

SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR WORKING
GROUP ON RURAL AND
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

January – December 2020





THROUGH
DIALOGUE TO
EU

SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR WORKING
GROUP ON RURAL AND
LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

January – December 2020



This project is funded
by the European Union



REACTOR
research in action

Center for Civil Communications
Центар за граѓански комуникации

ЕВРОТИНК
ЦЕНТАР ЗА
ЕВРОПСКИ СТРАТЕГИИ

EUROTHINK
CENTER FOR
EUROPEAN STRATEGIES
eurothink

SHADOW REPORT FROM MONITORING WORK AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON RURAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT JANUARY – DECEMBER 2020

ORIGINAL TITLE:

ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ НА
СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА РЕГИОНАЛЕН И ЛОКАЛЕН РАЗВОЈ
ЈАНУАРИ – ДЕКЕМВРИ 2020

Publisher:

Foundation Open Society – Macedonia

For The Publisher:

Fani Karanfilova – Panovska, executive director

Authors:

Aleksandar Kolekeski

Irina Jolevska, Gender Mainstreaming in Sector Working Groups

Editors:

Danche Danilovska – Bajdevska

Nada Naumovska

Sandra Anastasovska Kuzmanovski

Graphic design:

Koma

Translation from Macedonian language:

Katerina Dimishkovska

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација
Национална и универзитетска библиотека „Св. Климент Охридски“, Скопје

35.075.2:341.171(4-672EY:497.7)"2020"(047)

KOLEKESKI, Aleksandar

Shadow report from monitoring work and effects of the sector working group on rural and local development [Електронски извор] : January - December 2020 / [authors Aleksandar Kolekeski, Irina Jolevska ; translation from Macedonian language Katerina Dimishkovska]. - Skopje : Foundation Open society - Macedonia, 2021

Начин на пристапување (URL): <https://www.dijalogkoneu.mk>. - Текст во PDF формат, содржи 45 стр. - Наслов преземен од екранот. - Опис на изворот на ден 16.09.2021. - Превод на делото: Извештај во сенка од следењето на работата и ефектите на секторската работна група за регионален и локален развој : јануари - декември 2020. - Фусноти кон текстот. - Библиографија: стр. 45

ISBN 978-608-218-360-2

1. Jolevska, Irina [автор]

а) Процес на пристапување во ЕУ -- Секторски работни групи -- Македонија -- 2020 -- Извештаи

COBISS.MK-ID 54967045

This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the sole responsibility of Foundation Open Society – Macedonia, Eurothink: Center for European Strategies, Reactor – Research in action and Center for Civil Communication and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.

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	16
PART 3: CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION	19
PART 4: CSO CAPACITY	23
PART 5: EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK	27
5.1 Plenary sessions	27
5.2 General information on IPA III programming (2021-2027)	28
5.2.1 Strategic response and action fiche for regional and local development	32
5.3 Operational meetings	33
5.4 COVID-19 and IPA II projects	33
PART 6: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN THE 12 SECTOR WORKING GROUPS	37
6.1 Findings from monitoring sector working groups	38
6.1.1 SWG meetings	38
6.1.2 Trainings	39
6.1.3 Gender analysis of policies	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.

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 REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

FORMED: 2019²

NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS: 44, institutions x 26 members, civil society organizations x 7 members, academic community x 3 members, and donor community x 8 members

NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2020:

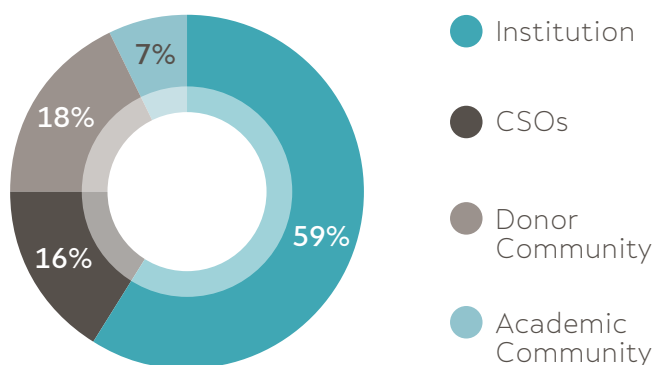
one plenary session, 27.11.2020

SWG CHAIR: Ministry of Local Self-Government

SWG CO-CHAIR: EU Delegation to the Republic of North Macedonia.

CHART 1.

Distribution of various representatives in SWG Regional and Local Development



² In a second attempt, initially formed in 2016 and revoked.

METHODOLOGY APPROACH

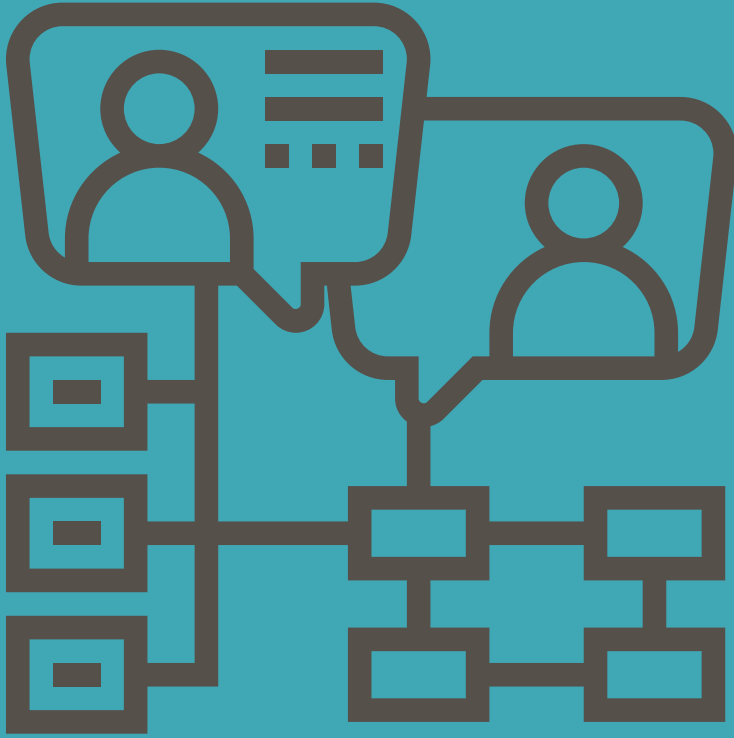
For the purpose of this report, the project team combined several research methods:

- free access to public information;
- focus group with civil society representatives that participate in the sector working group;
- interview with the coordinator of civil servants from the Ministry of Local Self-Government;
- direct monitoring at SWG meetings.

A total of 25 freedom of information requests were submitted to the competent ministry, which disclosed its responses within the law-stipulated deadline, except for one inquiry. As regards the focus group with civil society representatives, the project team held one such focus group³ with two from total of seven representatives from civil society organizations invited. Moreover, the project team made several attempts to organize an interview with the coordinator from the ranks of civil servants, but received no feedback.

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

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



PART 1

SECTOR POLICIES

European Commission's 2020 Progress Report for North Macedonia

In its 2020 report⁴ the European Commission notes that North Macedonia is **moderately prepared** in the area of regional policy and coordination of structural instruments. At the same time, it refers to **some progress** made in strengthening national capacity for strategic planning and sector-based programming and monitoring. It noted that the country is committed to **decentralization**, while municipalities have improved their financial management collection of local taxes, and the government initiated, in partnership with municipalities and the Association of Local Self-Government Units (ZELS), a process to reform legislation on the local self-government system, in order to grant municipalities additional powers and financial resources.

⁴ European Commission's 2020 Progress Report for North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=5657>



TABLE 1 . *Key findings from EC's 2020 Progress Report for RNM in respect to regional and local development*

KEY FINDINGS

1. Some progress is achieved in aligning national legislation with the EU acquis by creating preconditions for implementation of existing and future EU structural funds. Improvement includes laws on public procurement, prevention and protection against discrimination, and NUTS classification.
2. Introduction of new medium-term budgetary framework, improved budgetary classification, new fiscal rules, financial control and internal audit is still pending.
3. Although annual spending on regional development policies is gradually increasing, the country needs to put in place an integrated planning, management and monitoring system for regional development. The purpose is to address disparities among NUTS 3 regions and to tailor policies to specific needs of areas suffering economic and demographic handicaps.

TABLE 2 . *Recommendations from EC's 2020 Progress Report or RNM in respect to regional and local development*

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To upgrade the administrative and technical capacity across IPA operating structures, to adopt a retention policy and improve dynamics in implementation of EU-funded projects, particularly in the areas of transport and environment;
2. To significantly strengthen the regional development policy, to improve financial instruments put in place for its implementation and to improve administrative capacity at central and local level;
3. To ensure sustainability of project results.

In 2020, there are five cross-border cooperation programmes under IPA II, as follows: CBC Kosovo - North Macedonia,⁵ CBC Bulgaria - North Macedonia,⁶ CBC Greece – North Macedonia,⁷ CBC North Macedonia – Albania,⁸ and CBC Serbia – North Macedonia,⁹ which is the only programme in duration of 4 instead of 7 years.

At the same time, 2020 marked the start of activities for IPA III programming that covers the period 2021-2027:

- a) IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Albania and North Macedonia 2021- 2027;
- b) IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Kosovo and North Macedonia 2021 – 2027;
- c) IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Serbia and North Macedonia 2021- 2027;
- d) INTERREG IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Bulgaria and North Macedonia 2021- 2027;
- e) INTERREG IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Greece and North Macedonia 2021 – 2027;
- f) INTERREG Euro-Med Programme 2021 – 2027;
- g) ADRION – transitional programme, post 2020 programming.

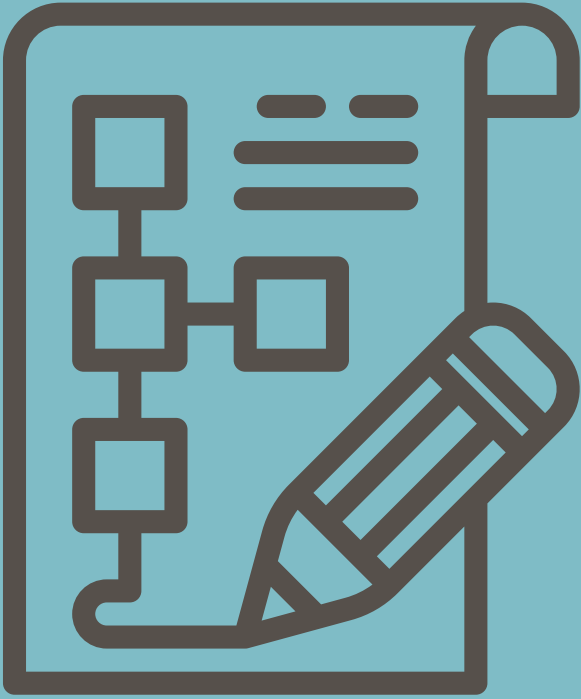
5 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Kosovo – North Macedonia, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/ipa/2015/2014_-2020_ipa_cbc_kosovo-the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf

6 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – North Macedonia, available at: http://mls.gov.mk/images/ipa/Interreg_IPA_CBC_CCI2014TC1615CB006_mk.pdf

7 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Greece – North Macedonia, available at: <http://www.ipa-cbc-programme.eu/>

8 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme North Macedonia – Albania, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/ipa/2015/2014_-2020_ipa_cbc_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia-albania.pdf

9 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia – North Macedonia, available at: http://mls.gov.mk/images/ipa/cbcmksrb/c_2016_8258_f1_annex_en_v1_p1_870324.pdf



PART 2

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

SWG Regional and Local Development is coordinated by the Ministry of Local Self-Government and is chaired by the line minister. This sector working group is established by means of decision and has own rules of procedure. SWG members are representatives from competent ministries, donor community, Association of Local Self-Government Units (ZELS), chambers of commerce, academic community and the civil society. A total of seven (7) civil society representatives are involved in this sector group, with the status of members.

In 2020, SWG Regional and Local Development held one plenary session, on 27.11.2020. In this monitoring period there are no changes noted in respect to **method of regulation** for this sector group. Its operation is regulated under the rules of procedure adopted in 2019. This document stipulates all rules, procedures and scope of work for the sector group, while the decision on its establishment provides **the list of SWG members** and their respective entities. In 2020, SWG composition did not undergo changes in terms of representatives from institutions, donor community and civil society organizations.



As regards **enforcement of provisions** from the rule of procedure, it is noted that this sector group did not comply with the obligation for organization of three meetings annually.

In terms of **transparency**, the Ministry of Local Self-Government has posted on its official website¹⁰ information related to IPA cross-border and territorial cooperation, but has not published any information related to SWG work, such as the founding documents (decision on establishment and rules of procedure), nor any press releases, minutes and materials from SWG meetings.

According to **civil society representatives**, information about their role in this sector working group is not fully clear. Although they are full-fledged members, they shared a feeling of not being able to make great contribution to SWG work. Hence, the rules of procedure need to be amended in order to precisely define their role and ensure their involvement in all stages for developing documents produced by this sector group.

2.2 ANNUAL WORK PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK REPORT

Development of annual plans and annual reports is not anticipated as activity in the rules of procedure for SWG Regional and Local Development, but if these are created in transparent and inclusive manner, they could provide a significant incentive for more organized work by the sector group. In 2020, SWG Regional and Local Development did not develop annual work plan and annual work report.

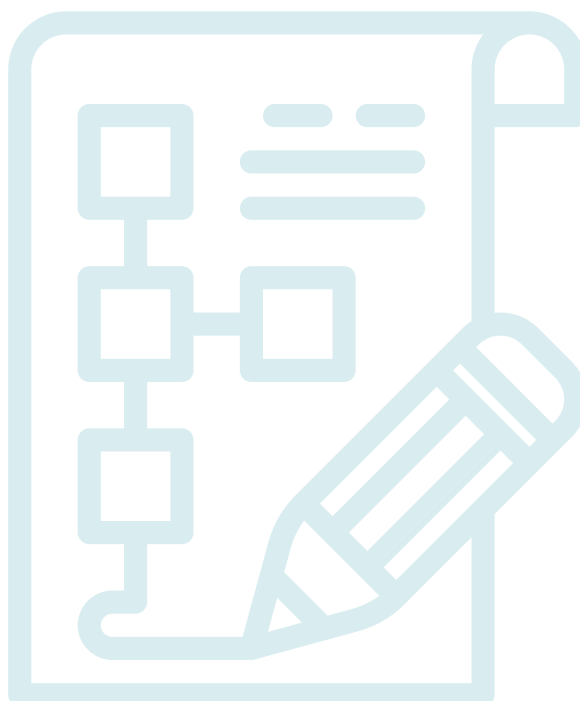
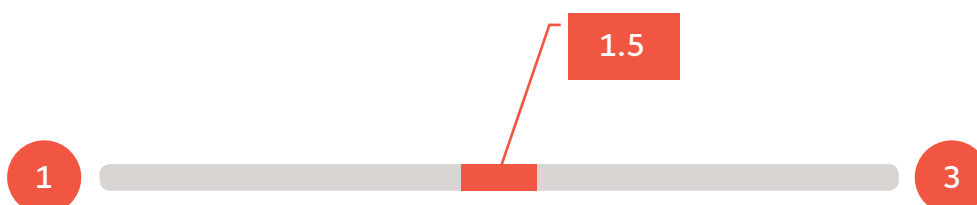
ASSESSMENT ON SWG FUNCTIONALITY

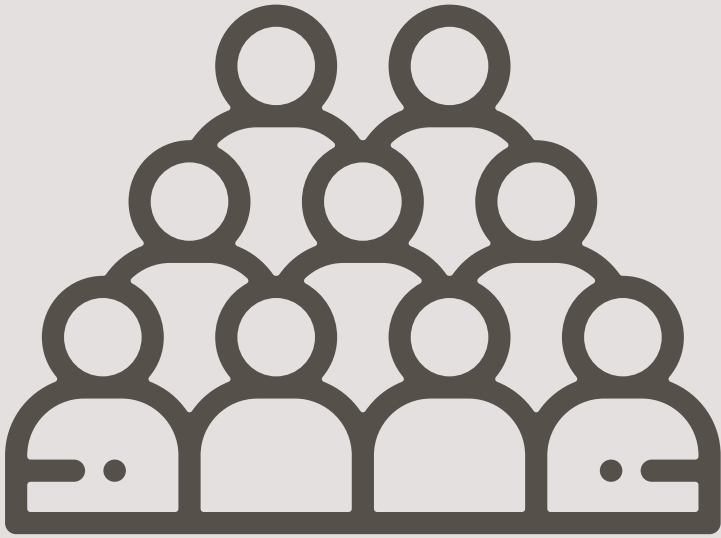
According to the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, **SWG functionality** is measured against 14 standards and 8 indicators that focus on creation of relevant work documents by SWGs (rules of procedure, annual work plan and annual

¹⁰ Official website of the Ministry of Local Self-Government, available at: <https://mls.gov.mk/>

work 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 Regional and Local Development in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.5.





PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

The list of civil society members in SWG Regional and Local Development is comprised of seven **civil society entities, with their representatives having the status of members:**

- Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society, with 3 members;
- Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, with 2 members;
- Association of Financial Workers from Local Self-Government Units and Enterprises, with 1 member; and
- Association of Utility Service Providers ADKOM, with 1 member.

The list of civil society entities is enclosed to the decision on establishing SWG Regional and Local Development,¹¹ and includes information on their individual representatives in the sector working group. The manner in which members of this sector group are selected is untypical compared to other SWGs, because the Council

¹¹ Ibid, ref. 8



is assigned three member seats, while the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation is assigned two member seats.

For the only plenary session held in 2020, civil society representatives were sent timely **invitations**. Moreover, meeting invitations contained all **necessary documents**, i.e. agenda and materials that will be discussed at SWG meeting.

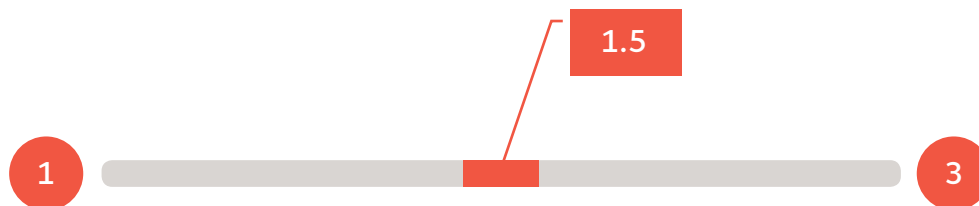
Interviews with civil society representatives conducted for the purpose of this project revealed that at SWG meetings, the sector group's chair is transparent and open to all SWG members. All meetings provide sufficient space, usually towards the end, for all members – including civil society representatives – to join discussion with their opinions and recommendations within topics covered. However, the focus of plenary sessions in 2020 was mainly put on representatives from institutions to present already developed draft documents.

During the interviews, civil society representatives reiterated the need for more opportunities for discussion, communication and exchange of information in order to ensure greater involvement on their behalf.

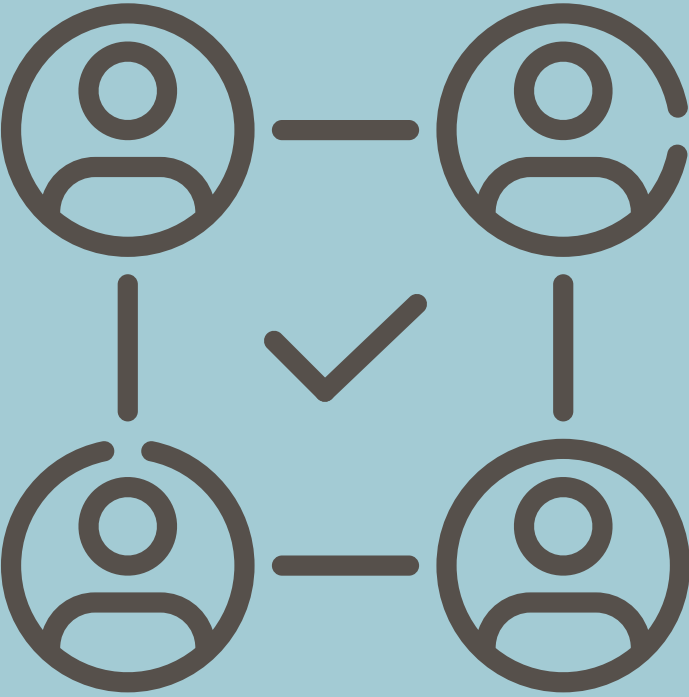
ASSESSMENT ON CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

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 Regional and Local Development in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.5.







PART 4

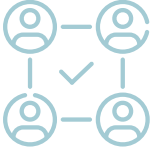
CSO CAPACITY

Participation of seven CSOs makes SWR Regional and Local Development one of sector working groups marked by relatively good civil society participation compared to other SWGs. However, civil society representatives believe that their role in this sector group is rather pro-form instead of implying meaningful contribution to SWG work.

Interviewed civil society representatives based this observation on several reasons. First, they indicate that one cannot talk about their efficient participation in the sector group having in mind the low dynamics of SWG meetings (one session annually), and minimum level of communication among SWG members beyond these meetings.

Moreover, interviewed civil society representatives indicated that during and after SWG meetings they are always given space to submit comments and proposals.

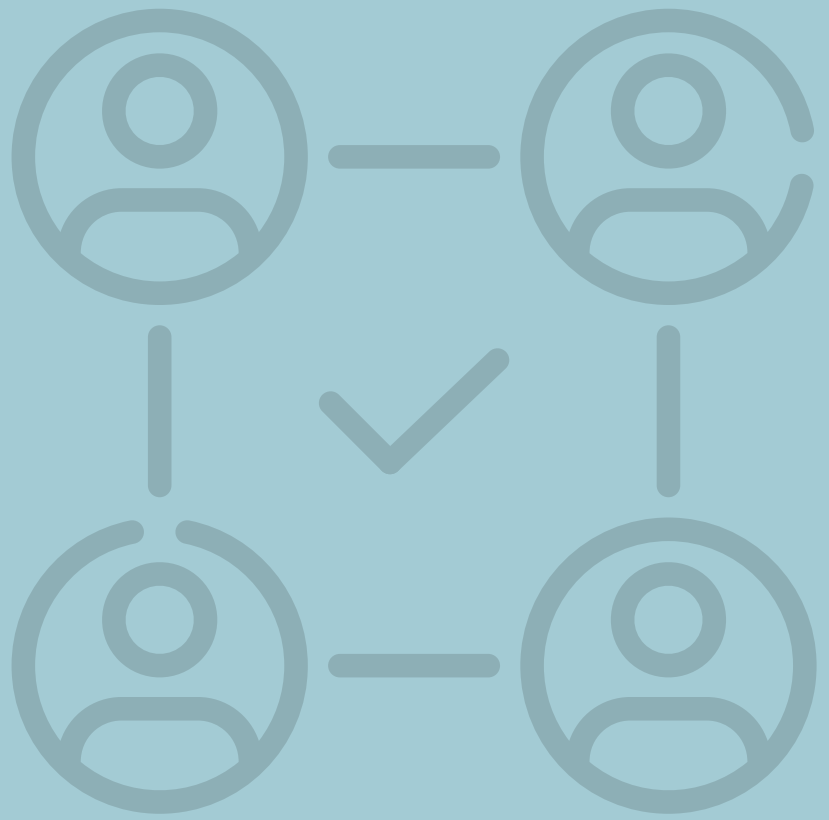
ASSESSMENT ON CSO CAPACITY



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 Regional and Local Development in this monitoring period is calculated at 2.0.







PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

5.1 PLENARY SESSIONS

In 2020, SWG Regional and Local Development held one plenary session, thereby failing to comply with the minimum of three meetings annually as stipulated under the rules of procedure. Due to the public health crisis, the plenary session was organized as online event¹² with technical support from the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA).

The plenary session was held on 27.11.2020 and concerned verification of strategic responses to IPA III:

- **Window 2:** Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication, key thematic priority: regional and local development and enhanced digitalization process;
- **Window 3:** Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity, key thematic priority: digital economy and society.

Representatives from institutions, donor community and civil society organizations were invited and attended this meeting.

¹² Via the platform WEBEX.

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,¹³ 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 III¹⁴ 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.

¹³ Performance Assessment Framework (PAF)

¹⁴ 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 1:
IPA III windows and thematic priorities

<p>WINDOW 1: RULE OF LAW, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Judiciary; ◆ Fight against corruption; ◆ Fight against organized crime; ◆ Migration and border management; ◆ Fundamental rights; ◆ Democracy; ◆ Civil society. 	<p>WINDOW 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACQUIS ALIGNMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Good governance; ◆ Administrative capacity and acquis alignment; ◆ Good neighbourly relations and reconciliation; ◆ Strategic communication, monitoring, evaluation and audit.
<p>WINDOW 3: GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Environment and climate change; ◆ Transport, digital economy and energy. 	<p>WINDOW 4: COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Education, employment, social protection and inclusion policies, and health; ◆ Private sector development, trade, research and innovation; ◆ Agriculture and rural development; ◆ Fisheries.
<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.¹⁵ 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. 	

¹⁵ COM/2018/465



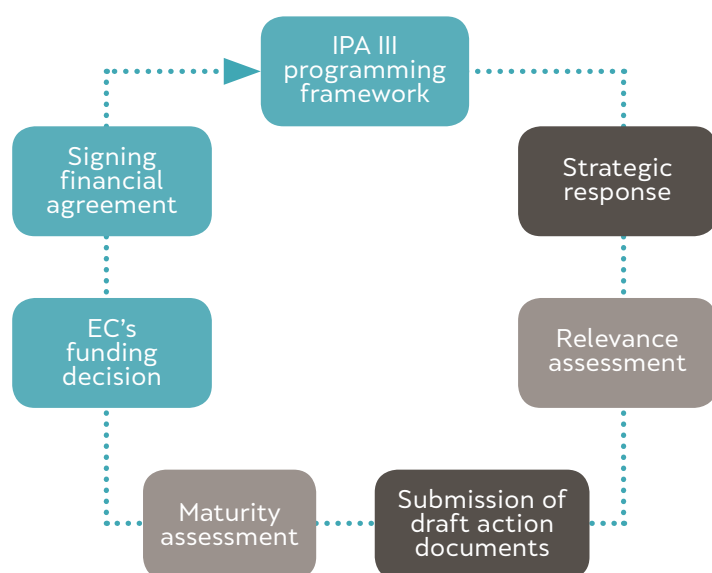
According to the IPA III Regulation, the European Commission proposes a programming framework for the period 2021-2027 that includes all priority areas eligible for funding. Based on this programming framework, each IPA III country develops its strategic responses, elaborating links between EU priorities 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 2021¹⁶ and 12 for the year 2022.¹⁷

TABLE 2. *2021 and 2022 action fishes for IPA III*

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

¹⁶ <https://www.sep.gov.mk/data/file/Dokumenti/Akciski%20fisea/2021.zip>

¹⁷ <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 ¹⁸	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%
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 regional and local development

In 2020, SWG Regional and Local Development focused its work on development and consultations for sector documents in coordination with the Ministry of Information Society and Administration during the single plenary session held jointly with SWG Public Administration Reform. The strategic response in the sector on regional and local development is part of Window 2: Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication.

¹⁸ Sector fiche with remaining funds under Component I from IPA I for the years 2012 and 2013

TABLE 3 . Strategic response and action fiche for regional and local development

SWG	STRATEGIC RESPONSE	KEY THEMATIC PRIORITY	ACTION FICHE	ACTION FICHE OBJECTIVES
REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT	WINDOW 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACQUIS ALIGNMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION Thematic priority 1: Good governance	(1) Public administration reform and enhanced decentralization of competences		

5.3 OPERATIONAL MEETINGS

In 2020, MLSG organized one operational meeting with representatives from the Secretariat for European Affairs and the EU Delegation. At this meeting, held on 22.06.2020, civil society members participating in this sector working groups were not invited to attend and were not informed about organization of such meeting within SWG Regional and Local Development. At the same time, it should be noted that minutes are not compiled from operational meetings in order to be later shared with civil society representatives.

5.4 COVID-19 AND IPA II PROJECTS

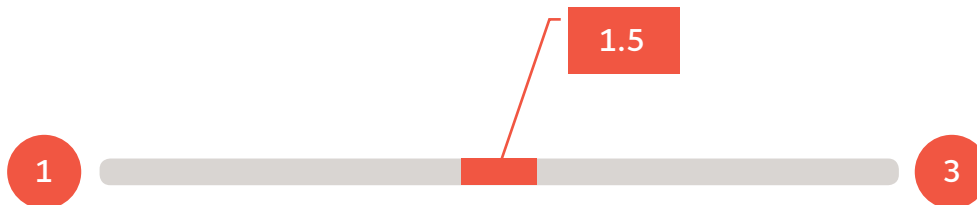
The COVID-19 pandemic has led to reallocation of funds from IPA II projects to finance relief measures tackling the health crisis. IPA II funds anticipated for regional and local development were no reallocated for projects related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

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 Regional and Local Development in this monitoring period is calculated at 1.5.





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)¹⁹, the European Union’s Gender Action Plan (GAP II)²⁰ 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,²¹ while IPA II treats gender equality as cross-cutting issue and as separate priority area for support.²²

19 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>

20 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>

21 Ibid.

22 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>



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 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 women²³ in the country are economically inactive, compared to 37.7% of men.²⁴ Moreover, 77% of health sector employees in RNM are women,²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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 report²⁷ 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.

23 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>

24 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>

25 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>

26 Ibid.

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

6.1.2 Trainings

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

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

Defeating is the fact that, in 2020, this basic module of the gender equality training was attended by only three administrative officers and nobody attended the advanced module. For comparison, in 2019 the basic module was attended by 359 and the advanced module was attended by 54 administrative officers. From its introduction to present, the gender equality training was attended by a total of 11,017 administrative officers. However, this figure pales into insignificance against the fact that, by 31.12.2020, public sector institutions employ a total of 131,183 persons.²⁸ Here it should be noted that this training course is available only to administrative officers, but not to other groups of public sector employees.²⁹

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

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

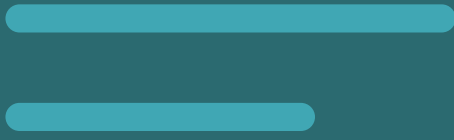
29 Pursuant to Article 14 of the Law on Public Sector Employee ("Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia" no. 27/14, 199/14, 27/16, 35/18 and 198/18 and "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia" no. 143/19 and 14/20), job positions of employees in public sector institutions are categorized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

and gender responsive budgeting, attended by 33 staff members from 14 line ministries.



6.1.3 Gender analysis of policies

The Ministry of Local Self-Government, responsible for SWG Regional and Local Development, has incorporated the gender perspective in the Strategy on Regional Development 2021-2031 and the Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2021–2026.



FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The work approach applied by SWG Regional and Local Development is not characterized by serious dynamics, especially due to the fact that, throughout the entire 2020, it held only one plenary session and one operational meeting. This is comparable to the previous dynamics of long inactivity, even cancellation and reactivation of this sector working group.³⁰ Urgent changes are needed to the rules of procedure in order to establish links with sector policies and to create opportunities for meaningful participation of various actors in regional and local development.

1. SWG Regional and Local Development demonstrated poor work dynamics in 2020, i.e. it held one plenary session and one operational meeting. This work dynamics falls short of what is needed for development of strategic and planning documents and for monitoring results achieved under existing commitments. The meeting held in 2020 concerned reconsideration of strategic documents for IPA III, excluding any possibility for necessary discussion of actual policies in the context of regional and local development.

2. It is necessary to ensure that this sector working group engages in development of proposals for sector and cross-sectoral policies, strategies and development programs relevant for regional and local development.

3. Relevant preconditions should be created for this sector group to participate in processes for identification, formulation and prioritization of developmental goals, measures and projects for implementation of national policies and strategies in this sector.

4. The rules of procedure need to be amended in order to define the model for selection of civil society repre-

³⁰ SWG Regional and Local Development was formed in 2016, but its work was suspended the same year. This sector group was again formed in 2019, after the initial meeting held on 20 March 2019.

sentatives and to define their role and mandate in work of this sector group. The current approach does not ensure full utilization of capacity disposed by civil society organizations.



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

- 1.** Most SWGs have still not recognized the importance of gender mainstreaming as a cross-cutting theme in their work. Although some line ministries have engaged in gender analysis of particular policies or have performed gender-responsive budgeting for individual programs, oftentimes these documents are not discussed and are not taken into account at SWG meetings. Hence the need for gender mainstreaming in work of all SWGs and use of gender analyses on state-of-affairs in specific sectors as baseline for policy development, implementation and evaluation.
- 2.** It is recommended for e-training on gender equality to become part of the framework of generic competences and annual training programs, thereby underscoring its mandatory implementation and ensuring greater coverage in terms of trained administrative officers. Moreover, it is equally important for training materials to be regularly, timely and continuously updated, in order to avoid the risk of outdated content. While implementation of specially designed training course on gender mainstreaming in strategic planning represents a step forward, it is still early to assess its effects. It is recommended for participants in such trainings and workshops to mandatorily include SWG members. In order to ensure that such training gains an even greater importance, it would be desirable to evaluate knowledge of training participants and to regulate organization of such trainings on regular instead of ad-hoc basis.
- 3.** Given that recommendations from 2019 Shadow Report are not fully taken into consideration, valid is the recommendation for involvement of coordinators and deputy coordinators for equal opportunities in SWGs, including civil society representatives with expertise and experience in the field of gender equality, as support for gender mainstreaming in all SWGs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ◆ European Commission's 2020 Progress Report for North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=5657>
- ◆ Revised Multi-Country Indicative Strategy Paper (2014-2020), adopted on 31.05.2018, available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/20180817-revised-multi-country-indicative-strategy-paper-2014-2020.pdf>
- ◆ Program on Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization in the Republic of Macedonia 2015–2020, available at: <http://mls.gov.mk/images/documents/lokalnasamouprava/>
- ◆ Strategy on Equitable Regional Development 2009–2019, Ministry of Local Self-Government, available at: <https://bit.ly/2Z4uRRC>
- ◆ Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Kosovo – North Macedonia, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/ipa/2015/2014_-_2020_ipa_cbc_kosovo-the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia.pdf
- ◆ Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria – North Macedonia, available at: http://mls.gov.mk/images/ipa/Interreg_IPA_CBC_CCI2014T-C1615CB006_mk.pdf
- ◆ Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Greece – North Macedonia, available at: <http://www.ipa-cbc-programme.eu/>
- ◆ Cross-Border Cooperation Programme North Macedonia – Albania, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/pdf/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia/ipa/2015/2014_-_2020_ipa_cbc_the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia-albania.pdf
- ◆ Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia – North Macedonia, available at: http://mls.gov.mk/images/ipa/cbcmksrb/c_2016_8258_f1_annex_en_v1_p1_870324.pdf
- ◆ Shadow Report from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Groups, January 2019 – February 2020, available at: <https://dijalogkoneu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FOOM-Izvestaj-vo-senka-CELOSEN.-SITE-SRG.pdf>
- ◆ Responses to information requests submitted under the instrument for free access to public information
- ◆ Transcript from interviews conducted with representatives from state institutions that participate in SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Transcript from the focus group organized with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Data collected under the survey questionnaire for civil society organizations and their experience in terms of civil society participation
- ◆ Rule of Procedure for SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Agenda for 2020 plenary session held by SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Performance Assessment Framework (PAF) Indicators
- ◆ Strategic responses for IPA III
- ◆ Job systematization at the Ministry of Local Self-Government

