

# Public administration reform - Strategic planning, inclusive policies and evidence - based legislation



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This edition of policy papers is developed to assist the civil society and citizens, in general, engage in an informed debate and have access to expert knowledge, views and opinions on topics of importance for EU integrations. Areas in which the Republic of North Macedonia will lead its EU accession negotiations are both complex and diverse, while reforms that need to be implemented will open many dilemmas that necessitate an expert debate. For more contents produced under the project “CSO Dialogue – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integrations”, visit the website: **[www.dijalogkoneu.mk](http://www.dijalogkoneu.mk)**

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## Introduction

The circumstances that this document was produced in were defined by a slew of global challenges triggered by the Corona virus pandemic, and their impact can be best perceived within the context of the pandemic management measures. That is also how the framework was set up within which the national institutions were managing the pandemic, on top of the already existing socio-economic challenges that further burdened the process of dealing with the pandemic. The national government institutions also faced strong pressure coming from civil society to find a way to manage the pandemic, but also mitigate its effects. These effects were most prominently felt in the areas of healthcare and in a socio-economic sense. The strong pressure coming from the public and the immense unpredictability arising as a result of the pandemic compelled the government institutions into not only finding a way, but also doing this in a quick and effective manner. Complex, intersectional challenges like these need to be addressed with complex, intersectional measures, policies and programmes.

Through a gender analysis of the planning processes and the available statistical data, this document aims to portray the institutional readiness to address gender equality as a cross-cutting issue. The subject of analysis will be the key documents of the central government on the planning and programming of their essential commitments, along with the public administration efforts to recognise the vulnerable groups and the position of women in society. This would enable insight into the intersectional (dis)enabling environment to empower the position of women in the Macedonian society. This document would also provide insight into the existing examples of an intersectional approach, i.e. putting gender equality in relation to areas outside the scope of social affairs, such as infrastructural matters, climate change, energy efficiency in the national strategic documents, as well as innovative qualitative data collection tools. Finally, this document makes an attempt to detect the strengths of the strategic documents and map out the potential areas for further development. The recommendations have been formulated in such a way as to refer to a specific target group within the context of the steps required to improve the institutional capacities to address gender equality as a cross-cutting issues and thus directly contribute to decreasing the existing inequality.

### Strategic planning processes by the executive branch focusing on gender mainstreaming

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, as the central body of the executive branch, is the key institution that sets out the planning priorities. In accordance with the Law on the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Rules of Procedure of the Government of North Macedonia, the annual programmes for work of the Government are drafted every year, in line with the Programme for Work of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021, the Methodology for Strategic Planning and Drafting of the Annual Programme for Work of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and the Government's strategic priorities.

Two programmatic documents by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia are currently in place: [The Programme for Work of the Government 2021](#)<sup>[1]</sup> and the [Programme for Work of the Government 2020 - 2024](#). The programmes were adopted based on the published Decisions determining the strategic priorities of the Government of North Macedonia, which are based on the [Methodology for Strategic Planning and Drafting of the Annual Programme of the Government](#) (APG), the purpose of which is to define the stages and procedures in the strategic planning process, including the timeframes for delivery of the activities, the correlation to the budgeting processes and a clear definition of the competences of the General Secretariat of the Government and the Ministry of Finance (in charge of the Budget of the RNM), which are responsible for these two processes. The government's document

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[1] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Programme for Work of the Government for 2021, "Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia"

*Strategic Planning Manual (2014)* [2] elaborates the planning process and is designed to help civil servants in preparing quality strategic plans. Moreover, this Manual is also result-oriented and analyses the ways to achieve the desired results in order to improve the situation in a certain area. What it lacks, however, is a gender inequality component, as well as a component on how to work with socially vulnerable groups. More specifically, this document does not overlook the respective matters, but merely focuses on the planning process itself, so when describing the objectives of the strategic documents it states that they need to be measurable, specific, ambitious and attainable, results-oriented, but it is worth emphasizing that there is no recommendation that it is necessary to ensure gender mainstreaming in the planning of the documents of the state administration.

The key strategic documents that have been analysed in order to determine how gender is mainstreamed in them are listed in the following paragraph, whereby it is necessary to keep in mind that those are planning and strategic documents by the executive branch, i.e. the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, for the past period. The documents in question cover different timeframes, with the most recent among them being from 2021 (the National Development Strategy, in draft stage), and the oldest one being from 2007.

The [Methodology for Strategic Planning and Drafting of the Annual Programme of the Government](#), sets out the foundations on preparing a draft-decision to stipulate a strategic priority: the Programme for Work of the Government that the Prime minister-designate submits to the Assembly when the Government is elected: the National Development Plan: the European Union Accession Partnership: the National Programme for Adoption of the Acquis Communautaire (NPAA); the Pre-accession Economic Programme; the Macroeconomic Policy: the ongoing socio-economic and societal situations and the commitments from the international agreements.[3] This methodology was adopted in 2008 and that is the reason why the [National Development Plan 2007 - 2009](#) was taken into consideration, although it was not drafted again after that initial period (2007-2009) – however, currently a National Development Strategy (NDS) is being prepared for the period 2021-2041. The Strategy (NDS)[4] shall be drafted based on an innovative methodology depicting an intergenerational, gender, interethnic, inter-party, long-term consensus on the country priorities, in order to ensure inclusive, green and sustainable development for everyone, in particular the vulnerable categories of people. [5] After the conducted analysis of the Methodology for Strategic Planning and Drafting of the Annual Programme for Work of the Government, it can be concluded that the text of the respective document does not take into consideration the vulnerable groups of citizens, in the sense that they have not been recognized and adequately addressed; there is no emphasis that the document is based on statistically gender disaggregated data, or based on any other demographic or specific groups. The preparatory work and the analysis are based on the “rule of thumb”, meaning that the data collected from the line ministries are not defined as either qualitative or quantitative, but are based on the assessment of the focal points from the ministries. [6]

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[2] [Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Petrova, Maja; Sali Sali; Kostikj, Ljiljana; Strategic Planning Manual, 2014](#)

[3] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, [Methodology for Strategic Planning and Drafting of the Annual Programme of the Government](#), 2008, p. 6

[4] [Bytyqi, Fatmir; Sahakyan, Narine, “Towards a National Development Strategy in Republic of North Macedonia”, UNDP Blog post, 08.10.2021](#)

[5] [The National Development Strategy 2021-2041 would provide a clear vision for a safe future for us and our children](#) (published on vlada.mk)

[6] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, [Methodology for Strategic Planning and Drafting of the Annual Programme for Work of the Government](#), 2008, p. 5

This assessment of the societal and socio-economic state of affairs draws on the opinions of the ministries and the other state administration bodies (SAB), and it should necessarily entail an assessment of the results achieved. In the drafting of this methodology no gender-sensitive methods or tools were taken into consideration in the process of creating the GRIA, but there indeed are gender-sensitive priority objectives in the Decision Determining the Strategic Priorities of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2021 and 2022. Article 2 of the [Decision Determining the Strategic Priorities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021](#), among the other priority goals to achieve the strategic priorities also envisages:

- » advancing the legislation on the development of gender equality along with strategies for prevention and protection of women against all forms of gender-based violence, including domestic violence;
- » advancing gender equality in all the areas of social life and mainstreaming gender in the policymaking and budgeting processes.[7]
- » Article 2 of the Decision Determining the Strategic Priorities of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2022 puts emphasis on the next priority objective, which addresses gender equality:
- » advancing the legislation on gender equality, gender mainstreaming in policy-making, budgeting and developing the concept of equality and non-discrimination in all the areas of social life[8];



[7] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, [Decision Determining the Strategic Priorities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021](#), Article 2, “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” 243/2020 from 9.10.2020

[8] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, [Decision Determining the Strategic Priorities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021](#), Article 2, “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” 97/2021 from 29.4.2021

According to the [gender analysis prepared for the purposes of the new Government Programme 2020-2024](#), the measures related to the economic empowerment of women may be assessed as good, given the fact that they include women-farmers, single parents, they address the gender gap in the wages, and provide incentives for shared parental leave. In addition, they also envisage fostering female entrepreneurship by non-repayable grants for newly established businesses and tax exemptions for new women-led businesses. [9] Moreover, this gender analysis emphasizes the large number of inactive women on the labour market which needs to be addressed through additional measures to encourage their participation on the labour market.

The next document that was subject to analysis is the [Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022](#) where the main priority area is “Policy-making and Coordination”, the overarching goal of which is: effective, efficient and inclusive policymaking. In order to achieve the overarching goal, several specific objectives were set, including Objective 1.2: Improved quality of the policies and providing transparency and participation of the stakeholders, whereby five measures and activities are envisaged:

- » Enhancing the quality of the RIA (Regulatory Impact Assessment) and the legislative process:
- » Introducing mechanisms for building an analytical foundation;
- » Strengthening policy monitoring, reporting and assessment;
- » Improving the work of the sectoral working groups and strengthening the capacity to implement a sectoral approach;
- » Increasing the involvement of stakeholders in the process of policy making, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.[10]

This document refers to the prevalence of gender mainstreaming in the context of the processes of planning programs, policies and measures by the public administration and from this aspect, the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018 – 2022 referred to above, in addition to not mentioning gender mainstreaming, also fails to recognize or address any vulnerable groups of citizens. In the area of monitoring and evaluating the public administration reform, MISA is expected to collect data about the level of implementation of the envisaged measures and activities in relation to PAR, which will be collected electronically, [11] but it has omitted to define the format in which the data would be collected, and when it comes to quantitative data, whether the collected data are planned to be gender-disaggregated.

When it comes to collecting gender-disaggregated quantitative data, the key institution is the State Statistical Office. The basic functions of the State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia as an institution are the collection, processing and dissemination of statistical data on the demographic, social and economic developments in the Macedonian society. Furthermore, the State Statistical Office is the main bearer and coordinator of the statistical system and the institution in charge of international cooperation in the area of statistics, on top of being the institution that defines the statistical methodologies and standards and ensures the protection of the individual data collected by either individuals or legal entities. A key publication that sets out the demographic characteristics of women and men in the Republic of North Macedonia and their representation in the social and economic life is the survey “Women and Men in North Macedonia”, which has been published since 2008. [12]

[9] Dimushevska, Elena; Gender Analysis of the new Government Programme 2020-2024, Kvinna till Kvinna, p. 34

[10] Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, [Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022](#), p.23

[11] Ibid. p.60

[12] [State Statistical Office “Women and Men in North Macedonia” for 2008, 2010, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019, 2020](#)

The legal obligation to collect gender-disaggregated data and present them, i.e. to ensure availability of said data, stems from Art. 18 of LEOWM (Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men from 2012). [13] According to Art. 18 (Presenting Statistical Data) from LEOWM all the state administration bodies, judicial bodies and all entities working in the area of public interest (agencies, media, civil society organizations) are obliged to collect and ensure availability of gender-disaggregated data about their respective organisations. A key document that monitors the development of equal opportunities at both the central and local level [is the annual report drafted by the Sector on Equal Opportunities under the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy](#), prepared based on the reports by the LSGUs (Local Self-Government Units) and SAB (State Administration Bodies) by the designated equal opportunities coordinators in the context of their achievements and contributions to the area of gender equality within their institutions/municipalities and within their scope of work. In addition to being the crucial, this document is the only one published by an institution of the executive branch that publishes qualitative and quantitative data related to gender equality, meaning that although they are bound by the LEOWM, the institutions neglect to publish public information in a statistically disaggregated format.

### Gender mainstreaming

The above Decision Determining the Strategic Priorities puts emphasis on the need to include gender mainstreaming in the policy-making and budgeting processes. However, it remains uncertain whether gender mainstreaming will find its way into the planning process, primarily in the strategic documents which are not in the field of gender equality, non-discrimination and human rights. According to UNICEF, gender mainstreaming refers to the process of assessing the implications of a certain measure/policy/programme on the different genders in order to avoid perpetuating the existing gender inequalities[14]. According to the Oxford Dictionary, intersectionality is the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage.[15] This relative prevalence of gender mainstreaming in the strategic documents comes as a reflection of at least three circumstances: 1. The lack and inaccessibility of gender-disaggregated data; 2. The low participation of women in the labour market; 3. The low level of participation of women in public life.

Regarding the first circumstance, it was already mentioned that the so far most comprehensive source of gender-disaggregated statistics available in the country is the survey “Women and Men in the Republic of North Macedonia”. The second circumstance is also a defining one, i.e. the low level of participation of women in the labour market directly affects their economic power. In this context, according to the data of the State Statistical Office, by cross-referencing the gender-disaggregated data on the level of education and the indicators “works full time” and “works part time” for 2018 (Tables 1 and 2), one can come to the conclusion that 29% of the people without education who work full time are women, and 71% are men, and when cross-cutting them with the indicator “works part time” 33.4% of the people without education are women and 66.6% are men.

[13] [Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men; “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” no. 6/2012; p.10](#)

[14] Definition of gender perspective [Glossary of Terms and Concepts](#), p.4

[15] Definition of intersectionality

**Table 1**

Data expressed in percentages	2018			
	Full time		Part time	
	women	men	women	men
No education	29.0	71.0	33.4	66.6
Incomplete primary education	42.1	57.9	52.5	47.5
Primary education	34.2	65.8	36.7	63.3
3 and 4 years of secondary education	35.4	64.6	34.9	65.1
Post-secondary education	48.3	51.7	/	/
Higher education	52.4	47.6	59.3	40.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>39.6</b>	<b>60.4</b>	<b>39.7</b>	<b>60.3</b>

Data available in the study “Women and men in the Republic of North Macedonia”, by the State Statistical Office, p.71

**Table 2**

Data expressed in percentages	2019			
	Works full time		Works part time	
	women	men	women	men
No education	32.4	67.6	44.9	55.1
Incomplete primary education	41.1	58.9	54.3	45.7
Primary education	34.2	65.8	36.7	63.3
3 and 4 years of secondary education	36.6	63.4	36.0	64.0
Post-secondary education	49.0	51.0	/	/
Higher education	52.8	47.2	42.8	57.2
<b>Total</b>	<b>40.1</b>	<b>59.9</b>	<b>41.5</b>	<b>58.5</b>

Data available in the survey “Women and men in the Republic of North Macedonia”, by the State Statistical Office, p.71

The lack of formal education seems to pose a greater obstacle for women to be able to get even part-time employment compared to men at the same level, i.e. with no formal education. Regarding the difference between full-time and part-time employees, 52.8% of women work full-time as opposed to 47.2% of men, which indicates that although there is certain parity or equality in the level of education between men and women, according to the data for 2018, men dominate when it comes to participation in television shows where it is necessary to give one's opinion or insight.

Regarding the third circumstance listed above, i.e. the low prevalence of women in the public sphere in the context of political shows where domestic and foreign policy matters are analysed, 20% of women participated in TV shows, while as much as 70% of all the broadcast TV shows consist of exclusively men. [16] According to this research, although there was no significant difference in terms of the acquired education, the participation of women in shows where expertise in a certain area is required is low, whereby out of the analysed 980 shows on television channels that are national operators in the period from 10 January to 21 March 2021, less than 20% of the invited guests were women, regardless of the gender of the host.

These three circumstances are interrelated so that when we take into consideration the low share of women in the labour market and the low participation in shows where the guests are expected to provide an analysis/opinion/ insight on matters, this to a certain extent also reduces the need to take into account gender-disaggregated statistics. This does not mean that there is no commitment to gender equality, but that the intersectional dimension which is required of modern policies and measures in order for them to be able to address the contemporary health and socio-economic challenges is insufficiently taken into account. An example of this is the third conclusion of the [Shadow report from the monitoring of the work and effects of the sectoral working groups for the period January 2019 – February 2020](#), which underlines the narrow perspective and understanding of the gender aspect. Within the sectoral working groups, this is often associated with counting the number of men and women in the groups themselves, whereas gender mainstreaming and gender impact analysis are not part of the SWGs' work. [17]

### **Innovative instruments and practices for quality data collection**

Regarding the type of data collected as a consultative mechanism for policy makers, there are software tools that enable the collection of qualitative data, i.e. narrative data from the respondents at both the national and local level depending on the purposes of data collection. One of these software tools is [Sensemaker](#), which in the period October-November was used to conduct national research in the area of gender and climate change. The questionnaire consisted of three parts: narrative part (micro-narratives), triangles within which the aspects that had impact on the decision of the respondent should be positioned, and demographic questions. The collected qualitative and quantitative data are available online.[18] [This research was conducted for the purposes of analysis of the public perception about the contribution towards the adaptation to climate change, and assessment of the vulnerability in the Republic of North Macedonia](#), for the purposes of which around 1220 stories from the every-day life of Macedonian citizens in relation to climate change were collected. These stories provided a glimpse into their daily lives, but also created a platform for sharing experiences and thus represent an innovative tool for public canvassing. In addition to insight into the stories, the [results](#) of this research shine a light on the different vulnerable groups of citizens in the context of gender inequality based on the varying levels of personal capacity to deal with the effects of climate change, but also the varying levels

[16] [Jordanovska Ivana; Antovska, Zorana; "Untapped Expertise: A Case Study on the Participation of Women in Political Television Shows in North Macedonia", Prespa Institute, p.3.](#)

[17] [SHADOW report on the monitoring of the work and the effects of the sectoral working groups \[Electronic source\]: for the period January 2019 - February 2020 / \[authors Sanja Bozovic Stojkoska ... et al.\]. - Skopje: Open Society Foundation – Macedonia 2020, p.209](#)

[18] [Results from the micronarratives survey](#)

of access to resources, networks and information with regards to how to deal with those effect. This leads us to the key benefit of this type of combined data (qualitative and quantitative) which is that they enable the authorities to adopt nuanced measures and policies at both the central and the local level, but also depict the broader picture that may be useful (to the authorities) in policy making. Qualitative data of this kind are an extremely valuable source of information for policy makers, particularly in conditions when the politicians and the political elites are focused on the will of the majority, a dominant political choice, which leaves out certain groups of citizens who do not have similar or identical needs compared to the majority groups.

The final visualization of the results does not display percentages and numbers that would show the policy makers what the opinion/approval/disapproval of the majority is, so that they could only procedurally create policies catering to the will of the majority, but provides insight into the experiences of the majority, as well as of those who have gone through unusual or simply different experiences and stories (micro-narratives) compared to the others. This is only the second time (first time in this particular area) that research of this type has been conducted in the Republic of North Macedonia and there is an expectation for it to be established as a practice in certain parts of the local self-government units, i.e. the collected data to be translated into interventions at the municipal and regional level. By mapping out the micro-narratives according to their demographic characteristics, the authorities have access to the vast experiences of citizens so that they can look at both the cultural milieu and the habits in the different regions, as well as the individual aspects of dealing with climate change. In this way, through these qualitative data, they can also set the goals that should be achieved through the envisaged measures at the national and local level in the area that research would be conducted in through this instrument combining qualitative and quantitative data.



[Medusa](#), an online platform for girls, women, gender and sexual minorities and any other individuals who are committed to listening, learning and living as feminists, also relied on the use of online questionnaires in the course of 2021. In fact, they published online questionnaires on 10 occasions where stories and experiences on the topics of catcalling, discrimination, mobbing, gender-based violence, the first lesbian kiss, etc. could be shared anonymously and are available at this [link](#). This type of research, relying on micro-narratives, is less useful in making conclusions or decisions, i.e. it does not focus on discovering the will of the minority or majority groups as decisive entities, but shines a light on the personal experience of each citizen as a central point of interest. The anonymity of these questionnaires is what lends authenticity to these stories/experiences so they can reflect the personal perceptions on a certain social issue. Exactly these insights are the nuances that can be offered through an intersectional approach in the planning processes for policies, programmes and measures.

### **Potential points for improvement of the strategic documents in relation to gender mainstreaming**

There are three key potential points for improvement that stand out in the analysis of the strategic documents focusing on their content/design, which will be listed in the following text. In addition to these three potential points for improvement in relation to the programmatic part, it is also worth to mention the so-called institutional coordination fatigue, i.e. uneven diligence in managing the implementation of the processes arising from the needs of the legislation or the national strategic and action documents. This so-called “coordination fatigue” is mentioned in the sense that different institutions are at varying levels in terms of their professional capacities, human resources, and some of the institutions of the state administration have lower capacities compared to the other stakeholders and institutions involved in the implementation of a certain program/plan/strategy. The key points for improvement that were detected with the analysis are: 1. Structural, i.e. the text of the strategic and action documents does not follow a unified pattern; 2. Planning funds and sources of funds; 3. Interagency process of drafting strategic documents; 3. Lack of qualitative and quantitative gender-disaggregated data as a means to verify the planning process.

The structural aspects of the points for improvement of the analysed action plans, operational or implementation plans that should be prepared, if not in parallel, then at least after the finalization of the strategic documents, are mainly based on the fact that they lack the format/form in which the necessary information for an action document would be inserted. Although this is a legitimate way to plan the funds in the sense that national institutions are in fact the key social actors, still clearly defined activities, indicators and goals for each of the above-listed planning documents would be useful to both parties, as well as donors (including the business sector) who are willing to support the development of the Republic of North Macedonia, but also to the national institutions themselves. Unifying the format of the planning documents would simplify the work of national stakeholders involved in the planning process, but also the implementation of agreed goals and activities, and adds room for manoeuvre to create nuanced policies. This is probably due to the fact that the set format/template and the planning and implementation process relies on the capacity of the public administration and, of course, on the political will to implement the agreed activities and achieve the expected results. The analysis shows that the format of each strategic document within the state administration is recommended and described in the aforementioned Strategic Planning Manual, which also recommends the preparation process and the analyses that should precede the drafting of those documents.

The inter-ministerial co-operation and joint contribution strengthen the prevalence of certain key cross-cutting issues, such as strengthening the position of women, sustainable environment and transformation of vulnerable groups. However, the Venn diagram of institutions is not sufficiently homogeneous. The ministries and the other institutions separately have different levels of diligence and capacity, and not all of them are always able to provide a quick response or be available for rapid

coordination with the other stakeholders. This affects the quality of the national strategic documents in several different ways: due to the different levels of diligence, capacity and education they address the policy areas in a narrower sense, i.e. it is necessary to instil capacity and sensitivity in advance so that they are able to address the strategic goals and their outcomes in a broader sense. This potential point for improvement can be detected through analysis of the available strategic documents from the Ministry of Health, where the [Mental Health Strategy 2018-2025](#) and the [Drug Strategy 2014 - 2020](#) neglect the gender aspect and the aspect of the environment and climate change exactly at a point in time when they have increased impact on human health and living conditions. Despite the fact that they were prepared in the run-up to the COVID-19 pandemic, the inclusion of gender mainstreaming in these strategic documents and the implications on the mental health of the population are potential points for improvement of these strategic documents in the upcoming period.

The last point for improvement that this document was tasked with pointing out is the absence of a unified system for collection of gender-disaggregated data, apart from the State Statistical Office, whose primary activity is exactly that. In fact, despite the legal obligation of the institutions that are active in the area of public interest to collect and publish gender disaggregated data, they most often do not comply with this requirement and no gender-disaggregated databases are available in the communication channels of the entities acting in the area of public interest. As previously mentioned, Article 18 of the Law on Equal Opportunities stipulates that all institutions, organizations and general stakeholders who act in the area of public interest should collect gender-disaggregated data. The absence of this practice so that these data would be publicly available and introduced into the planning process significantly affects the intersectional potential of any strategic document, i.e. the having this practice in place would allow for planning processes that would be nuanced and enable the transformation and strengthening of the role of women in society. In addition to enabling more comprehensive strategic and planning documents, they would make it possible for the working groups to become additionally sensitized about gender equality as a cross-cutting issue, which needs to be perceived in a broader sense, not just within the social or economic context.

In addition to the points for improvement listed above, for a perspective of increased intersectionality in the national strategic and action documents, it would be necessary for the documents to explore the areas in which their joint effort could contribute to a positive change at all stages. For example, the [Youth Strategy prepared by the Agency for Youth and Sports \(2016 - 2025\)](#)[19] does not take into account the social potential of sports activities, i.e. it treats sports in the context of competitions and representation at European and international competitions. A second example is the [Poverty Reduction Strategy \(2010 - 2020\)](#), [20] which legitimately identifies the social aspects that affect the economic status of a person or household, yet fails to take into account the energy poverty, or the costs incurred due to the energy inefficiency of households. In the context of the impact of climate change and the adaptation and mitigation of its effects, taking into account these effects on the economic status of citizens would have unequivocally affected the inclusion of vulnerable groups of citizens when creating the activities and indicators in the action plan for this strategy.

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[19] [Agency for Youth and Sport of the Republic of North Macedonia; Youth Strategy \(2016 - 2025\)](#)

[20] [Ministry of Labour and Social Policy of the Republic of North Macedonia \(2010 – 2020\), Poverty Reduction Strategy](#)

## Observed progress with regards to intersectional inclusion in the drafting of strategic documents

It is worth noting that the strategic and national documents that have been developed over the past 10 years also boast strengths, meaning that there is evident progress in terms of the intersectionality of the documents, i.e. the more recent the documents are, the more institutional stakeholders from different sectors have been involved in their preparation. Hence, the previous and the current strategies on drugs significantly differ in terms of the institutional actors involved, specifically in terms of which sector the contribution to the drafting of the strategies comes from. In this context, the most recent strategy on drugs from 2014 includes private psychiatric clinics and academic scientific institutions.

For example, the [National Strategy on Drugs of the Republic of Macedonia \(2006-2012\)](#) provides the **following list of included institutional stakeholders**: the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Finance, the Customs Administration, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy, the Ministry of Justice, the Agency for Youth and Sports, the Psychiatric Hospital - Skopje, the Addiction Treatment Center Kisela Voda - Skopje, the Macedonian Red Cross, the Network of Non-Governmental Organizations active in the field of drugs[21]; while the list in the [new strategy for 2014 – 2022](#)[22] has been expanded with the Ministry of Local Self-Government and the Secretariat for European Affairs from the executive branch. In addition, the following institutes and clinics from the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius University” – Skopje had been consulted: the Institute of Forensic Medicine, the Institute of Epidemiology and Biostatistics, the Psychiatry Clinic, the Toxicology Clinic, whereby private health organizations specializing in psychiatry were included as well: “Helio Medika”, “Dr. Gramov”, “Evromedika” from Skopje.

Currently, the Strategy for Gender Equality 2021 - 2026 is being finalized, which for the first time contains a chapter with the title “Women and Climate Change”, as well as the [Long-term Climate Action Strategy with an Action Plan](#), which treats gender equality as a cross-cutting issue. In the secondary package of measures to be implemented by the Government and the line ministries, together with the academic institutions and non-governmental organizations, gender equality is stipulated in two measures: in the support for the development of a legal framework and financial mechanisms for protection of groups vulnerable to climate change, including women, children, the elderly and people with disabilities and enabling the active participation of the affected communities in the decision-making related to climate change and equal participation of women and men[23], and in Specific Objective 8: Key aspects of climate change in the future national strategic planning documents related to education, research, development and innovation, social inclusion and equal opportunities for women and men[24].

Recently, [The Revised Programme for Reform in Employment and Social Policy](#) was prepared, where the key target groups were highlighted, but further emphasis was placed on the interventions aimed at improving the state of employment of the Roma community. In addition, the program relies on gender-disaggregated data[25].

[21] Ministry of Health; “National Drug Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia”; p.2

[22] Petrushevska, Tatjana; “National Drug Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia” Ministry of Health (Sector for Controlled Substances), p. 2

[23] [Ministry of Environment; Long-Term Climate Action Strategy with an Action Plan; p. 62](#)

[24] Ibid. p. 24

[25] [Government of the Republic of North Macedonia; Revised Programme for Employment and Social Policy Reform](#)

Apart from this feature, the second trait of the more recent strategic and action documents, which is directly correlated to the first one, is the increased level of intersectionality, which means increased cross-sectoral cooperation. For example, the [National Nature Strategy 2017 - 2027](#)<sup>[26]</sup> and the [Environment and Climate Change Strategy 2014 - 2020](#) did not include gender mainstreaming in their planning, unlike the aforementioned Long-Term Climate Action Strategy, which was prepared in 2020. The current working groups usually include 10 representatives from the stakeholder institutions who provide their contribution. In the section of strategic and planning documents from the socio-economic areas, a special contribution is given by the so-called gender machinery, which is represented by a coordinator for equal opportunities and a deputy coordinator for equal opportunities in each state administration body (SAB) and the local self-government units (LSGU).

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[26] [Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, National Nature Strategy 2017 - 2027](#)

## Recommendations to the state actors



The key recommendation to the state actors is that the inclusion of gender mainstreaming needs to be treated as a cross-cutting issue, i.e. it should not be singled out as an issue related only to social affairs and social relations, but the intersectional approach should be applied and included in areas that do not arise from social issues, such as the environment, climate change, agriculture and forestry. The intersectional approach and advocacy efforts to treat gender equality as a cross-cutting issue should necessarily arise from and further strengthen the existing efforts through insight into gender-disaggregated data, which would provide the country baseline in terms of gender equality.

### Central government



- Enhanced cooperation with SAB (state administration bodies) and LSGU (local self-government units) in relation to them providing publicly available gender-disaggregated data
- Including the coordinators (and their deputies) for equal opportunities from SAB and LSGU in the working groups drafting the national strategic documents
- Including the coordinators (and their deputies) for equal opportunities from SAB and LSGU in the sectoral working groups that work on programming the IPA funds and gender impact analysis
- Developing trainings/modules specially designed for public administration employees in order for them to be able to undertake gender mainstreaming and present the existing institutional design on decreasing gender inequality
- Enhancing the SAB and LSGU reporting form on the progress in the field of equal opportunities submitted to the MLSP in order for it to include an intersectional approach, i.e. address gender equality in a broader sense

### Local self-government



- Include the coordinators (and their deputies) for equal opportunities within their LSGUs in the process of creation of documents relevant at the municipal and regional level
- Include the coordinators (and their deputies) for equal opportunities in the working groups within their LSGUs in the areas and working groups that are not directly related to social and economic issues
- Strengthened and enhanced role of the commissions for equal opportunities in terms of an intersectional approach, and, above all, their involvement in the area of energy efficiency, sustainable environment and municipal infrastructure interventions

