

# SHADOW REPORT

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

*January – December 2021*







THROUGH  
DIALOGUE **TO**  
**EU**

# SHADOW REPORT

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

*January – December 2021*



This project is funded  
by the European Union



**REACTOR**  
research in action

**Center for Civil Communications**  
Центар за граѓански комуникации

**ЕВРОТИНК**  
ЦЕНТАР ЗА  
ЕВРОПСКИ СТРАТЕГИИ

**EUROTHINK**  
CENTER FOR  
EUROPEAN STRATEGIES

## SHADOW REPORT FROM MONITORING WORK AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021

### ORIGINAL TITLE:

ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ НА СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА РЕГИОНАЛЕН И ЛОКАЛЕН РАЗВОЈ ЈАНУАРИ – ДЕКЕМВРИ 2021

### Publisher:

Foundation Open Society – Macedonia

### For the publisher:

Fani Karanfilova Panovska, executive director

### Authors:

Aleksandar Kolekeski

Irina Jolevska, Gender Mainstreaming in Sector Working Groups

### Editors:

Danche Danilovska – Bajdevska

Nada Naumovska

Sandra Anastasovska Kuzmanovski

### Graphic design:

КОМА

### Translation from Macedonian language:

Katerina Dimishkovska

Skopje, 2022

---

CIP - Каталогизација во публикација  
Национална и универзитетска библиотека „Св. Климент Охридски“, Скопје  
35.075.2:341.171(497.7)“2021“(047)

LAZAROV, Goran

Shadow report from monitoring work and effects of the sector working group on regional and local development [Електронски извор] : January – December 2021 / [authors Aleksandar Kolekeski, Irina Jolevska ; translation from Macedonian language Katerina Dimishkovska]. - Skopje : Foundation open society – Macedonia, 2022

Начин на пристапување (URL):

<https://eur01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fdijalogkoneu.mk%2Fen%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2Fsites%2F3%2F2022%2F06%2FREGIONALEN-LOKALEN-RAZVOJ-2021.pdf&data=05%7C01%7C%7C95745e01c1e444d55b608da4e0841fa%7C6dd6692964ee4888a65ab847baf12c47%7C0%7C637908095245913044%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ikl1haWwiLCJXVCi6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C&sd=zwrvVD%2B6etOhBUbZnwEulFJdiprWQgxNVXjs3QQxLJU%3D&reserved=0>

- Превод на делото: Извештај во сенка од следењето на работата и ефектите на секторската работна група за регионален и локален развој :

јануари – декември 2021. - Текст во ПДФ формат, 46 стр., илустр. - Наслов преземен од екранот. - Опис на изворот на ден 20.05.2022. - Фусноти кон текстот. - Библиографија: стр. 46

ISBN 978-608-218-399-2

1. Kolekeski, Aleksandar [автор] 2. Jolevska, Irina [автор]

а) Процес на пристапување во ЕУ -- Секторски работни групи -- Македонија -- 2021 -- Извештаи

COBISS.MK-ID 57423621

---

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

# TABLE OF CONTENT



FOREWORD	5
GENERAL INFORMATION	9
METHODOLOGY APPROACH	11
<b>PART 1: SECTOR POLICIES</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>PART 2: SWG FUNCTIONALITY</b>	<b>21</b>
2.1 Rules of Procedure	21
2.2 Annual plan and annual work report	22
<b>PART 3: CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>PART 4: CSO CAPACITY</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>PART 5: EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK</b>	<b>31</b>
5.1 Plenary sessions and operational meetings	31
<b>PART 6: INSTRUMENT FOR PRE-ACCESSION ASSISTANCE IPA III (2021-2027)</b>	<b>35</b>
6.1 IPA III programming (2021-2027) in the sector on regional and local development	36
<b>PART 7: GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SECTOR WORKING GROUPS</b>	<b>41</b>
7.1 Gender mainstreaming in SWG Regional and Local Development	43
FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	45
BIBLIOGRAPHY	46



# 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 groups<sup>1</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>
- 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.

<sup>1</sup> SWG Justice, SWG Public Administration Reform, SWF Roma Integration and SWG Home Affairs

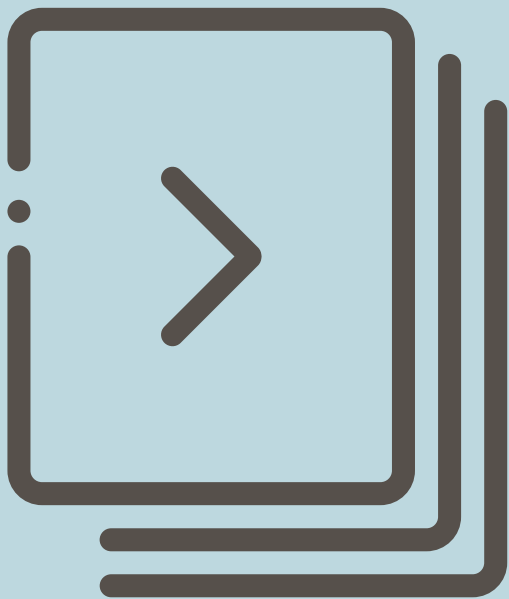
<sup>2</sup> SWG Competitiveness and Innovation



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 REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

**FORMED:** 2019<sup>3</sup>

**NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS:** 45, institutions x 26 members, civil society organizations x 8 members, academic community x 3 members, and donor community x 8 members

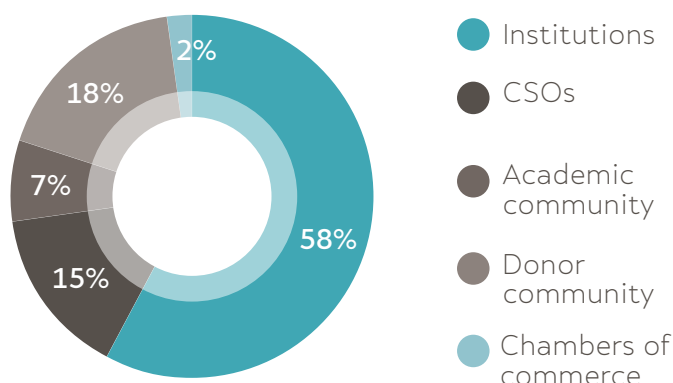
**NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2021:** two plenary sessions, on 04.06.2021 and 06.07.2021

**SWG CHAIR:** Ministry of Local Self-Government

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

### **CHART 1.**

*Distribution of various representatives in SWG Regional and Local Development*



<sup>3</sup> For the second time because SWG Regional and Local Development was first formed in 2016.



# 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 detailed analysis of documents, laws and strategies that are of significance for this sector working group.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, the project team submitted a total of **22 freedom of information requests** to the competent ministry and received neat responses within the law-stipulated deadline.

As regards field/online component, the project team **interviewed**<sup>5</sup> the coordinator from the ranks of civil servants at the Ministry of Local Self-Government, and organized a **focus group**<sup>6</sup> with two civil society representatives that participate in this sector working group.

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

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

4 For more information see BIBLIOGRAPHY.

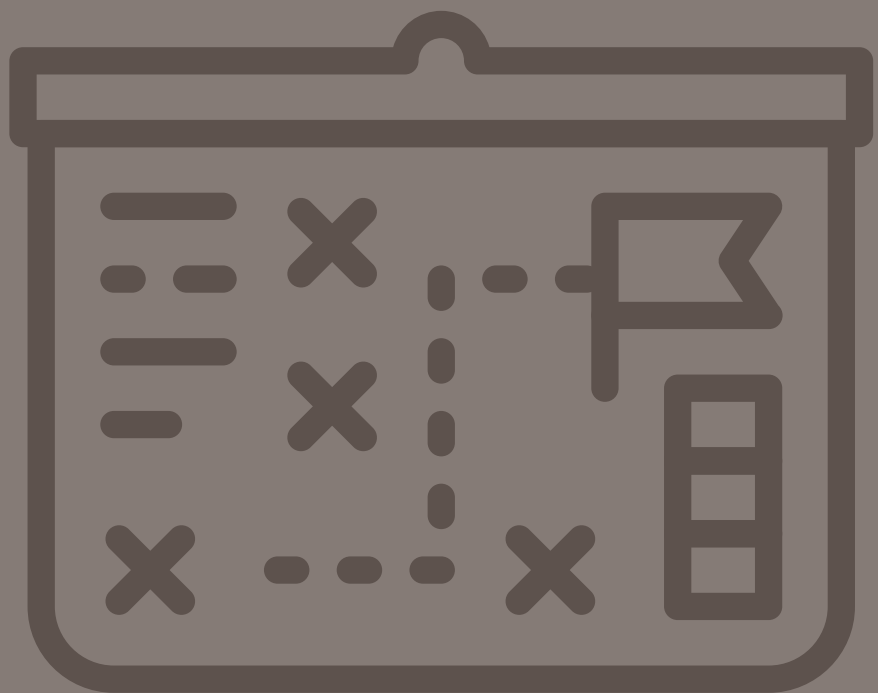
5 Interview with the coordinator from the Ministry of Local Self-Government was conducted on 14.01.2022.

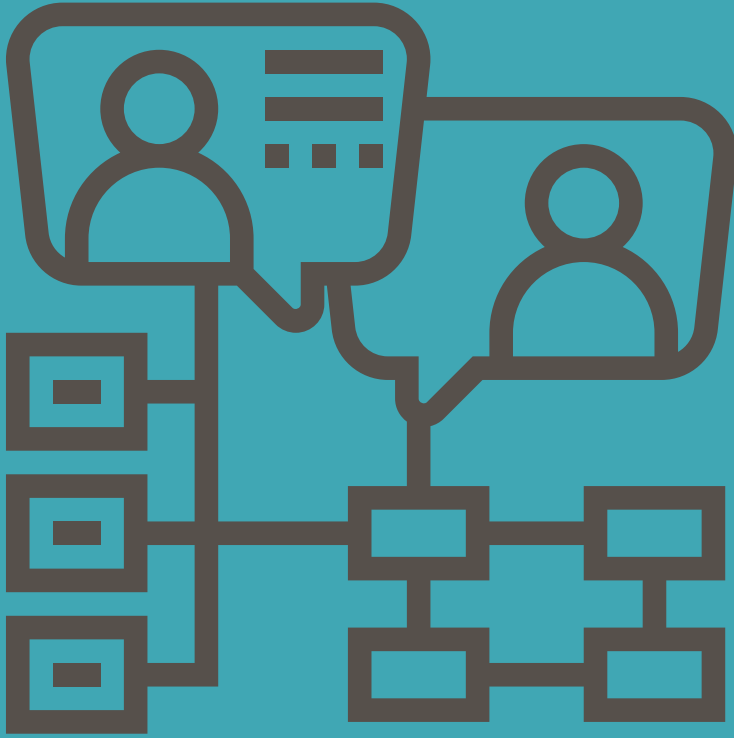
6 Focus group with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Regional and Local Development was held on 24.01.2022.



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 from 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 for all 12 sector working groups.







# PART 1

## SECTOR POLICIES

### European Commission's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia

EC's 2021 report<sup>7</sup> noted that North Macedonia is **moderately prepared** in the area of regional policy and coordination of structural instruments.

**Limited progress** was made over the reporting period, particularly with adoption of the Law on Equitable Regional Development.



<sup>7</sup> European Commission's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=5657>



## **TABLE 1.**

*Key findings from EC's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia in respect to regional and local development*

### **KEY FINDINGS**

1. Regional policy was improved with amendments to the [Law on Equitable Regional Development](#), adopted in January 2021, committing 1% of GDP to regional development, [Strategy on Equitable Regional Development \(2021-2031\)](#) and [national programming for upscaling state funds for regional development](#). The integrated system for planning, management and monitoring national investments in regional development is still in the process of establishment. Progress is needed in respect to decisive, operational and fiscal decentralization.
2. The administrative capacity continued to deteriorate in 2020 and no progress was made in respect to staff retention policy and training and capacity building function.

[EC's 2021 progress report](#) also noted that most recommendations from 2020 remain valid.

## **TABLE 2.**

*Recommendations from EC's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia in respect to regional and local development*

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Upgrade administrative and technical capacity across IPA operating structure, adopt retention policy and put in place permanent capacity-building mechanism for all structures involved in implementation of EU-funded projects, including planning, management and monitoring of infrastructure investments, and particularly for the ongoing projects under the Economic and Investment Plan, such as railway corridor 8 and waste water treatment plant in Skopje, and ensure sustainability of project results;

- 
2. Ensure implementation of the legal and strategic framework on regional development, upgrade local and regional project planning and implementation capacity, and put in place an integrated system for monitoring national investments at local level;
- 
3. Keep fiscal decentralization high on the agenda in order to build long-term sustainable financial framework for municipalities, based on predictable resources and collection of local taxes.
- 

## **DECENTRALIZATION**

The decentralization process is covered under the [Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2021–2026](#),<sup>8</sup> adopted by the Government of North Macedonia on 6 April 2021. Priorities under this program aimed at attainment of the overall objective are grouped into four components, as follows:

- I. Normative framework and local self-government financing;
- II. Innovative and inclusive local economic development;
- III. Quality local services with full population coverage; and
- IV. Enhanced resilience of local governments and sustainable development.

Adopted as single comprehensive planning document, the Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization provides the framework of national benchmarks for implementation of the decentralization process and promotion of sustainable local development.

---

<sup>8</sup> Minutes from the 66th session of the Government of RNM, available at: <https://vlada.mk/2021-066> [last retrieved on 15.12.2021]



## **EQUITABLE REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In the field of regional development, documents adopted in 2021 include the new [Law on Equitable Regional Development](#) and the [Strategy on Regional Development 2021-2031](#)<sup>9</sup>, followed by [7 annual programs for development of planning regions](#).<sup>10</sup>

Moreover, 2021 activities in this sector include organization of regional community forums as tool for identification, priority-setting and development of projects to be financed by MLSG and BRD.<sup>11</sup> In particular, community forums are tool for participatory, transparent and evidence-based decision making, irrespective of the implementation level (local, regional, national) and topics discussed.

## **CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION**

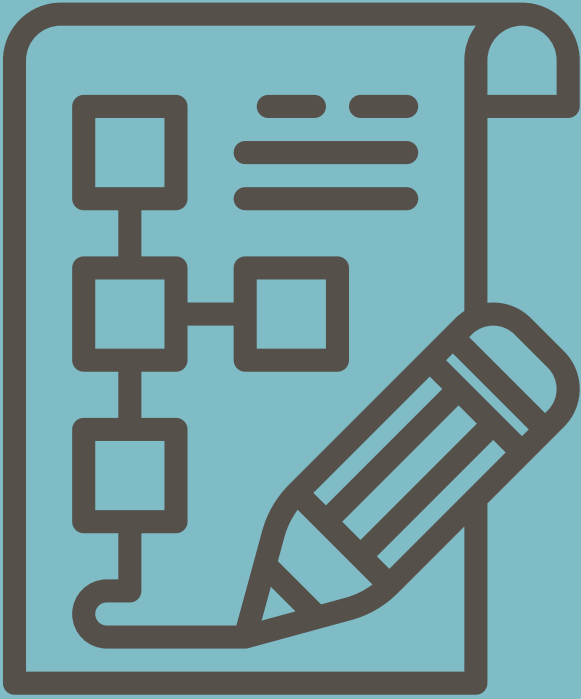
In 2021, projects were implemented under five IPA II Cross-Border Cooperation Programmes: [CBC Kosovo - North Macedonia](#)<sup>12</sup>; [CBC Bulgaria - North Macedonia](#)<sup>13</sup>; [CBC Greece - North Macedonia](#)<sup>14</sup>; [CBC North Macedonia - Albania](#)<sup>15</sup> and [CBC Serbia - North Macedonia](#).<sup>16</sup>

Moreover, 2021 marked the start of activities for priority-setting related to [IPA III programming](#) (2021-2027) in respect to cross-border cooperation:

- 9 Available at: <https://dejure.mk/zakon/strategija-za-regionalen-razvoj-na-republika-severna-makedonija-2021-2031> [last retrieved on 15.12.2021]
- 10 Development Program for the East Planning Region, Development Program for the Northeast Planning Region, Development Program for the Southeast Planning Region, Development Program for the Pelagonija Planning Region, Development Program for the Southwest Planning Region and Development Program for Vardar Planning Region.
- 11 Regional community forums as tool for identification, priority-setting and development of projects for financing by MLSG and BRD, available at: <https://bit.ly/3HC6LBM> [last retrieved on 15.12.2021]
- 12 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Kosovo-North Macedonia, available at: <https://bit.ly/3hGgplh>
- 13 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Bulgaria - North Macedonia, available at: <https://bit.ly/3tmBRas>
- 14 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Greece - North Macedonia, available at: [http://www.ipa-cbc-programme.eu/com/4\\_The-Programme](http://www.ipa-cbc-programme.eu/com/4_The-Programme)
- 15 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme North Macedonia - Albania, available at: <https://ipacbc-mk-al.eu/mk/programa/>
- 16 Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Serbia - North Macedonia, available at: <https://bit.ly/3pBoQJo>

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





# PART 2

## SWG FUNCTIONALITY

### 2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

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

In 2021, SWG Regional and Local Development held two plenary sessions, on 04.06.2021 and 06.07.2021. No changes are observed in terms of **the method of regulation** for operation of this sector group. In particular, operation of this sector working group is regulated by the rules of procedure adopted back in 2019. This document includes all rules, procedures and competences of the sector working group, while the decision on formation of SWG Regional and Local Development establishes the **list of members and** entities they are representing. SWG membership, i.e. composition was not subject to changes in terms of representatives from state institutions, donor community and civil society organizations.



As regards **enforcement of provisions** from the rules of procedure, this sector group has not fully complied with the anticipated number of three meetings per year.

As regards **transparency**, the Ministry of Local Self-Government's website<sup>17</sup> hosts information on IPA cross-border and territorial cooperation, but does not include information related to performance of this sector group, such as founding documents (decision on formation and rules of procedure), as well as press releases, minutes and materials from SWG meetings.

Information about the role of **civil society representatives** in SWG Regional and Local Development is not fully precise. Although they have the status of SWG members, civil society representatives do not feel they make great contribution to SWG work. Hence, the rules of procedure need to be amended in order to precisely defined their role and the method for involvement in all stages of creating documents produced by the sector group.

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 procedure for all 12 SWGs. For more information on planned amendments to the rules of procedure and the process for their adoption see **FOREWORD**.

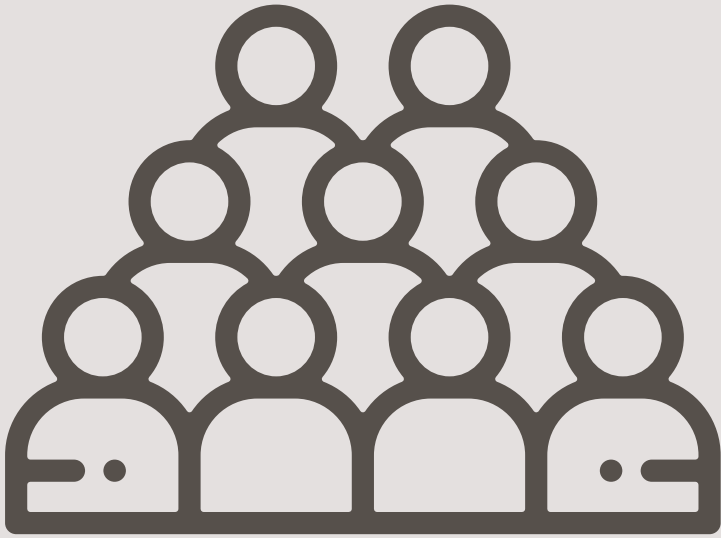
## 2.2 ANNUAL PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK REPORT

Annual plans and annual work reports are not anticipated as activity under the rules of procedure for SWG Regional and Local Development, but if annual plans are developed in transparent and inclusive manner they could serve as significant incentive for more efficient and more organized work on the part of this working group. In 2021, SWG Regional and Local Development did not develop annual plan and annual work report.

<sup>17</sup> Official website of the Ministry of Local Self-Government, available at: <https://mls.gov.mk/>







# PART 3

## CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

The list of civil society members that participate in SWG Regional and Local Development is comprised of **seven entities with the status of members:**

- Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society, with 3 members;<sup>18</sup>
- Macedonian Center for International Cooperation, with 2 members;
- Association of Financial Workers from Local Self-Government Units and Enterprises, with 1 member; and
- Association of Utility Service Providers ADKOM, with 1 member.

<sup>18</sup> The civil society joined work of SWG Regional and Local Development in February 2019 on direct invitation from the ministry which has addressed the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society as the advisory body to the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. Afterwards, the Council nominated representatives to participate in this sector group. The request for nomination of civil society representative sent to the Council for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society is available at: <https://bit.ly/35NEOsC>

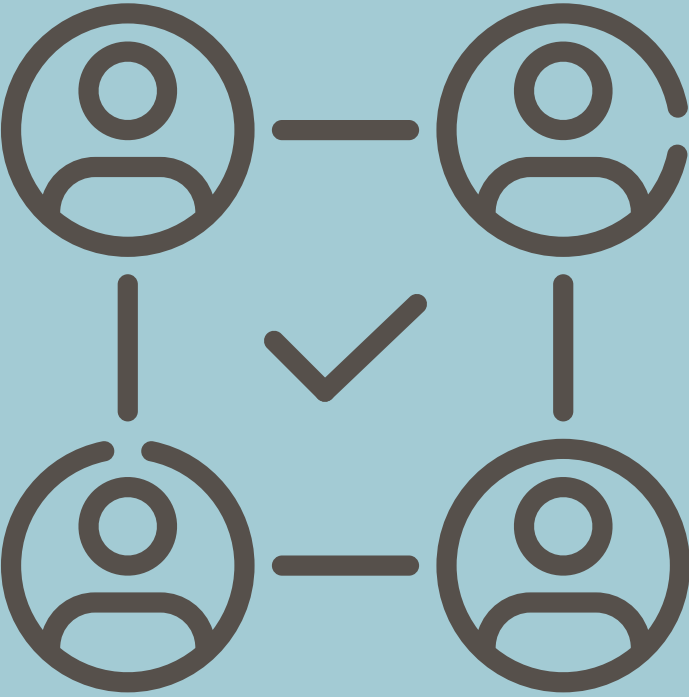


In 2021, **invitations** for SWG plenary sessions were distributed in timely manner to all civil society representatives. Moreover, invitations were sent together with all **necessary documents**, i.e. meeting agenda and materials to be discussed at these meetings.

During the interviews with civil society representatives conducted for the purpose of this report, it was said that SWG chair fosters a transparent and open attitude to all SWG members. All meetings provide sufficient space, usually towards the end, for all members – including those from civil society organizations – to join discussions with their opinions and recommendations for topics covered. However, plenary sessions held in 2021 mainly focused on views provided by representatives from institutions, i.e. presentation of already developed draft documents.

During the interviews, civil society representatives reiterated the need for greater involvement in SWG work, which depends on more opportunities for discussion, communication and exchange of information.





# PART 4

## CSO CAPACITY

Participation of 7 civil society representatives in SWG Regional and Local Development makes this sector group one of those with relatively good civil society participation in quantitative terms compared to the other sector groups. However, civil society representatives are of the opinion that their role in SWG is more formal and does not imply meaningful contribution to its work.

Interviewed civil society representatives based this observation on several reasons. First, they indicated that one cannot talk about effective participation in the sector group having in mind the poor dynamics of SWG meetings (two sessions per year) and the minimum level of communication among SWG members beyond these meetings.

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





# PART 5

## EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

### 5.1 PLENARY SESSIONS AND OPERATIONAL MEETINGS

#### 5.1.1 Plenary sessions

In 2021, SWG Regional and Local Development held two plenary sessions although the rules of procedure stipulate organization of minimum three meetings per year. In that, plenary sessions were held online,<sup>19</sup> with technical support from the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA).

**SWG plenary sessions** were held on 04.06.2021 and 06.07.2021, as follows:

- **first plenary session** was focused on presentation of the new Law on Equitable Regional Development, 2021 Strategy for Regional Development, Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization, activities related to promotion of the fiscal decentralization system and presentation of EUD TAIEX for municipalities;

<sup>19</sup> Via the platform WEBEX.



- **second plenary session** included presentation of the EU Support Programme for Local and Regional Development of the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, financed by the Embassy of Switzerland, USAID Local and Regional Development Program and UNDP program portfolio for local and regional development.

Representatives from institutions, donor community and civil society organizations were invited and attended both plenary sessions.

### 5.1.2 Operational meetings

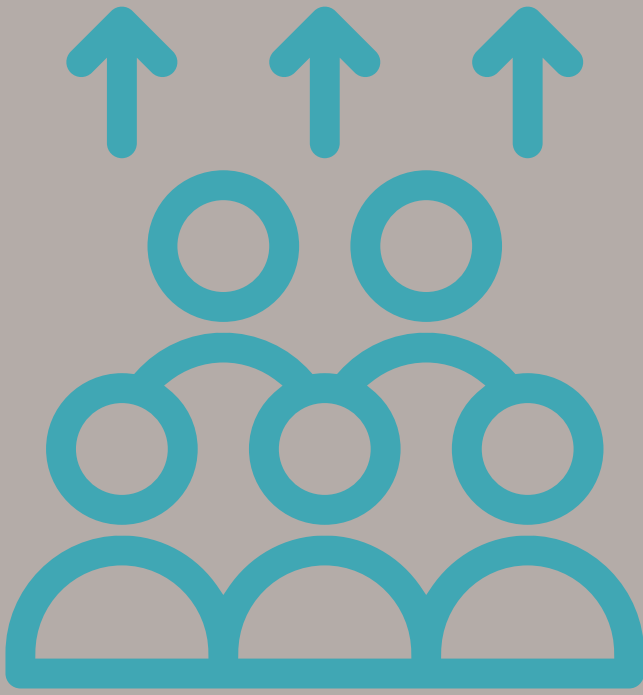
SWG Regional and Local Development did not hold any operational meetings in 2021.

### 5.1.3 Results from SWG work

In 2021, SWG Regional and Local Development focused its work on presentation of previously developed law, strategy and programs.

It seems that this approach and work dynamics are insufficient and do not allow adequate space for discussion of sector policies and strategies, as well as for alignment and coordination of these policies through broad consultations and immediate identification of needs.





# 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 III<sup>20</sup> by the European Union, and is coherent with other funds, programmes and instruments of the Union, primarily the Neighbourhood Development and International Cooperation Instrument.

According to its structure, IPA III is organized around five thematic priorities, i.e. windows:

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

<sup>20</sup> Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) COM/2018/465 final



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 SECTOR ON REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

The most important document for the sector on regional and local development are strategic responses to **WINDOW 2**: Good Governance, thematic priority on governance at local level (decentralized governance) and in some aspects **WINDOW 3**: Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity, thematic priority: Digital Economy and Society.

In particular, thematic priority 1: Good Governance covers several sectors, as follows: public administration reform, public finance management, governance at subnational level (also referred to as decentralized governance), statistics and economic governance. Strategic priorities are well defined and fully correspond to IPA III programming framework.

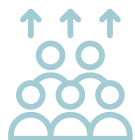
**TABLE 3.***Implementation plan and budget for the period 2021-2024*

**WINDOW 2:**  
**GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACQUIS ALIGNMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY  
 RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION**

**Thematic priority 2: Good Governance**

**Implementation period: 2022**

Action	Estimated total budget (million EUR)	Requested contribution from IPA (million EUR)	Implementation plan/arrangement
<u><a href="#">EU for Modern Public Administration</a></u>	18.0	18.0	The action will be implemented under direct management and includes (1) sector budget support with additional assistance and (2) project-based support that includes procurements (goods and service contracts) and grants (twinning). The action document was developed and submitted to the European Commission's services in November 2021.



## **BILATERAL CROSS-BORDER PROGRAMMES**

### **1. CBC North Macedonia – Albania**

Thematic priority 1: Environment protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management (TP2)

Thematic priority 2: Tourism and cultural and natural heritage (TP5)

Thematic priority 3: Technical assistance (TP0)

### **2. CBC Kosovo – North Macedonia**

Thematic priority 1: Competitiveness, business environment and development of small and medium enterprises, trade and investment (TP8)

Thematic priority 2: Environment protection, climate change adaptation and mitigation, risk prevention and management (TP2)

Thematic priority 3: Technical assistance (TP0)

### **3. CBC Serbia – North Macedonia**

Thematic priority 1: Employment, labour mobility and social and cultural inclusion across borders (TP1)

Thematic priority 2: Encouraging tourism and cultural and natural heritage (TP2)

Thematic priority 3: Technical assistance (TP0)

## **INTERREG PROGRAMMES**

### **1. Bulgaria – North Macedonia**

Thematic priority 1 (specific objective): Increase competitiveness of local economies and improve business environment

Thematic priority 2 (specific objective): Cultural and historical heritage of the Republic of Bulgaria and the Republic of North Macedonia as precondition for development of attractive, all-season tourism product by means of smart solutions that provide universal access and participation

### **2. Greece – North Macedonia**

Thematic priority 1: Institutional capacity-building for more effective regional development policies



## **BALKAN MEDITERRANEAN (BALKAN MED)**

Thematic priority 1 (specific objective): Smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation

Thematic priority 2 (specific objective): Greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

Thematic priority 5 (specific objective): Europe closer to the citizens by promoting sustainable and integrated development of urban, rural and coastal areas and local initiatives.

## **ADRION PROGRAMME**

Thematic priority 1 (specific objective): Smarter Europe by promoting innovative and smart economic transformation

Thematic priority 2 (specific objective): Greener, low-carbon Europe by promoting clean and fair energy transition, green and blue investment, circular economy, climate adaptation and risk prevention and management

Thematic priority 3 (specific objective): Connected Europe by strengthening mobility and regional connectivity with ICTs



# 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.<sup>21</sup> 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 Men<sup>22</sup> 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.<sup>23</sup> At the same time, EU membership is conditioned with respect and promotion of fundamental European values.<sup>24</sup> The Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance in the period 2021-2027 (IPA III) stipulates that implementation of IPA

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

22 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.

23 Article 2 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, available at: <https://bit.ly/3s4gjyR>

24 Ibid. Article 49, paragraph (1)



III should be led by the principles of gender equality and enhanced rights of women and girls,<sup>25</sup> 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".<sup>26</sup> GAP III is organized into five pillars and the third pillar anticipates activities in six key areas of engagement.<sup>27</sup> Moreover, GAP III reflects goals and objectives defined under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, IPA III defines gender equality as specific objective, but also thematic priority eligible for support.<sup>29</sup> 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.<sup>30</sup> 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.<sup>31</sup>

An important element of the sector approach to gender mainstreaming is building and enhancing technical competences of all stakeholders

25 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>

26 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](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf)

27 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.

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

29 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>

30 Ibid.

31 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](https://ec.europa.eu/international-partnerships/system/files/join_2020_17_en_final.pdf)

involved in implementation of sector policies.<sup>32</sup> 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](#).

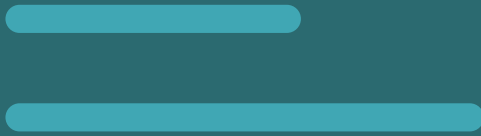
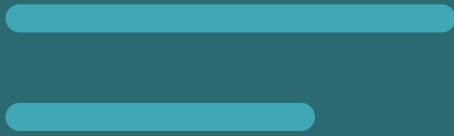
## 7.1 GENDER MAINSTREAMING IN SWG REGIONAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

In 2021, SWG Regional and Local Development held two plenary sessions, but minutes were not taken from these meetings. In the absence of such minutes, it cannot be established whether meetings included discussion of gender issues and gender mainstreaming. However, a positive step forward in operation of this sector group concerns the fact that meetings included discussion of strategy documents that feature the gender perspective.

In particular, gender perspective is integrated in the Strategy for Regional Development 2021-2031 and Program for Sustainable Local Development and Decentralization 2021-2026. Another important aspect concerns the fact that gender analyses have been developed and used in development of the Strategy for Regional Development. Although the coordinator for equal opportunities and his/her deputies do not participate directly in work of SWG Regional and Local Development, it should be noted that the officer responsible for strategy development at the Ministry of Local Self-Government is also deputy coordinator for equal opportunities.<sup>33</sup> This could be one reason for gender mainstreaming in new strategy documents. Finally, according to information obtained from MLSG, gender perspective is integrated also in development of new cross-border cooperation programmes.

<sup>32</sup> EIGE, Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1359?lang=mk>

<sup>33</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022



## FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As regards performance, SWG Regional and Local Development held two plenary sessions in 2021. This is a comparative improvement against the work dynamics of one meeting held last year, and against the previous period of long inactivity, which included termination and revival of this sector working group.<sup>34</sup> SWG rules of procedure need to be amended in terms of creating connections to sector policies and opportunities for meaningful participation of various stakeholders in terms of regional and local development.

1. SWG Regional and Local Development held two plenary sessions in 2021. These meetings mainly focused on presentation of previously developed and adopted laws, strategies, programmes and projects.
2. Efforts are needed for this sector group to facilitate development of proposals for content of sector and cross-sector policies, strategies and development programs relevant for regional and local development.
3. Preconditions need to be created for civil society organizations to join, through sector group, processes for identification, formulation and priority-setting of developmental goals, measures and projects to be implemented under national policies and strategies in this sector.
4. SWG rules of procedure need to be changed in order to define the model for selection of civil society representatives and their role and mandate in work of this sector group. The current approach does not fully utilize the capacity of civil society organizations.

---

<sup>34</sup> SWG Regional and Local Development was first formed in 2016, but its work was suspended in the same year. In 2019, this sector working group was formed again, after organization of the initial meeting held on 20 March.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



- ◆ European Commission's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=5657>
- ◆ Law on Equitable Regional Development, February 2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3owYrMc>
- ◆ Strategy for Regional Development of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2031, available at: <https://bit.ly/3LemEkd>
- ◆ Responses to information requests submitted under the instrument for free access to public information
- ◆ Transcript from interviews with representatives from state institutions that participate in SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Transcript from focus group with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Data obtained from the survey questionnaire conducted among civil society organizations about their experience with civil society participation
- ◆ Rules of Procedure for SWG Regional and Local Development
- ◆ Agendas for meetings held by SWG Regional and Local Development held in 2021
- ◆ Performance Assessment Framework Indicators (PAF)
- ◆ Strategic response to IPA III, available at: <https://bit.ly/3soDELY>
- ◆ Act on job systematization at the Ministry of Local Self-Government, available at: <https://bit.ly/3owmEly>
- ◆ Regional community forums as tools for identification, priority-setting and development of projects for funding from MLSG and BRD, available at: <https://bit.ly/3HC6LBM>
- ◆ Shadow Report from Monitoring Work and Effects of Sector Working Groups in the period January 2019 – February 2020, available at: <https://dijalogkoneu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/FOOM-lzvestaj-vo-senka-CELOSEN.-SITE-SRG.pdf>





