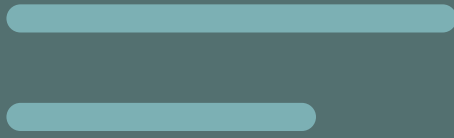
Namely, in 2017 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), with the support from the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN WOMEN), developed an e-training course on gender equality intended to enhance knowledge of public administration employees. This training course 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 persons.²⁶ Here it should be noted that this training course is available only to administrative officers, but not to other groups of public sector employees.²⁷

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.

²⁶ Ministry of Information Society and Administration. 2020 Report from the Register of Public Sector Employees. Available at: <https://bit.ly/2T3DTxW>

²⁷ 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. SWG Health held three plenary sessions in the course of 2020, making it the most active sector group compared to the others. However, even this work dynamics is insufficient to create strategic documents for IPA III and monitor results achieved under already existing strategies and plans within the same year. Hence, urgent changes are needed to the rules of procedure that will increase dynamics of SWG meetings. Changes to the rules of procedure should distinguish between plenary sessions and operational meetings, whereby the first would imply discussion of strategy documents and policies and their implementation track record, while the second would focus on development of these documents. Most certainly, the rules of procedure should guarantee that all SWG members, including civil society representatives, are invited and attend these meetings.

2. Moreover, changes to the rules of procedure need to cover the model for selection of civil society representative and to define their role and mandate in this sector working group. At the moment, civil society representatives are assigned the status of observers which creates additional confusion among CSOs, although – in the practice – the status of observers does not create significant difference compared to other SWG members. At the same time, the rules of procedure should enlist specific expectations from civil society organizations that participate in SWG work because the current situation does not allow full utilization of their capacity.

3. An annual work plan should be created in the first quarter of the year, setting forth the dynamics and schedule of SWG plenary sessions and operational meetings. Development of the annual plan needs to involve all SWG members. According to MoH representatives, this recommendation is acceptable, but they believe such initiative should come from the Secretariat for European Affairs for the purpose of coordination and harmonization with other SWGs.



4. The issue of low transparency is noted also in respect to SWG Health. The Ministry of Health's website does not host any information on establishment and operation of this sector group. All information related to SWG work need to be immediately published on the website of the competent ministry. At the same time, once MoH is relived from the burden of the health crisis, it should start work on creating specific activities that will contribute to familiarization of the broader public with reform policies discussed within this sector working group.

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.

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- ◆ 2022 action fiche EU for Health
- ◆ Job systematization at the Ministry of Health

