

## KEY FINDINGS FROM THE SHADOW REPORT ON SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

### RELEVANT SECTOR POLICIES

In its 2020 Country Progress Report, the European Commission notes that North Macedonia 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.



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..

It is important for the country 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.

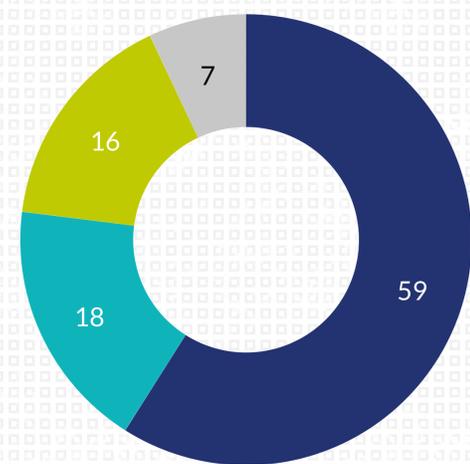
In 2020, there are five cross-border cooperation programmes under IPA II, as follows: CBC Kosovo - North Macedonia, CBC Bulgaria - North Macedonia, CBC Greece – North Macedonia, CBC North Macedonia – Albania, and CBC Serbia – North Macedonia, which is the only programme in duration of 4 instead of 7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

At the same time, 2020 marked the start of activities for IPA 3 programming that covers the period 2021-2027:

- IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Albania and North Macedonia 2021- 2027;
- IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Kosovo and North Macedonia 2021 – 2027;
- IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Serbia and North Macedonia 2021- 2027;
- INTERREG IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Bulgaria and North Macedonia 2021- 2027;
- INTERREG IPA Cross-Border Cooperation Programme between Greece and North Macedonia 2021 – 2027;
- ADRION – transitional programme, post 2020 programming.

### SWG REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

- ◆ **FORMED:** 2019
- ◆ **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:** 1 plenary session, 27.11.2020
- ◆ **SWG CHAIR:** Ministry of Local Self-Government
- ◆ **SWG CO-CHAIR:** EU Delegation to the Republic of North Macedonia



■ Institutions (59%) ■ Donor community (18%)  
■ CSOs (16%) ■ Academic community (7%)

## SWG FUNCTIONALITY

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- ◇ SWG **membership** is precisely defined in the **rules of procedure** and adequately applied.
- ◇ The rules of procedure propose a **minimum of 4 meetings per year**. Only one meeting was held in 2020.
- ◇ SWG members are **regularly** invited to meetings.
- ◇ **Minutes from SWG meetings** are compiled in predetermined form and content and are sent to participants. However, the minutes are sent with a few months delay.
- ◇ Information on SWG work is not available on **MLSG's website**.

## CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

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- ◇ **7 civil society organizations** participate in SWG, with membership status.
- ◇ SWG chairperson's attitude at meetings is **transparent and open** to all members.
- ◇ **Sufficient time** is allowed for civil society representatives to get involved by presenting opinions and recommendations at SWG meetings.
- ◇ Civil society representatives are **not encouraged** to suggest agenda items, i.e. there is no two-way communication on topics to be discussed at SWG meetings.
- ◇ In 2020, representatives from other CSOs, academic community and expert public who are not SWG members **were not invited** to attend meetings.

## CSO CAPACITY

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- ◇ Role of civil society representatives in SWG is more **formal**, instead of providing essential contribution to its work.
- ◇ Given the poor dynamics of SWG meetings, as well as minimum communication between SWG members beyond such meetings, one cannot talk about **effective civil society participation**.
- ◇ Civil society representatives **do not receive feedback** whether their suggestions and comments are taken into consideration.

## EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

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- ◇ Topics discussed at SWG meetings in 2020 concerned action fiches and **strategic responses to IPA 3**, related to public administration reform.
- ◇ One plenary meeting was held, contrary to the rules of procedure stipulation for four meetings per year.

## WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE:

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- ◇ **Amend the rules of procedure** in order to define the model for selection of civil society representatives, their role and mandate.
- ◇ **Increase the dynamics of SWG meetings** in order to develop strategic and planning documents, and to monitor results achieved under existing strategies and plans.
- ◇ Involve civil society representatives in **all phases of creating documents** that fall within SWG's scope of work.
- ◇ Create an **annual plan** for SWG work in the first quarter of the year.
- ◇ Publish all necessary documents related to SWG work on **MLSG's website**.