

SHADOW REPORT

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

January – December 2021





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SHADOW REPORT FROM MONITORING WORK AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION, SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021

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ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ НА СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА ОБРАЗОВАНИЕ, СОЦИЈАЛНА ПОЛИТИКА И ВРАБОТУВАЊЕ ЈАНУАРИ – ДЕКЕМВРИ 2021

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FOREWORD

SUMMARY ON PERFORMANCE OF SECTOR WORKING GROUPS IN 2021

Shadow Reports from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Groups in 2019, 2020 and 2021 were developed under the hypothesis that SWGs are important bodies responsible for sector policy creation and monitoring in the Republic of North Macedonia and serve as forum for coordination of donor support for policy implementation.

The sector-wide approach was indicated as comprehensive approach for IPA II, used to assess and determine the state's qualification level in terms of utilization of IPA assistance for full sector support, and was followed by formation of sector working groups over the period 2015-2020. With the start of IPA III programming for the period 2021-2027, institutions continued the sector-wide approach and operation of sector working groups.

While, in formal terms, sector working groups have potential to be policy makers in relevant sectors, SWG monitoring findings in 2021 indicate to regression in terms of their functionality, civil society participation and effects from their work. Modest improvement is noted in respect to transparency in operation, having in mind that institutions responded to more than 85% of information requests made under the instrument for free access to public information, accounting for an improvement by more than 4% compared to 2020. Openness is also noted in terms of increased communication, especially because in 2021 representatives from all 12 SWGs accepted invitations for interview with the project team that monitors their work and performance.

Based on the analysis of meetings held by SWGs, total of 251 responses made by institutions under the instrument



for free access to public information, 12 interviews with IPA coordinators and discussions with 26 civil society organizations that participate in sector groups, flagship monitoring findings on performance of SWGs in 2021 concern the following:

- In 2021, SWGs held a total of 11 plenary sessions and 8 operational meetings, representing a decrease compared to 2020 findings, when they held a total of 19 plenary sessions and 21 operational meetings.
- None from 12 SWGs has complied with the minimum number of plenary sessions on annual level stipulated in their respective rules of procedure or draft rules of procedure, while 4 sector groups¹ did not hold any plenary session during 2021.
- In the case of 5 from 12 sector groups, civil society organizations have not participated in SWG work during 2021. In the case of 4 SWGs, civil society participation was absent due to the fact that the relevant sector group has not held any meeting, while one sector group has not invited civil society organizations to participate in its work.²
- SWGs that have held plenary session and invited civil society organizations to attend these meeting did not fully update data on civil society representatives resulting in invitations being sent to erroneous or non-existing e-mail addresses, which additionally narrows the space for civil society participation.
- Although IPA III Regulation anticipates that civil society organizations should be given space for meaningful participation in IPA programming and sector policy development, in the practice there is no actual space for substantial engagement of civil society organizations during plenary sessions and involvement of civil society representatives in operational meetings organized by SWGs.
- While donor coordination is anticipated as part of activities performed by sector working groups, the monitoring tools did not observe agenda items for SWG meetings held in 2021 that focus on donor coordination matters.

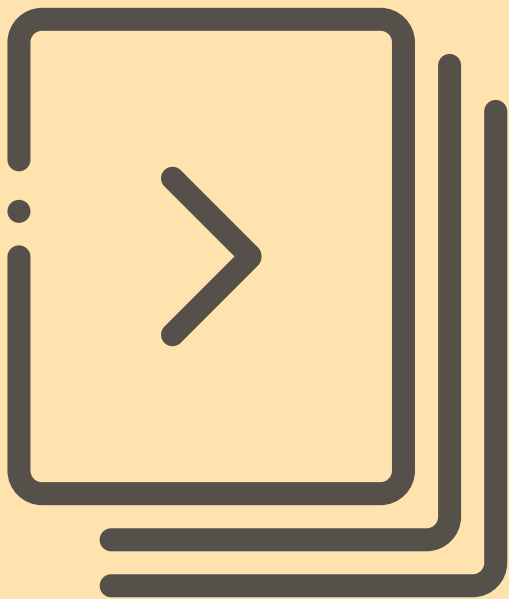
1 SWG Justice, SWG Public Administration Reform, SWF Roma Integration and SWG Home Affairs

2 SWG Competitiveness and Innovation

Based on the established state-of-play, encouraging steps have been made in 2021 towards enhanced structural dialogue. In particular, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) initiated the process for amending the rules of procedures for SWGs in order to improve their overall performance and regulate civil society and donor participation. During interviews with representatives from competent institutions it was underlined that they are open to changing the rules of procedure with a view to regulate participation and role of civil society organizations in greater details. Expectations are that predictability of SWG dynamics and functionality will be improved in 2022, by creating the indicative calendar for meetings of all SWGs and by publishing information on phases for future IPA programming, as well as relevant documents for sector policies. Based on responses obtained from civil society organizations, evident is the request for their participation at the level of technical meetings that would allow them to be involved in all stages of policy development and adoption.

HOW TO MOVE FORWARD?

SEA must urgently open consultations around the new rules of procedures for SWGs, which should include provisions that improve meaningful participation of civil society organizations, primary by ensuring availability and access to materials and information of operational nature, as well as by organizing inception training for new representatives to ensure thorough understanding of sector policy processes and IPA programming. These trainings should also target civil society representatives from Sector Monitoring Committees. The new rules of procedure should regulate in details the procedure for selection and work of civil society representatives, including the method for consultations with the broader civil society. Adherent actions are needed to implement plans aimed at improving participation, work predictability and transparency of SWGs.



GENERAL INFORMATION

SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON EDUCATION, SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT

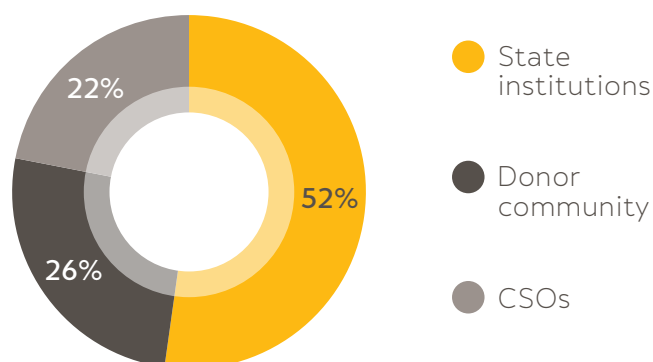
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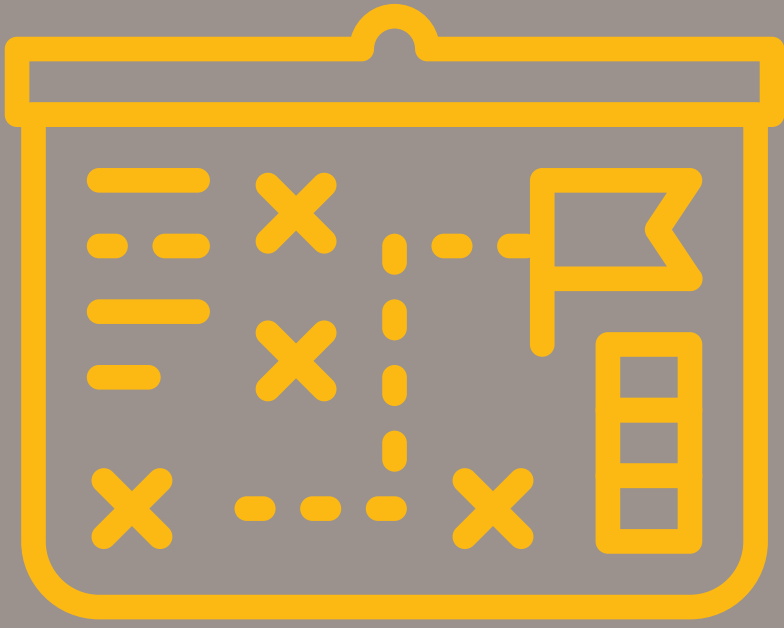
NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS: 97, institutions x 51 members, civil society organizations x 21 members and donor community x 25 members

NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2021: 2 plenary sessions, on 25.05.2021 and 30.06.2021

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

CHART 1.
Distribution of various representatives in SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment





METHODOLOGY APPROACH

For the purpose of this report, the project team combined several research methods for data collection, processing and analysis. Research work was comprised of desk analysis and field/online research.

The desk research component included in-depth analysis of documents, laws and strategies that are of significance for this sector working group (*for more information see [BIBLIOGRAPHY](#)*). Moreover, the project team submitted **22 freedom of information requests** to the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy as institutions competent for this sector group. Responses to all 22 information requests were disclosed in timely and complete manner.

As regards field/online component, the project team **interviewed**³ the coordinator of civil servants at the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, and conducted an **interview**⁴ with representative from civil society organizations that participate in the sector working group. While the methodology approach anticipates organization of focus group, small number of civil society organizations attended SWG meetings in 2021 and therefore only one member from the line of civil society organizations accepted the invitation for interview.

In addition to interviews, the project team was invited to observe both sessions held by the sector group, organized online on 25.05.2021 and 30.06.2021.

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;

³ Interview with coordinators from the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Labour and Social labour was conducted on 18.01.2022

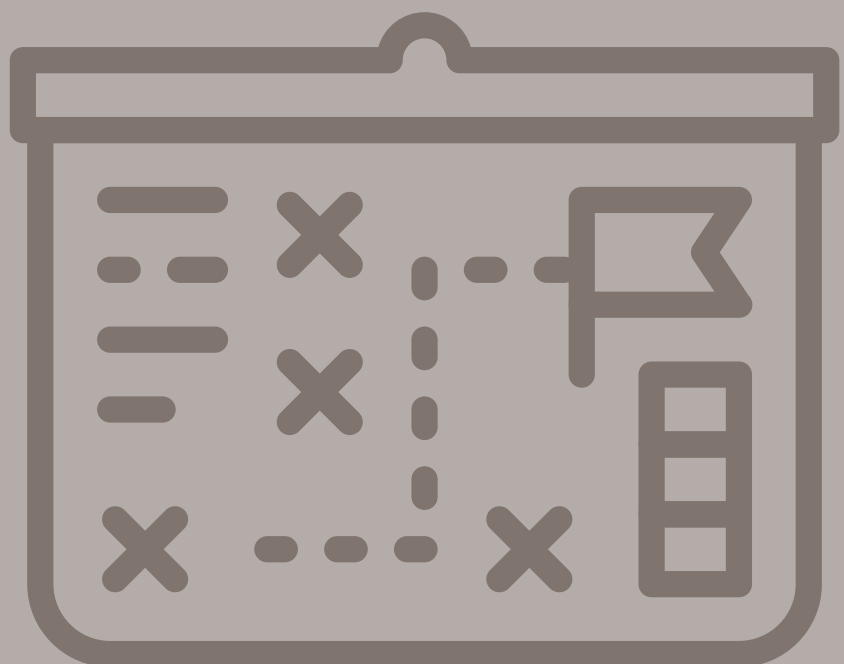
⁴ Interview with civil society representative that participates in SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment was conducted on 01.02.2022.

- effects from SWG work; and
- IPA.



Based on the methodology for monitoring work and effects of sector working groups, performance of SWGs in all these five segments is measured against 31 standards and 21 indicators. Scores calculated for these standards (1 is the lowest and 3 is the highest) are used to assess progress in work of all sector working groups at annual level.

Nevertheless, having in mind that five of twelve SWGs did not hold plenary sessions in 2021 and given that most standards and indicators are directly related to SWG meetings, unlike last year, this monitoring report does not include scores for individual segments of SWG performance. This method is applied to all SWGs, including those that have held plenary sessions in 2021, in order to maintain same approach to assessment of all 12 sector working groups.





PART 1

SECTOR POLICIES

In 2021, MES and MLSP drafted several changes to strategically important policies in the sectors on education, social policy and employment. Having in mind the volume of developed and already adopted laws and programs, this part of the report refers on all three areas of competences for this sector working group individually.

EDUCATION

In 2021, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) drafted three new legal solutions that are of importance for the education sector. They concern the [Law on Adult Education](#),⁵ [Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching and Didactic Materials in Primary and Secondary Education](#)⁶ and [Law on Vocational Education and Training](#).⁷ All of them are completely new law texts developed in the course of 2021. The Proposed Law on Adult Education is currently in parliamentary procedure, while

- 5 The process for drafting the Law on Adult Education started on 01.11.2019 and is available on ENER: https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=55565
- 6 The process for drafting the Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching and Didactic Materials in Primary and Secondary Education started on 03.03.2021 and is available on ENER: https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=64178
- 7 The process for drafting the Law on Vocational Education and Training started on 18.04.2021 and is available on ENER: https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=66198



the new Proposed Law on Textbooks and Other Teaching and Didactic Materials in Primary and Secondary Education was withdrawn from parliamentary procedure in July 2021.⁸ As regards the Law on Vocational Education and Training, all public debates are completed and this piece of legislation is expected to be adopted in 2022. In addition to new legislation, MES drafted amendments to series of other laws that are in parliamentary procedure, such as:

- Law on Amending the Law on Teachers and Expert Associates in Primary and Secondary Education;
- Law on Amending the Law on the Bureau for Development of Education;
- Law on Amending the Law on Education Inspection;
- Law on Amending the Law on Primary Education;
- Law on Amending the Law on Innovation;
- Law on Amending the Law on Higher Education (on proposal from group of MPs);
- Law on Amending the Law on Scientific and Research Activity (on proposal from group of MPs).

Most amendments and new legal solutions are based on the ministry's strategic priorities, mainly noted in the Education Strategy 2018-2025,⁹ but also in individual concept documents such as the concept for primary education, adopted in March 2021.¹⁰

While most of these legislative amendments and new solutions are still in parliamentary procedure and are not adopted yet, it should be noted that changes to the Law on Subsidized Student Meals were adopted on 30.06.2021.¹¹ In particular, changes to this law arise from the concept for subsidizing student meals, whereby the initial model anticipated greater control and conditions for economic operators that would service student meals. Under the changes adopted, all regular students

8 "Proposed Law on Textbooks Withdrawn from the Parliament", fakulteti.mk, published on 01.07.2021, available at: <https://www.fakulteti.mk/news/01072021/predolog-zakonot-za-ucebnici-povlechen-od-sobranie-kje-odi-na-nova-javna-rasprava>

9 Education Strategy 2018-2025, MES, available at: <http://mrk.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Strategija-za-obrazovanie-MAK-WEB.pdf>

10 Concept for Primary Education, MES, available at: <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Koncepcija%20MK.pdf>

11 Decree on proclamation of the Law on Amending the Law on Subsidized Student Meals, "Official Gazette" no. 150 from 05.07.2021, available at: <https://www.mf.ukim.edu.mk/sites/default/files/Zakon%20za%20izmena%20i%20dopolnuvanje%20na%20Zakon%20za%20subvencioniran%20studentski%20obrok.pdf>

are entitled to 2,400 MKD over a period of 9 months in the year, paid to their bank accounts, which results in lost opportunity for greater control over funds and the purpose for which they can be used.

As regards strategy programs and plans, a series of documents were adopted in 2021 and those important for the education sector include:

- Ministry of Education and Science's Strategic Plan 2022-2024;
- 2021 Program for Implementation and Development of Pupil Standard Activity;
- 2021 Program for Implementation and Development of Student Standard Activity;
- 2021 Program for Construction and Reconstruction of Primary Schools;
- 2021 Program for Construction and Reconstruction of Secondary Schools;
- Concept for Primary Education;
- National Standards on Student Performance by End of Primary Education;
- Standards on Intercultural Education in Primary Education.

Some of these documents are standard annual programs adopted by the ministry, but it is important to underline the ministry's **strategic plan for the period 2022-2024**,¹² **concept for primary education**,¹³ and developed standards on intercultural education in primary education, which are the key strategy documents that guide next steps of the ministry in the education sector in the future years.

SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT

One of key strategy documents of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP) 2020-2022. This document outlines the main aspects of the

¹² Strategic Plan 2022-2024, MES, available at: <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Strateshki%20plan%20%202022-2024.pdf>

¹³ Concept for Primary Education, MES, available at: <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Koncepcija%20MK.pdf>



ministry's goals in the sectors on social policy and employment, and includes projection of steps in respect to changes under other sector policies falling within the ministry's competences. Hence, it is important to note that the first plenary session held by this sector group in 2021 discussed the **annual report** on implementation of this strategy document.¹⁴

In 2021, the ministry developed a completely new piece of legislation (Law on Material Security of Unemployed Persons Due to Privatization of Predominantly State-Owned Enterprises) and six amendments to other laws important in the sectors on social policy and employments, as follows:

- Law on Amending the Law on Youth Allowance; Закон за изменување и дополнување на Законот за волонтерство
- Law on Amending the Law on Volunteering;
- Law on Amending the Law on Labour Relations;
- Law on Amending the Law on Child Protection;
- Law on Amending the Law on Social Protection;
- Law on Amending the Law on Employment and Work of Foreigners.¹⁵

As regards strategic plans and strategies, in 2021 the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy adopted the following documents:

- National Strategy on Employment 2021-2027, with Action Plan on Employment 2021-2023;
- National Strategy on Formalization of Informal Economy 2021-2022;
- National Strategy on Development of Social Enterprises in RNM 2021-2027 and Action Plan 2021-2023;
- Strategy for Promotion of Volunteering 2021-2025 and Implementation Action Plan 2021-2025;

¹⁴ Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, 2020 Annual Report on Implementation of the Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme, May 2021, available at https://mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/SRGrupa/Aneks4_izvestaj_samoocena_prilog1_revidirana.pdf

¹⁵ Laws are available on the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's website: <https://mtsp.gov.mk/zakoni.nsp>

- Strategy on Gender Equality 2021-2026;
- 2021 Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures and Labour Market Services;
- Revised 2021 Operational Plan for Active Employment Programs and Measures and Labour Market;
- 2022 Program for Development of Child Protection Activity;
- 2022 Program on Implementation of Social Protection Activity.¹⁶

Most of these programs arise from legal solutions in effects and ESRP 2020-2022. In the case of legislation, some amendments are of technical character and address gaps identified in law implementation, while other imply essential changes, like amendments to the Law on Labour Relation that has undergone meaningful changes in terms of the government's goal to declare Sundays non-working days for majority of workers, including increased wages for professions that would decide to work on Sundays.

It is important to note that among all documents enlisted above, only the 2020 evaluation report on implementation of ESRP was discussed at both plenary sessions held by this sector group in 2021.

¹⁶ Enlisted documents are available on the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's website: <https://mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti.nsp>



PART 2

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment was formed in 2017 and its rules of procedure have not been changed since their adoption. Having in mind that the rules of procedure were not changed in 2021, this document remains to govern operation of this sector group.

As noted in 2020, SWG membership remained unchanged in 2021 as well. Total number of invited SWG members stands at 97, of which 51 are representatives from institutions, 21 members come from civil society organizations and the donor community is represented with 25 members. Members from state institutions are regularly updated in compliance with changes at competent institutions, and the same is valid in the case of donor community representatives. On the other hand, data and members from civil society organizations are not updated.

In 2021, SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment held two plenary sessions. The first session took place on 25.05.2021, and the second was held on 30.06.2021. As regards compliance with the provision from SWG rules of procedures concerning distribution of invitations with draft agenda ten days in advance of scheduled



meetings, it could be noted that this obligation was not respected by this sector working group. In particular, the sector group acted contrary to this provision in respect to sending invitations for the second plenary session, whereby invitations were sent on 24 June,¹⁷ i.e. only seven days before the scheduled meeting. Moreover, SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment did not comply with article 11, item 2 of the rules of procedure, which regulates the dynamics of SWG meetings, i.e. one meeting every three months. In essence, this provision stipulates organization of four meetings per year, but in 2021 this sector working group has met only twice. In addition to these technical remarks, the project team also noted that some e-mail addresses of civil society organizations are erroneous, whereby not all civil society representatives received meeting invitations, although they have the status of SWG members.

Having in mind abovementioned technical obstacles that emerged in enforcement of SWG rules of procedure, representatives from MLSP and MES indicated to the need for revision of the rules of procedure. On one side, compliance with provisions in effect is important for them, but in practice it is difficult to enforce these provisions due to overburdened agendas of SWG co-chairs (ministers) and unpredictable work dynamics on strategy documents falling within the realm of this sector group. According to representatives from MLSP and MES, equally important is definition of SWG goals, i.e. whether this group will serve as platform for discussing all strategy policies or keep its current form. On the other hand, the interviewed civil society representative, who has attended both plenary sessions, stressed the need for more detailed regulation of civil society membership, method for selection of civil society representatives and internal coordination among civil society organizations. Guaranteed number of SWG meetings is an important segment, but in her opinion, more important are crucial issues related to documents discussed at SWG meetings and how can civil society organizations ensure greater involvement and participation.

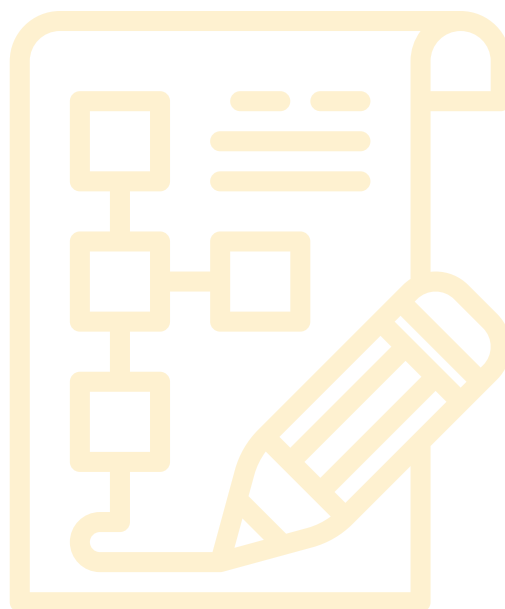
In December 2021, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) initiated a meeting with representatives from all institutions that chair sector working groups to present and discuss the new draft rules of procedures for all 12 SWGs. For more information on planned amendments to the rules of procedure and the process for their adoption see [FOREWORD](#).

¹⁷ Invitation for plenary session received in electronic form.

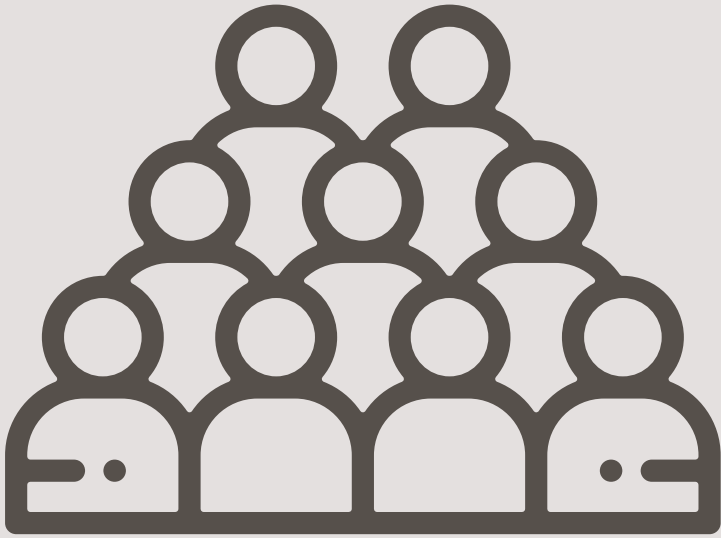
Transparency of SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment is relatively high, especially with the introduction of direct distribution of SWG meeting minutes to all members. At the same time, the project team noted continuation of previous practice for publishing working materials, agendas and accompanying documents on the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy's website.¹⁸ Hence, it could be concluded that this practice provides an excellent example for other ministries that chair other sector working groups.

2.2 ANNUAL PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK REPORT

SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment does not develop annual plans and annual work reports. These documents are not anticipated in SWG rules of procedures.



¹⁸ Materials related to work of SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment are available at: <https://mtsp.gov.mk/srg-obrazovanie-vrabotuvanje-i-socijalna-politika.nspx>

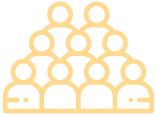


PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Civil society organizations with representatives in SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment remained unchanged in 2021, as follows:

- Reactor – Research in Action;
- Macedonian Anti-Poverty Platform;
- Federation of Trade Unions in Macedonia;
- Association of Employers of Macedonia;
- Macedonian Center for Civic Education;
- Foundation Step-by-Step;
- Nansen Dialogue Center – Skopje;
- Resource Center;
- Coalition of Youth Organizations SEGA;
- Foundation Agro-Center for Education;
- IPA Mechanism;



- Union of Independent and Autonomous Trade Unions of Macedonia;
- Business Confederation of Macedonia;
- Romalitico;
- REDl;
- Roma Education Fund – Macedonia;
- Sumnal; and
- INSOK.

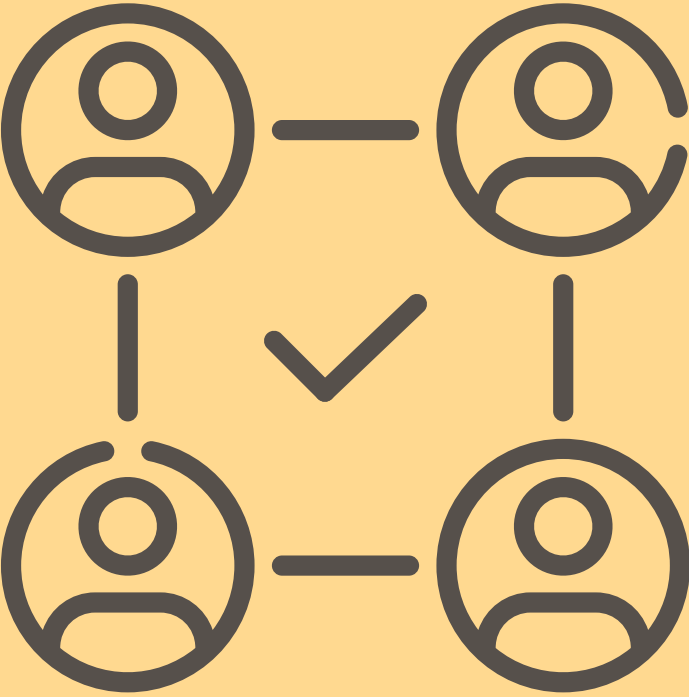
Nevertheless, civil society participation in SWG meetings held during 2021 is relatively low. One reason thereof is identified in erroneous e-mail addresses of civil society representatives, and while majority of civil society organizations have been neatly invited, some of them did not receive such invitations.

Representatives from competent ministries agree that space is provided for civil society participation, but depending on topics discussed, their contribution is often lacking. On the other hand, the interviewed civil society representative reported difficulties in monitoring this sector group, as well as the fact that SWG discussions usually concern already finalized products, which are difficult to be commented within the short time period allowed for that purpose. One of main challenges in 2021 concerned organization of online sessions, whereby representatives from competent ministries and civil society representative agree that online format of sessions has reduced space for discussions.

As noted in 2020, this working group has developed practices for civil society participation and provides space for involvement of civil society representatives. However, there is still room for improvements in terms of updating SWG membership, broader consultations for documents produced, and more detailed regulation of competences of civil society representatives in SWG rules of procedure.

Although SWG meetings in 2021 concerned discussion of one strategy document, civil society organizations were involved in development of above-enlisted strategy documents through specific working groups formed for that purpose.





PART 4

CSO CAPACITY

Capacity of civil society representatives has not changed compared to 2019 and 2020, especially having in mind the continuity of civil society organizations that are involved in this sector working group from its formation.

As noted in 2020, civil society organizations believe they are well prepared in topics covered by this sector working group, but there is great potential for increasing their participation in topics which they might not cover in their respective areas of operation. Hence, it is important to regulate SWG membership and cover more CSOs profiled in this sector for the purpose of securing greater quality of possible comments and creation of comprehensive policies in the sectors on education, social policy and employment. On the other hand, similarly to the civil society representative, interviewed representatives from state institutions noted that additional cooperation before and after SWG meetings is of crucial importance, primarily with a view to ensure greater involvement of organizations with relevant expertise that might not be part of this sector working group.

Unpredictability of processes and SWG work dynamics continue to be one of main challenges for full utilization of civil society capacity, both for the civil society sector and the state institutions. Hence, it is important to establish a practice for clear definition of steps to be taken by the sector group, as well as topics and documents that will be in the focus of SWG work from the beginning of the year, thereby allowing civil society organizations to prepare and to consult other organizations.



PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

5.1 PLENARY SESSIONS

In 2021, SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment held two plenary sessions.

SWG session held on **25 May 2021** included discussion of the report on implementation of the project for technical reform support “EU for the Youth” and the 2020 report on implementation of the Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP).

On **30 June 2021**, this sector working group held its second plenary session focused on discussing the draft text of IPA III action programme “EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality”.

5.2 OPERATIONAL MEETINGS

In 2021, SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment has organized just one technical meeting, held on 09.03.2021. The topic discussed concerned development of the report on implementation of ESRP 2020-2022. Representatives from civil society organizations are not invited to operational/technical meetings.

Having in mind that civil society representatives do not participate in such meetings, one possible solution to intensify cooperation and to enhance civil society participation is to increase the number of operational meetings and to involve civil society organizations in these meetings. On one hand, that would increase information among civil society organizations, and on the other hand, it would allow state institutions to create policies with greater involvement of the civil society.

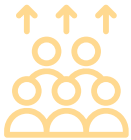
PART 6

INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE IPA III (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 III was introduced with adoption of the Regulation on Establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance and the Regulation on Implementing Rules and Principles for IPA III¹⁹ by the European Union, and is coherent with other funds, programmes and instruments of the Union, primarily the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument. Според структурата, ИПА 3 е поделена на пет прозорци, а секој прозорец се состои од тематски приоритети:

1. Rule of Law, Fundamental Rights and Democracy;
2. Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication;

¹⁹ Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) COM/2018/465 final



3. Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity;
4. Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth;
5. Territorial and Cross-Border Cooperation.

For more information on IPA III programming (2021-2027) see the report [IPA: Cross-Cutting Issue.](#)

6.1 IPA III PROGRAMMING (2021-2027) IN THE SECTORS ON EDUCATION, SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT

IPA III funds anticipated for the sectors on education, social policy and employment are part of WINDOW 4: Competitiveness and Inclusive Growth, thematic priority 1: Education, Employment, Social Protection and Inclusion Policies, and Health. The action document “EU for Quality Employment and Equal Opportunities” is planned for 2022, with total budget of 11.1 million EUR, of which 11 million EUR are contribution from IPA III. Action fiches are still not developed for actions “EU for Jobs and Opportunities” and “EU for Human Capital”, which are planned for implementation in 2023 and 2024, meaning that at the moment these actions are addressed with strategy indicators in the earliest stage and they can be changed in the future.

TABLE 1.

IPA III programming (2021-2027) in the sectors on education, social policy and employment

**WINDOW 4:
COMPETITIVENESS AND INCLUSIVE GROWTH**

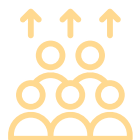
Thematic priority 1: Education, Employment, Social Protection and Inclusion Policies, and Health

Implementation period: 2022

Action	Estimated total budget (million EUR)	Requested contribution from IPA (million EUR)	Implementation plan/arrangement
<u>EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality</u>	11.12	11.0	This action will be implemented under direct management, procurements, including contacts for goods, services and works. The action document and accompanying materials were submitted to the European Commission services in November 2021.

Implementation period: 2023 and 2024

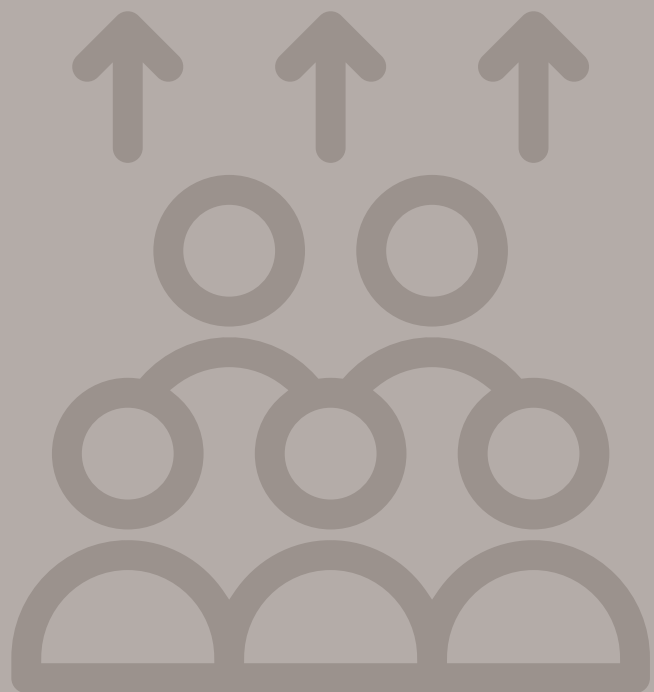
<u>EU for Jobs and Opportunities</u>	13.5	11.0	Direct management
<u>EU for Human Capital</u>	7.5	7.0	Direct management

**TABLE 2.**

2022 Action Document “EU for Improved Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality”

**2022 ACTION DOCUMENT
“EU FOR IMPROVED HEALTH, SOCIAL PROTECTION
AND GENDER EQUALITY”**

Expected outcomes	EU contribution (EUR)	Indicative third party contribution
1. Improved occupational security and health system and practices	2,500,000	0
2. Enhanced effectiveness of the system for prevention and protection of gender-based and domestic violence	1,000,000	120,000
3. Improved quality of social services	1,500,000	0
4. Improved state response to major health threats in the country	6,000,000	0
Total	11,000,000	120,000





PART 7

GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SECTOR WORKING GROUPS

Gender mainstreaming is a process for systematic consideration of implications on women and men from a planned action, including legislation, policy or program, in any area and at all levels.²⁰ In that, the ultimate goal is to achieved gender equality. Within the national legislation of the Republic of North Macedonia, gender mainstreaming is defined under the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men²¹ and represents an obligation for all state bodies and institutions. Failure to incorporate the gender perspective implies adoption of gender-neutral or gender-blind policies that are unable to address existing inequalities and could contribute to deepened gender gaps.

Gender equality is among core values of the European Union.²² At the same time, EU membership is conditioned with respect and

²⁰ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185?lang=mk>

²¹ Article 4, paragraph (1), item 10) of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, “Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia” no. 6/12, 30/13, 166/14, 150/15 and “Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia” no. 53/21.

²² Article 2 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, available at: <https://bit.ly/3s4gijR>



promotion of fundamental European values.²³ The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance in the period 2021-2027 (IPA III) stipulates that implementation of IPA III should be led by the principles of gender equality and enhanced rights of women and girls,²⁴ in line with and aimed at attaining the minimum standards established under the EU's new Gender Action Plan 2021-2025 (GAP III) titled "An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action".²⁵ GAP III is organized into five pillars and the third pillar anticipates activities in six key areas of engagement.²⁶ Moreover, GAP III reflects goals and objectives defined under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.²⁷ On the other hand, IPA III defines gender equality as specific objective, but also thematic priority eligible for support.²⁸ In that, it is stressed that gender equality is a cross-cutting issue that should be adequately reflected and integrated in the overall implementation process.²⁹ Goals of IPA III assistance under the thematic priority on gender equality fully correspond to six areas of engagement from GAP III, which provides an additional indicator for the need for these two documents to be linked. On that account, work within sector groups - that represent forums for interdepartmental cooperation and are competent for creating and implementing national policies and programming, monitoring and evaluating foreign aid - should be guided by and aligned with GAP III. Finally, due consideration should be made of the EU's commitment that, by 2025, at least 85% of all new external actions should include gender equality as important or general goal.³⁰

²³ Ibid. Article 49, paragraph (1)

²⁴ Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529&qid=1643627286827&from=en>

²⁵ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf

²⁶ Ibid. GAP III anticipates activities grouped into six thematic areas: ensuring freedom from all forms of gender-based violence; promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights; strengthening economic and social rights and empowerment of girls and women; advancing equal participation and leadership; implementing the women, peace and security agenda; addressing challenges and harnessing opportunities offered by the green transition and the digital transformation.

²⁷ A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

²⁸ Regulation (EU) 2021/1529 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 15 September 2021 establishing the Instrument for Pre-Accession assistance (IPA III), available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32021R1529&qid=1643627286827&from=en>

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III – An Ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in EU External Action, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf

An important element of the sector approach to gender mainstreaming is building and enhancing technical competences of all stakeholders involved in implementation of sector policies.³¹ Hence, equal importance is assigned to capacity building on gender mainstreaming among policy makers, but also among people involved in policy implementation.

For more information, see [Shadow Report on Gender Mainstreaming in Sector Working Groups](#).

7.1 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SWG EDUCATION, SOCIAL POLICY AND EMPLOYMENT

As noted in the previous two shadow reports, SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment continuously integrates the gender perspective in its work. What is specific for this sector group is that it is chaired by two ministries, i.e. the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) and the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP). In 2021, employees from both ministries attended several trainings on gender-responsive operation organized by the project “Improving Institutionalization of Gender-Responsive Budgeting Through Systemic Gender Mainstreaming in Strategic Planning and Programming by Government Institutions in North Macedonia”, supported by the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UN Women). These trainings were attended by administrative officers at expert or management level and those involved in strategic planning and policy creation at institutions, including coordinators for equal opportunities of women and men. Moreover, SWG members include employees from MLSP’s sector on equal opportunities and MES’s coordinator for equal opportunities. At the same time, this sector group’s composition includes civil society organizations that work on promoting gender equality. Information obtained from competent ministries show that gender perspective was integrated in MES’s Strategic Plan 2021-2023 and that gender analyses have been used in development and formulation of certain measures under the National Strategy on Employment 2021-2023.³²

³¹ EIGE, Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1359?lang=mk>

³² According to information from MLSP, development of the National Strategy on Employment 2021-2023 relied on the analysis: UN Women, N. Mojsoska-Blazevski, J. De Henau, “Investing in a free universal childcare in the Republic of North Macedonia: Analysis of costs, short-term employment effects and fiscal revenue” (2019), available at: <https://bit.ly/3Gosv2w>



Last year, upon previous consultations with members of SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment, IPA operational structure within MLSP developed the 2020 action document “EU for Improved Health, Social Policy and Gender Equality”. Actions and projects planned under the draft action document were presented at the plenary session held by this sector group on 30.06.2021. Gender equality is defined as primary objective in this action document. Projects planned therein are targeting the area of occupational safety and health, support to efforts for addressing gender-based and domestic violence, and improved quality of social services through support for the evaluation and monitoring system, including promotion of the licensing system. Gender desegregated indicators will be used to measure effects of proposed projects. Separate gender analyses were not used or developed for this action document, and instead it relied on administrative data from institutions, statistical data from the State Statistical Office and other publicly available analyses.





FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment should update its membership data, especially e-mail addresses of civil society representatives.
- 2.** Additional participation of civil society organizations in operational/technical meetings and additional meetings between representatives from competent ministries and civil society organizations are needed for the purpose of better exchange of information and predictability of SWG processes.
- 3.** SWG rules of procedure need to be changed in respect to precision of competences for civil society representatives, as well as introduction of the practice for selection of SWG members and development of mandatory annual program and annual work report.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ◆ European Commission's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia
- ◆ Revised Employment and Social Reform Programme (ESRP) 2020-2022 and 2020 annual report on the programme's implementation
- ◆ Draft Performance Assessment Framework Indicators for SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment
- ◆ National Programme for Adoption of the EU Acquis (NPAA) 2021-2025
- ◆ Responses to information requests submitted under the instrument for free access to public information
- ◆ Transcript from the interview with representatives from state institutions that participate in SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment
- ◆ Transcript from the interview with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment
- ◆ Insight into electronic communications with SWG members
- ◆ Rules of Procedure for SWG Education, Social Policy and Employment

