

SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK
AND EFFECTS OF
THE SECTOR WORKING
GROUP ON PUBLIC
ADMINISTRATION REFORM

January – December 2021





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by the European Union



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SHADOW REPORT FROM MONITORING WORK AND EFFECTS OF THE SECTOR WORKING GROUP ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IN THE PERIOD JANUARY – DECEMBER 2021

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ИЗВЕШТАЈ ВО СЕНКА ОД СЛЕДЕЊЕТО НА РАБОТАТА И ЕФЕКТИТЕ НА СЕКТОРСКАТА РАБОТНА ГРУПА ЗА РЕФОРМА НА ЈАВНАТА АДМИНИСТРАЦИЈА 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.

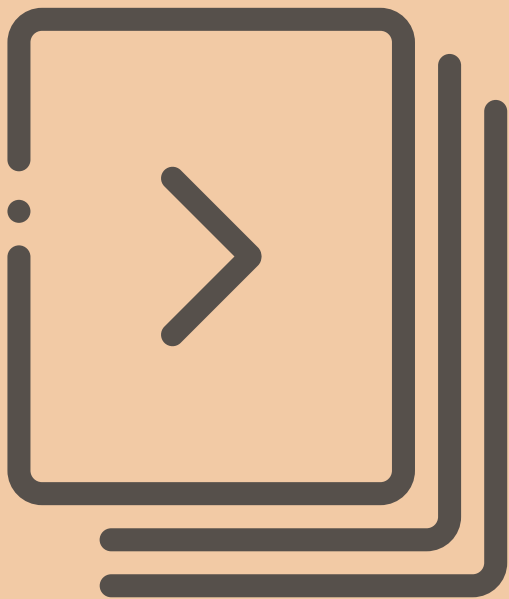
¹ SWG Justice, SWG Public Administration Reform, SWF Roma Integration and SWG Home Affairs

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 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

FORMED: 2015

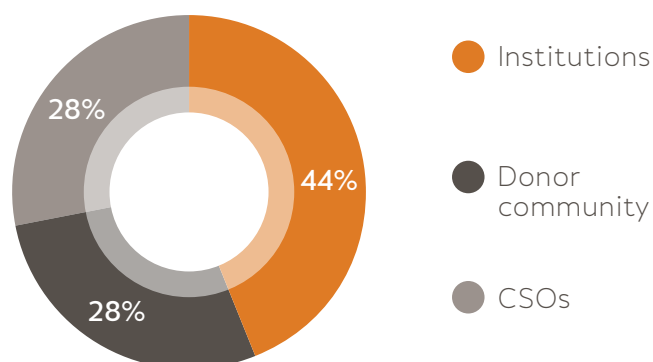
NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS: 38, institutions x 16 members, civil society organizations x 12 members, and donor community x 10 members

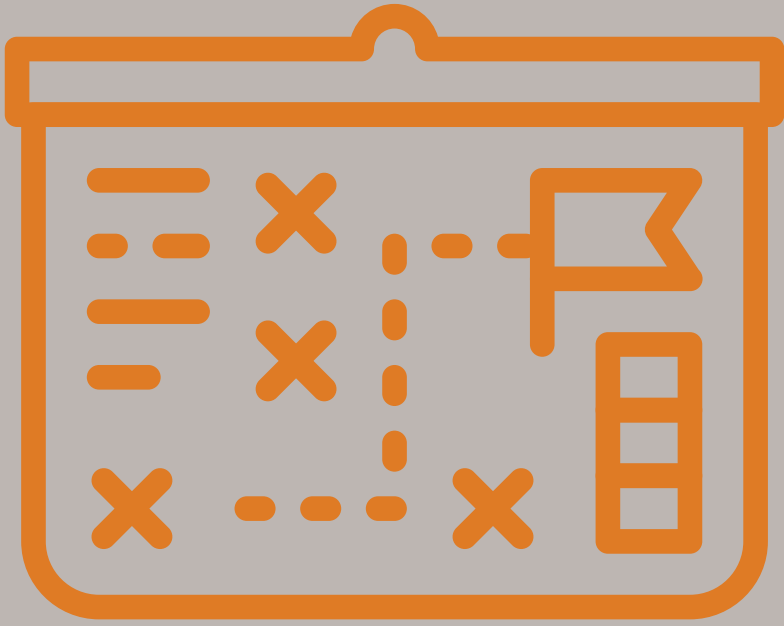
NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2021: no plenary sessions/ seven operational meetings

SWG CHAIR: Ministry of Information Society and Administration

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

CHART 1.
Distribution of various representatives in SWG Public Administration Reform





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 Information Society and Administration (MISA) as the institution competent for operation of 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 Information Society and Administration, and organized a **focus group**⁴ with civil society representatives that participate in the sector group. The focus group was attended by three from total of twelve civil society representatives. Having in mind that SWG Public Administration Reform did not hold any plenary sessions in 2021, the project team was unable to monitor the process from within.

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

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

³ Interview with the coordinator from the Ministry of Information Society and Administration was conducted on 12.01.2022.

⁴ Focus group with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Public Administration Reform was organized on 21.01.2022



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 12 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 years, 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

In 2021, MISA did not adopt new strategies, laws and programs in the field of public administration reform. The single relevant document in this reporting period concerns the Proposed Law on Amending the **Law on Introduction of Quality Management System and Common Assessment Framework for Performance and Service Provision in Public Service**, adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia. Before its adoption, the draft law was posted on **ENER**⁵ where all stakeholders were able to provide recommendations aimed at improving the quality of this law.

Implementation of the key strategic document on public administration reform, i.e. **Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018-2022**⁶ and **Action Plan**,⁷ continued in the course of 2021, together with activities for creation of several new national strategies, and laws that have been deadlocked in the drafting process.

5 Law on Introduction of Quality Management System and Common Assessment Framework for Performance and Service Provision in Public Service, available at: <https://bit.ly/366PLpr>

6 Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018 - 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/366I3f0>

7 Action Plan for Implementation of the Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018 - 2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/3JIDPyl>



STRATEGY ON PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM 2018-2022

Last year (2021) was the penultimate implementing year for the five-year Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018-2022. In June 2021, MISA published its **fourth semi-annual report** on implementation of the strategy's action plan for the period January - June 2021.⁸ According to the practice established for previous reports, the draft version was shared with civil society organizations that work on these topics in order to provide feedback.

In particular, the semi-annual report for the period January - June 2021 enlists that from total of 51 activities planned in the reporting period only 5 were completed, 22 activities are underway and 24 activities are delayed or have not started yet. In terms of overall implementation of all activities under the action plan, i.e. from February 2018 to June 2021, the report refers to around 200 activities, of which 97 are completed, 24 activities are underway and 79 have not started yet. These data are indicative of poor implementation track record for reforms in the sector of public administration.

MISA representatives reported that poor implementation is due to revision of the strategy's action plan, whereby large portion of unrealized activities from previous years were rolled over for implementation this year, but human resources remained at the same level.

Plans for 2022 include activities for development of the new five-year strategy, which is expected to include activities that will not be implemented under the current strategy. Also, the new strategy is planned to be discussed withing SWG Public Administration Reform in the course of 2022.

⁸ Fourth Semi-Annual Report on implementation of the Action Plan to the Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018-2022, available at: <https://bit.ly/35Uwwz9>

NATIONAL STRATEGY ON INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES AND ACTION PLAN 2021-2025

In June 2021, MISA published the [Draft National Strategy on Information and Communication Technologies 2021 - 2025](#)⁹ on ENER, Key priority of this strategy document is enhanced digital infrastructure of the government through formation of the Digital Agency, establishment of the Joint Governmental Data Centre and development of the National Optical Transport Network.

More precisely, the National Strategy on ICTs 2021 - 2025 is organized around six pillars:

- connectivity and government infrastructure;
- centralization and rationalization of ICTs and e-government services;
- promotion of digital skills among citizens, workforce and professionals;
- research, development and innovation;
- data protection;
- digital services (inspired by environmental protection).

One month after the strategy was posted on ENER, on 23 July 2021, MISA organized an open [public debate](#)¹⁰ to discuss the draft strategy and its action plan, which was attended by all stakeholders, including civil society organizations.

Draft versions of the strategy and its action plan 2021-2025 are still available for comments on ENER.

In September 2021, after having completed the drafting process, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration published the proposed laws on [public sector employees](#)¹¹ and [administrative officers](#),¹² both aimed at addressing problems that have emerged in implementation of existing legislation adopted five years ago.

⁹ Draft National Strategy on Information and Communication Technologies and Action Plan 2021-2025, available at: <https://bit.ly/3sD1cwN> [last retrieved on 09.02.2022]

¹⁰ For more information about the public debate see: <https://bit.ly/3LsqGp1>

¹¹ Proposed Law on Public Sector Employees, available at: <https://bit.ly/3gBoo90>

¹² Proposed Law on Administrative Officers, available at: <https://bit.ly/34Akbjh>

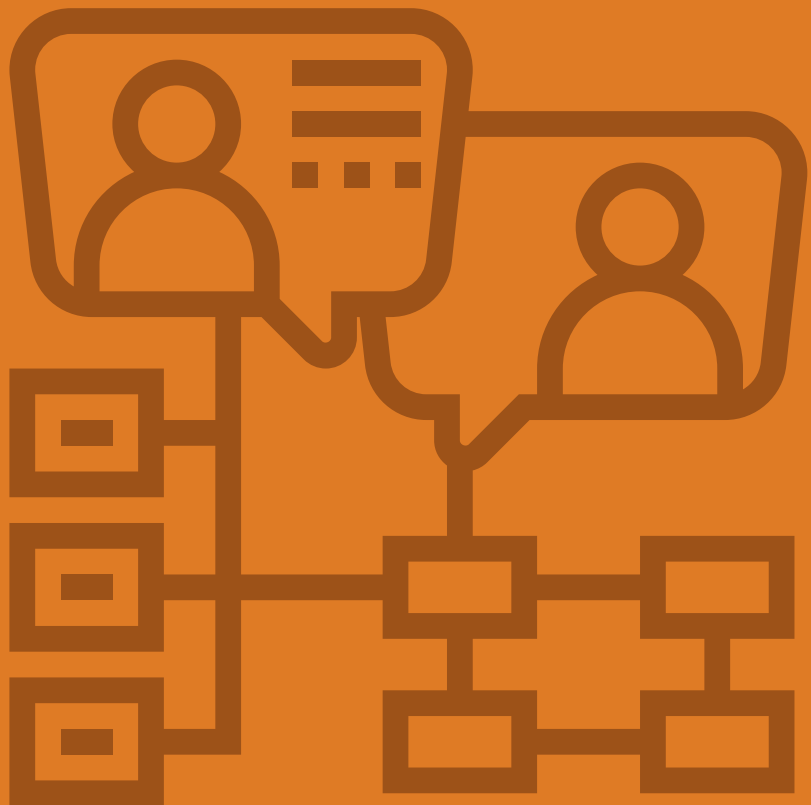


The process for adoption of the long-awaited **Law on Senior Management Service**¹³ continued in the course of 2021. The main goal of this law is to reduce political influence and to strengthen capacity of senior management officers. In September 2021, the draft law was posted on **ENER**¹⁴ for comments.

Back in 2020 MISA formed a working group tasked to draft amendments to the **Law on Organization and Operation of State Administration Bodies**, which is expected to unblock the process that started in 2018. Members of this working group include civil society representatives, but this group did not hold any meetings in the course of 2021.

13 Draft Law on Senior Management Service, available at: <https://bit.ly/3ozRGYR>

14 Proposed Law on Senior Management Service, available at: <https://bit.ly/3LE5mNF>





PART 2

SWG FUNCTIONALITY

2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

SWG Public Administration Reform was formed in 2015 and has not changed documents that govern its operation from their initial adoption. Hence, the rules of procedure and the decision for formation of this sector group, as key documents that regulate its composition and work method, were not changed in 2021.

Also, no changes were made to the number of SWG members compared to last year and their total number stands at 38 (state institutions are represented by 16 members, civil society organizations have 12 representatives and donor community is represented by 10 members). Members from the line of state institutions, including names of donor community and civil society organizations that participate in SWG Public Administration Reform are enlisted in the annexes to the rules of procedure. However, MISA confirmed that, in 2021, it has initiated a procedure for updating the list of SWG members given that the last update was made in 2017 and many members have changed their job positions since then. For that purpose, it distributed a questionnaire to all institutions and after responses are obtained, MISA will update the decision for formation of this sector group.



In 2021, SWG Public Administration Reform did not hold any plenary sessions in spite of the fact that the rules of procedure stipulate organization of at least four sessions per year. Hence, the project team is unable to further elaborate and assess other aspects of SWG rules of procedures related to plenary sessions.

The need to amend the rules of procedure was emphasized by SWG members, including representatives from state institutions and those from civil society organizations.

MISA representatives referred to the need for precise definition of SWG competences in order to avoid overlapping powers with other bodies. Special reference in this regard was made to bodies monitoring implementation of the key strategy document, i.e. the Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018-2022.

On the other hand, civil society representatives reiterated the need for greater consistency in operation of this sector group, which should be guaranteed by the rules of procedure. Hence, they indicated the need for the rules of procedure to guarantee organization of the minimum number of meetings per year, with agenda items agreed with all SWG members. At the same time, civil society representatives stressed the need for involvement of civil society organizations in creation of processes and documents to be discussed within the sector group, which would allow their contributions to be more comprehensive than those provided at the moment.

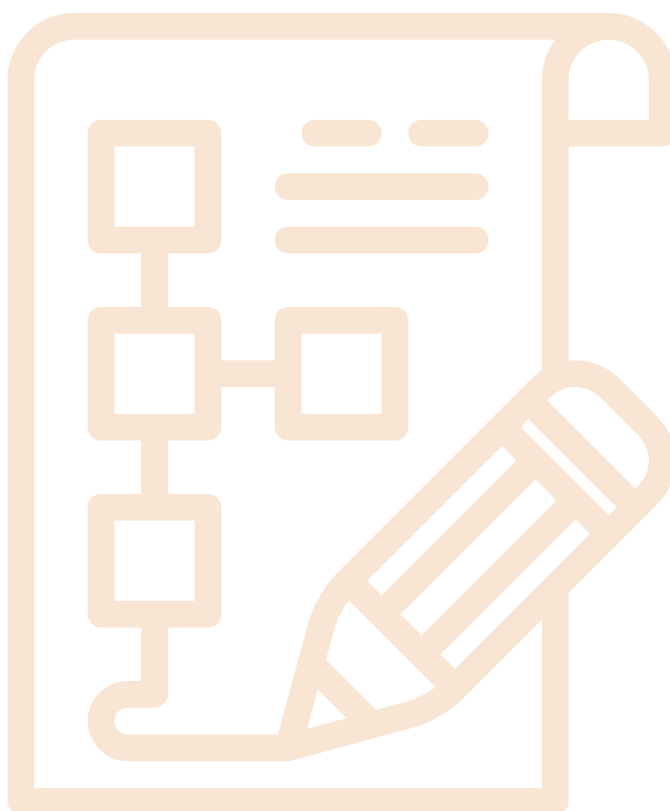
In December 2021, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) initiated a meeting with representatives from all institutions that chair sector working groups to present and discuss the new draft rules of procedure for all 12 SWGs. For more information on planned amendments to the rules of procedure and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

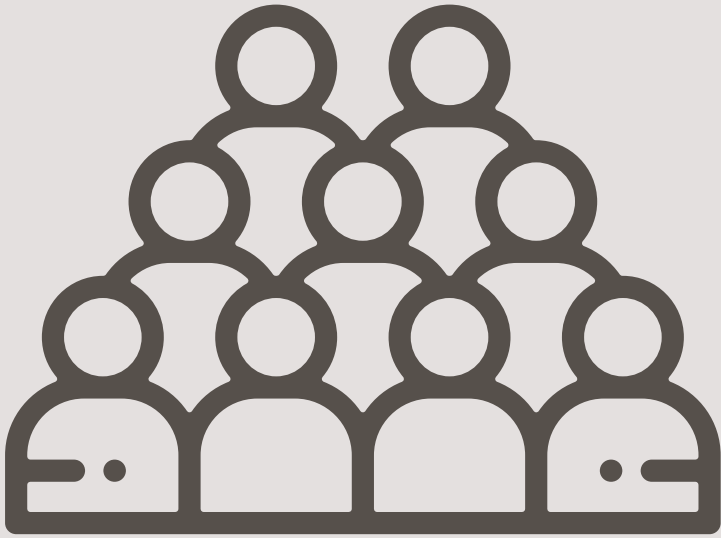
As regards [transparency](#), there is continued need for greater information dissemination in the public about the work of this sector group. The Ministry of Information Society and Administration's website does not host any information related to SWG work, such as: founding documents (decision for established and rules of procedure), announcements, minutes and materials from SWG meetings.

2.2 ANNUAL PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK REPORT

SWG Public Administration Reform does not develop annual work plans. Based on responses obtained from MISA to information requests submitted under the instrument for free access to public information, programming of IPA funds primarily depends on the EU Delegation and therefore development and implementation of annual plans might be inadequate, especially because the sector group is unable to anticipate whether public administration reform will be financed in the relevant programme year or not, in order to define a timeline for development of documents.

At the same time, this sector group does not develop and adopt annual work reports that would present its achievements in the field of public administration reform.





PART 3

CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

SWG Public Administration Reforms has twelve members from civil society organizations, which makes this sector group one of those marked by highest civil society participation:

- Foundation Open Society – Macedonia;
- Institute for Human Rights;
- International Foundation for Election Systems;
- International Republican Institute;
- Macedonian Young Lawyers Associations;
- Progress – Institute for Social Democracy;
- Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis”;
- Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation;
- European Policy Institute;
- Association for Development Initiatives ZENITH;
- Metamorphosis Foundation;
- National Democratic Institute.¹⁵

¹⁵ Websites of CSOs that participate in SWG Public Administration Reform: Foundation Open Society- Macedonia, Institute for Human Rights, Progress – Institute for Social Democracy, Institute for Democracy “Societas Civilis”, Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, European Policy Institute, Association for Development Initiatives ZENITH, Metamorphosis Foundation, National Democratic Institute, International Foundation for Election Systems, International Republican Institute, Macedonian Young Lawyers Association

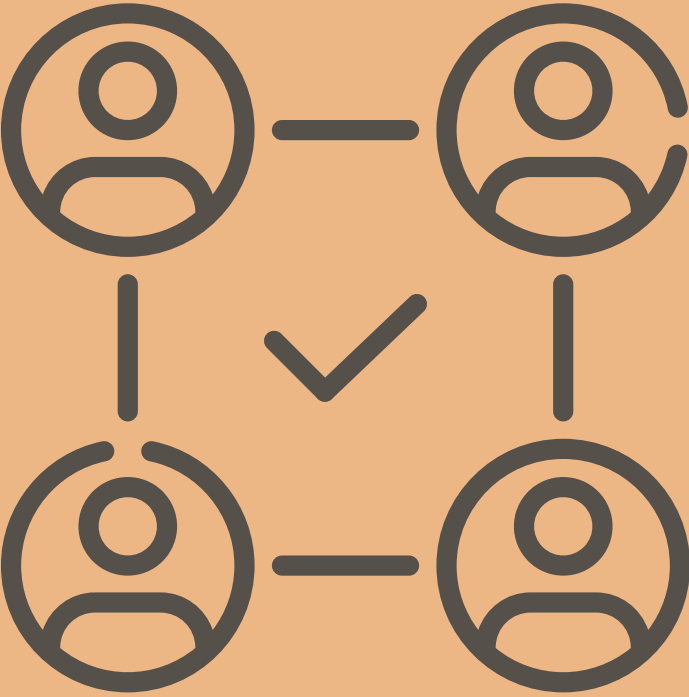
Nevertheless, in the course of 2021, civil society representatives were not communicated on any issues pertaining to SWG Public Administration Reform.



Civil society representatives stressed that adoption of changes to SWG rules of procedure will contribute to greater involvement of civil society organizations in operational work of sector groups.

It should be noted that, in September 2021, MISA invited SWG members from the ranks of civil society organizations to nominate two representatives that will attend future operational meetings organized by this sector group and represent the civil society. Hence, two representatives were selected in coordination with civil society organizations (one from Foundation Open Society – Macedonia and one from the Center for Change Management and two deputy members) to represent their interests at operation meetings held by SWG Public Administration Reform. However, these representatives were not invited to attend the single operational meeting organized after their nomination (04.11.2021). According to MISA, civil society representatives were not invited because SWG operation meeting was of informal, technical nature. At the same time, it was indicated that plans are in place for civil society organizations to be invited to attend operational meetings in the future because their participation is of great importance and that was the original reason for this initiative.





PART 4

CSO CAPACITY

In 2021, civil society organizations that participate in SWG Public Administration Reform regularly published press releases, analyses and policy brief on topics pertaining to their program and project activities, but these were not directly intended to be exclusively used by this sector working group.

During the focus group organized with civil society organizations it was underlined that their role in SWG Public Administration Reform is rather technical, instead of implying meaningful contribution to its work. Such attitude on the part of institutions that chair this sector group is very discouraging and unless changes are made in this regard, civil society organizations do not see how their role in SWGs could be useful.

On the other hand, it was said that announced changes to the rules of procedures and MISA's initiative for two civil society representatives to attend SWG operational meetings open the path towards more active involvement on the part of the civil society.



PART 5

EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

5.1 PLENARY SESSIONS

According to the rules of procedure, SWG Public Administration Reform should hold at least four plenary sessions per year, but in 2021 this sector group did not organize any such sessions unlike the situation observed in previous years when it had organized two plenary sessions annually.

SWG plenary session was initially scheduled for **7 July 2021**, intended for presentation of IPA 2022 action document “EU for Modern Public Administration”, but was later cancelled. According to information obtained from MISA representatives, this meeting had been cancelled on request from the Secretariat for European Affairs and the EU Delegation for the purpose of further improvements to IPA 2022 action document before its presentation. Presentation of this document before SWG members is postponed for 2022.

5.2 OPERATIONAL MEETINGS

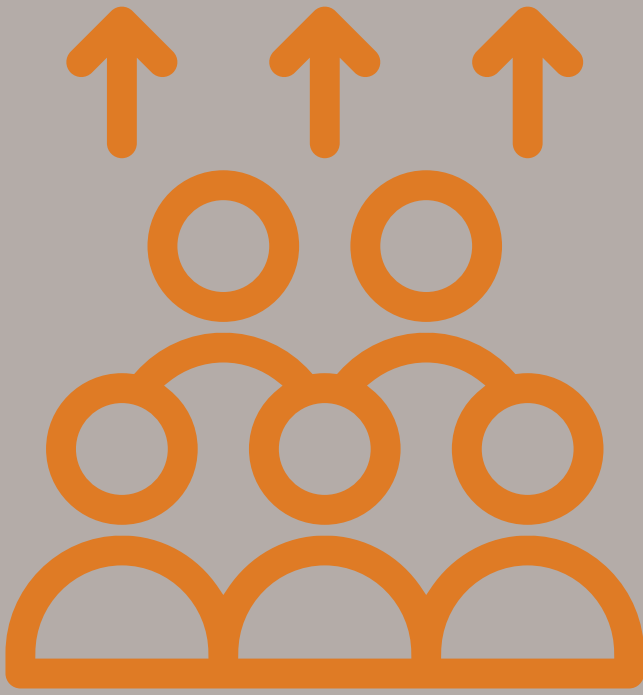


A total of **seven operational meetings** were organized for the needs of developing IPA 2022 action documents, taking place on 02.02.2021, 11.03.2021, 18.03.2021, 23.03.2021, 21.05.2021, 24.09.2021 and 04.11.2021.

In addition to representatives from MISA, these meetings were also attended by representatives from the Secretariat for European Affairs and the EU Delegation, but civil society organizations were not invited to attend.

On MISA's initiative, two civil society representatives that participate in this sector group will also attend operational meetings organized in the future. For more information on involvement of civil society representatives in SWG operational meetings see **PART 3: CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION.**





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 III¹⁶ 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;**

¹⁶ 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 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

IPA III funds anticipated for the sector on public administration reform are part of WINDOW 2: Good Governance, Acquis Alignment, Good Neighbourly Relations and Strategic Communication, Thematic priority 2: Good Governance. Funds for the year 2022 are planned under the action document “EU for Modern Public Administration”, with a total budget of 18 million EUR, fully funded by IPA III. According to information obtained from MISA, IPA 2022 action document is still not finalized and the same is planned to be discussed within SWG Public Administration Reform in the course of 2022.

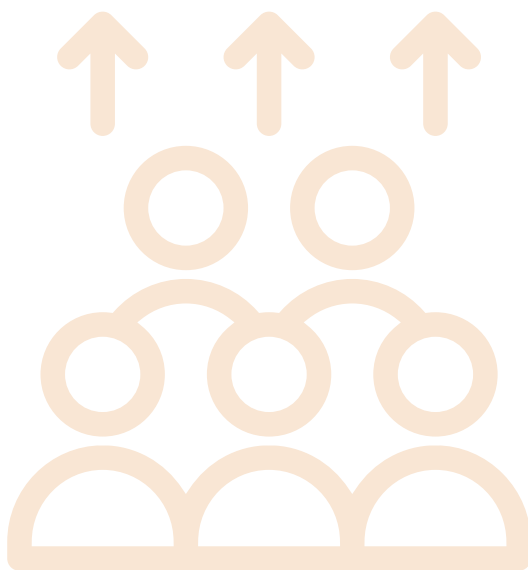


TABLE 1:

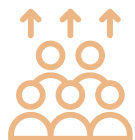
IPA III programming (2021 - 2027) in the sector
on public administration reform

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

Thematic priority 2: Good Governance

Implementation period: 2022

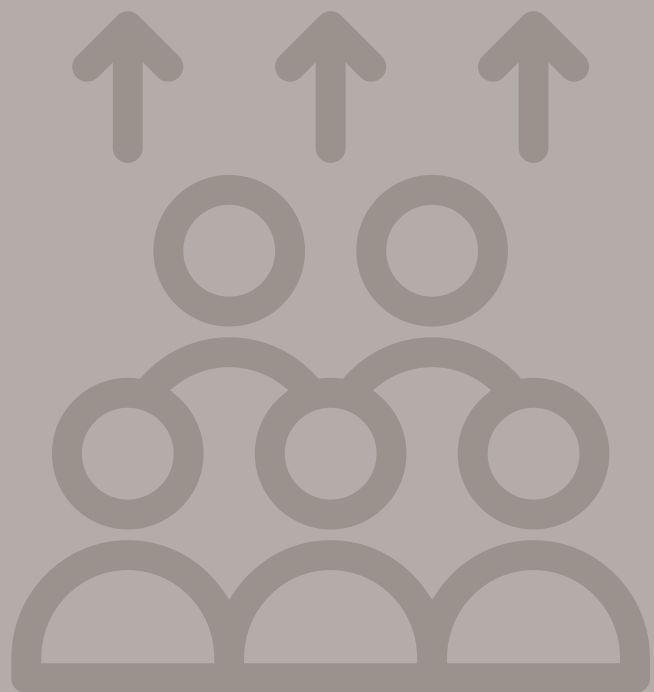
Action	Total estimated budget (million EUR)	Requested contribution from IPA (million EUR)	Implementation plan/arrangement
<u>EU for Modern Public Administration</u>	18.0	18.0	The action will be implemented under direct management and includes (1) sector budget support with additional assistance and (2) 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.

**TABLE 2****2022 Action Document “EU for Modern Public Administration”**

2022 ACTION DOCUMENT “EU FOR MODERN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION”		
Expected outcomes	EU contribution (EUR)	Indicative third party contribution
Budget support	14,000,000	
1. Improved use of statistical and financial data for creation of policy reforms and secured economic stability	2,500,000	0
2. Improved effectiveness and efficiency of the public administration in North Macedonia	1,500,000	0
Total	18,000,000	0

A novelty under IPA III concerns the fact that all projects will be managed centrally, i.e. the EU Delegation in the Republic of North Macedonia will be the contracting authority for all projects. On that account, the EU Delegation and the National IPA Coordinator will develop a manual that would facilitate implementation of these activities by relevant institutions.

Openness of data on the implementation status of activities under IPA III is of exceptional importance for regular monitoring and greater involvement on the part of all stakeholders. Hence, in 2021, MISA and other institutions involved in implementation of IPA III appointed a person responsible for updating Performance Assessment Framework Indicators on the website specially designed for that purpose. Although IPA III activities have already started, the website is still not active/operational.





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.¹⁷ 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 Men¹⁸ 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.¹⁹ At the same time, EU membership is conditioned with respect and promotion of fundamental European values.²⁰

¹⁷ European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185?lang=mk>

¹⁸ 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.

¹⁹ Article 2 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, available at: <https://bit.ly/3s4ggyR>

²⁰ Ibid. Article 49, paragraph (1)



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,²¹ 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".²² GAP III is organized into five pillars and the third pillar anticipates activities in six key areas of engagement.²³ Moreover, GAP III reflects goals and objectives defined under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.²⁴ On the other hand, IPA III defines gender equality as specific objective, but also thematic priority eligible for support.²⁵ 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.²⁶ 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.²⁷

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

- 21 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>
- 22 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
- 23 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.
- 24 A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>
- 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 Ibid.
- 27 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

involved in implementation of sector policies.²⁸ 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 PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

SWG Public Administration Reform did not hold any plenary sessions in 2021 and therefore the project team is unable to assess gender mainstreaming in its work. There is no information that coordinators for equal opportunities of women and men or their deputies, external experts or civil society organizations that work on promotion of gender equality have been involved in work of this sector group in the last year. As regards development of documents and priority-setting in this sector, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) elaborated that, due to the method for assistance implementation, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA), MISA and the EU Delegation have decided to define fewer indicators and targets that would allow greater coverage and integration of cross-cutting issues. On that account, as reported by MISA, participation of other SWG members was limited.

In the course of 2021, MISA has not developed or used any gender analysis in its activities for policy creation. As regards training on gender-sensitive work, MISA referred to gender equality training available on the electronic learning management platform. At the same time, MISA indicated that these trainings are integrated in the platform as mandatory training for public administration employees, upon initiative and in compliance with strategic priorities of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. According to MISA, small participation in 2021 trainings is due to the fact that the e-learning platform was not functional on the account of formal public procurement procedures.

This sector working group has drafted an IPA III action document, but the same is not finalized and was not shared with the project. In the action document, gender equality is identified as important goal for support.

²⁸ EIGE, Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1359?lang=mk>



FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.** After publication of the second Shadow Report from Monitoring Work and Effects of the Sector Working Group on Public Administration Reform, MISA has initiated development of work plan that should include all activities aimed at implementing recommendations put forward in that report. However, by the cut-off date for this report, there is no information available on the status of such work plan and planned start of its implementation.
- 2.** While they have the status of full-fledged SWG members, the role of civil society representatives is still not fully defined in respect to capacity-building and improving efficiency of SWG work. Positive development in terms of civil society participation is seen in MISA's initiative to allow two civil society representatives that are SWG members to attend operational meetings held by this sector group, but future implementation of this measure needs to be closely followed.
- 3.** As was the case in previous years, SWG Public Administration Reform did not develop annual work plan for 2021. SWG work without previously defined dynamics and without actual indicators for measuring sector group's performance opens many possibilities for incomplete utilization of SWG capacity. Hence, in the first quarter of the current year, SWG Public Administration Reform must develop its work plan and schedule of plenary and operational meetings, including definition of topics to be discussed at plenary sessions. All SWG members should be involved in development of the annual work plan.
- 4.** SWG Public Administration Reform needs to increase its transparency. Namely, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration's website should host general information on this sector group, such as: documents on its formation, the rules of procedure, as well as information on SWG meetings held and decisions made.

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- ◆ Semi-annual Report on Implementation of SPAR's Action Plan for the period January – June 2021
- ◆ 2020 Annual Report on Implementation of SPAR's Action Plan
- ◆ Act on Job Systematization at the Ministry of Information Society and Administration
- ◆ Draft Performance Assessment Framework Indicators for SWG Public Administration Reform
- ◆ National Program for Adoption of the EU Acquis (NPAA) 2021-2025
- ◆ Responses to information requests made under the instrument for free access to public information
- ◆ Transcript from the interview with the representative from state institutions that participate in SWG Public Administration Reform
- ◆ Transcript from the focus group organized with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Public Administration Reform
- ◆ Insight in electronic communications with SWG members
- ◆ Rules of Procedure for SWG Public Administration Reform
- ◆ Strategic response to WINDOW 1: RULE OF LAW, FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY
- ◆ Strategic response to WINDOW 2: GOOD GOVERNANCE, ACQUIS ALIGNMENT, GOOD NEIGHBOURLY RELATIONS AND STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION
- ◆ Strategic response to WINDOW 3: GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY
- ◆ 2021 Action Fiche: EU for Modern Public Administration

