

# SHADOW REPORT

FROM MONITORING WORK  
AND EFFECTS OF  
THE SECTOR WORKING  
GROUP ON ENVIRONMENT  
AND CLIMATE ACTION

*January – December 2021*







THROUGH  
DIALOGUE TO  
**EU**

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**REACH-OR**  
research in action





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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 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

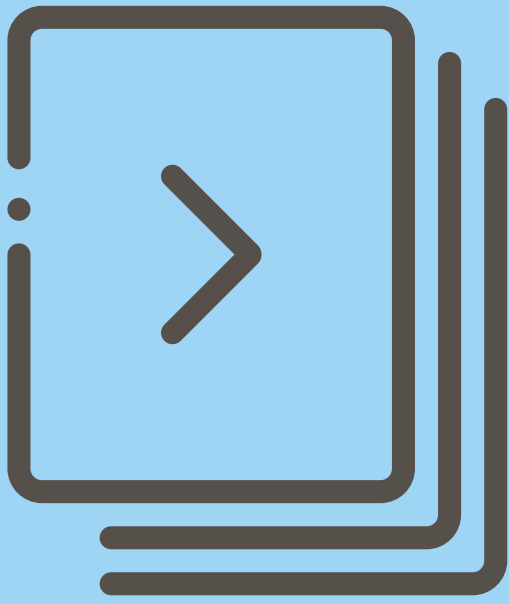
<sup>2</sup> SWG Competitiveness and Innovation



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 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

**FORMED:** 2015

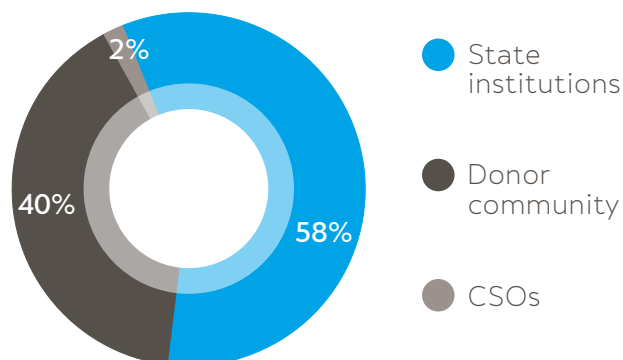
**NUMBER OF SWG MEMBERS:** depends on topics discussed by the working group; 117 members were invited to the last meetings, of which 3 were civil society representatives

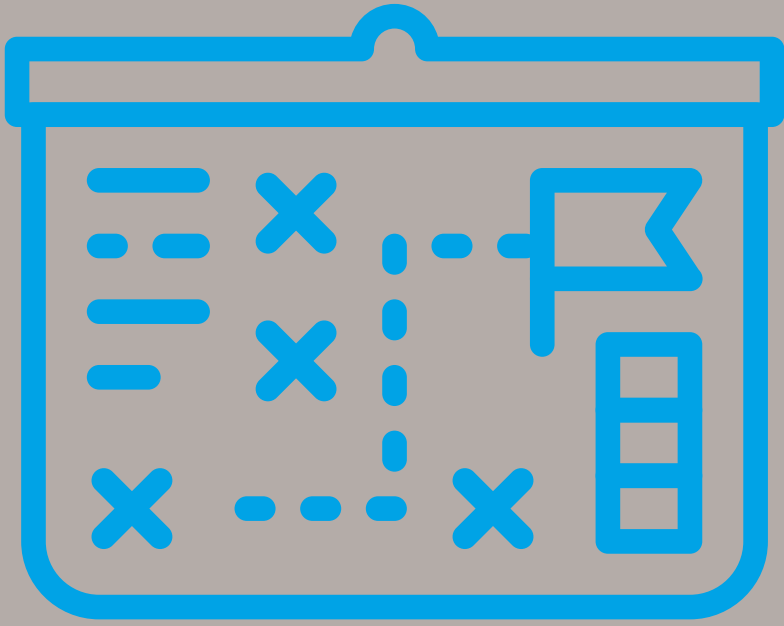
**NUMBER OF MEETINGS HELD IN 2021:** one plenary session held on 17.06.2021

**SWG CHAIR:** Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning

### **CHART 1.**

**Distribution of various representatives in SWG Environment and Climate Action**





# 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 Environment and Spatial Planning as the institution competent for this sector group. Responses to information requests have not been disclosed by the cut-off date for this report.

As regards field/online component, the project team **interviewed**<sup>3</sup> the coordinator from the ranks of civil servants at the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning, and organized a **focus group**<sup>4</sup> with civil society representatives that participate in the sector group. The focus group was attended by two from total of three civil society representatives.

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.

<sup>3</sup> Interview with the coordinator from the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning was conducted on 07.02.2022.

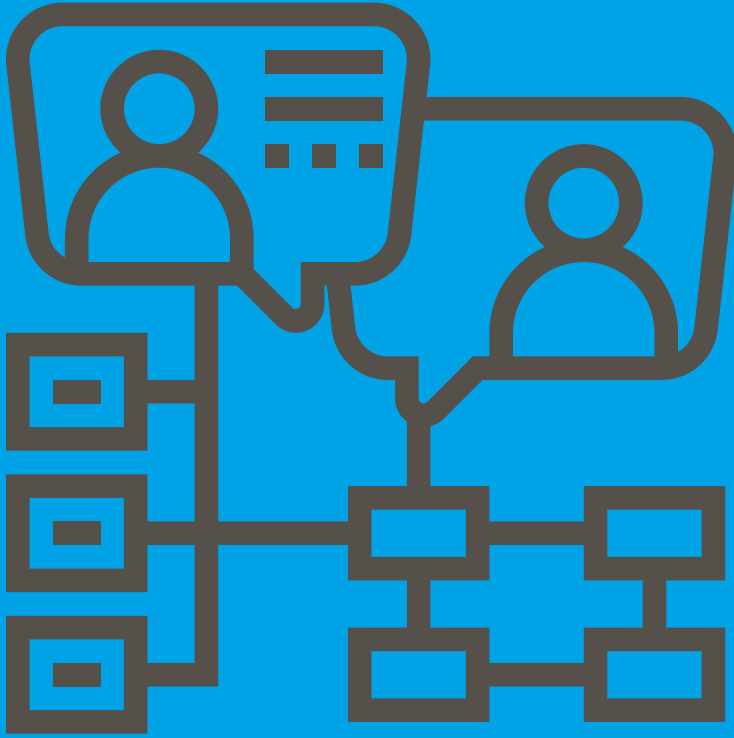
<sup>4</sup> Focus group with civil society representatives from SWG Environment and Climate Action was organized on 01.02.2022.



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 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

While in the course of 2019 and 2020 the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning was primarily focused on developing the strategic framework, i.e. laws and policies of key importance in the sector on environment and climate action, 2021 was the year when majority of these laws were adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia. In particular, 2021 legislative activities included adoption of eight laws, one of which concerned law amendments, as follows:

- Law on Declaring Part of Shar Planina as National Park;
- Law on Amending the Law on Ambiance Air;
- Law on Management of Accumulators and Batteries and Accumulator and Battery Waste;
- Law on Management of Electrical and Electronic Equipment;
- Law on Extended Producer Responsibility for Management of Separate Waste Flows;
- Law on Management of Packaging and Packaging Waste;



- Law on Management of Additional Waste Flows;
- Law on Waste Management.<sup>5</sup>

In 2021, the ministry's main focus was on waste policies, including environment and air protection. Adoption of laws was initiated with consultations on the Single Electronic Register of Legislation (ENER) of the Republic of North Macedonia back in 2019, and implied open discussions with civil society organizations. In addition to already adopted legislation, underway is the procedure for several other documents in different stages of drafting (submitted to government for approval or in parliamentary procedure):

- Law on Environment Inspection Supervision;
- Law on Environment Protection;
- Law on Industrial Emissions;
- Law on Climate Action.

On one side, the interviewed civil servant from the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning believes that, to great extent, these legal solutions included participation of civil society organizations with their ideas, mainly through public debates. On the other hand, civil society organizations that participated in the focus group and are members of this sector group reported selective invitation for participation in processes for creation of laws, depending on the subject matter. They provided examples when civil society organizations had to first create public pressure in order to expose shortcomings of laws under development so they could be later invited by the ministry to elaborate their remarks. In their opinion, the new practice implies some form of progress having in mind that they had not been involved in these processes in the past, but there is still great space for improvement in terms of civil society participation in policy creation, as well as in discussion of the ministry's future plans. In addition, civil society organizations underlined the need for greater transparency about steps in creation of laws and policies, including predictability of these processes, so they would be able to engage in meaningful participation.

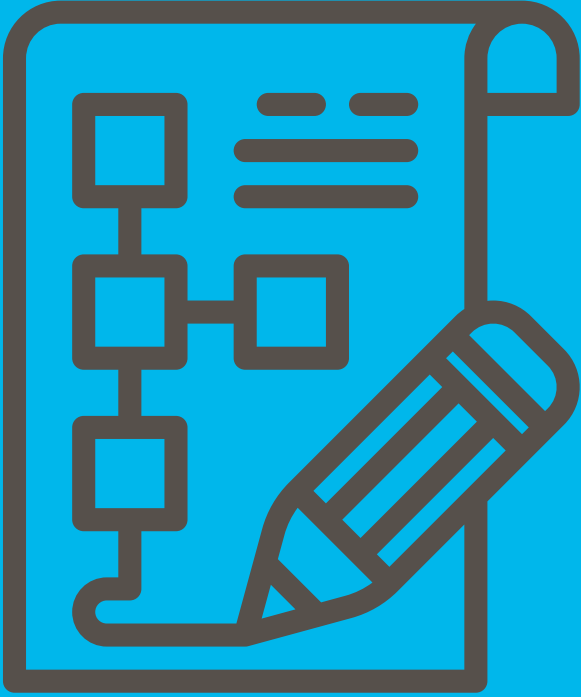
<sup>5</sup> Laws enlisted during the interview with civil servant from the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning.

Strategy documents, like plans and programs, that are of great importance for the sector on environment and climate action include the National Plan on Waste Management 2020 – 2030<sup>6</sup> and the Environment Strategy 2014-2020, whose validity expired in 2020. In the case of the environment strategy with expired validity, there are no additional information on possible implementation evaluation efforts, i.e. evaluation of its effects, and there are no announcements about the timeline for adoption of the new strategy document. Both strategy documents were not discussed by SWG Environment and Climate Action, as well as other laws reported in this document.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>6</sup> National Plan on Waste Management 2020 – 2030, available at: <https://bit.ly/2UmyfHK>

<sup>7</sup> Draft agenda for SWG plenary session held on 17.06.2021.



# PART 2

## SWG FUNCTIONALITY

### 2.1 RULES OF PROCEDURE

As noted in 2019 and 2020 reports for SWG Environment and Climate Action, this sector group does not have a document that governs its operation. In other words, this means that the sector working group operates according to the same principles from its formation, which do not include rigid rules for selection of SWG members, internal deadlines for scheduling meetings and procedures for holding meetings.

All in all, this setup puts under question the sector group's functionality. Lack of institutional framework, procedures and competences contributes to general unclarity about competences of this sector working group. Moreover, there are no regulations in place about participation of civil society organizations, which has been left to the good will of the competent ministry. Hence, the project team welcomes the initiative for development of SWG rules of procedure and formalization of its operation.

For example, absence of relevant rules of procedure that would govern submission of documents to SWG members has resulted in these documents not being shared with members in timely manner. Such was the case with the only plenary session organized in 2021,



for which invitations were not accompanied with documents that will be reviewed and discussed by SWG members. The ministry acknowledges this problem, i.e. oftentimes organizational matters are rushed and SWG members are asked to comment voluminous documents within short period of time, contrary to their actual ability to fully review them and form an opinion. Moreover, it is unclear who can serve as member or observer in the process, i.e. there is no clear division of SWG members and possible observers/participants from non-state actors.

On that account, the project team welcomes the initiative for development of SWG rules of procedures which, according to civil servants competent for this sector group, will be developed in cooperation with the current SWG members and anticipate equal treatment in terms of nomination and participation of SWG members from state and non-state actors. The draft version of this document was already presented for review to the Secretariat for European Affairs and is still in the stage of submission of comments, which will be followed by formal adoption by the sector working group.

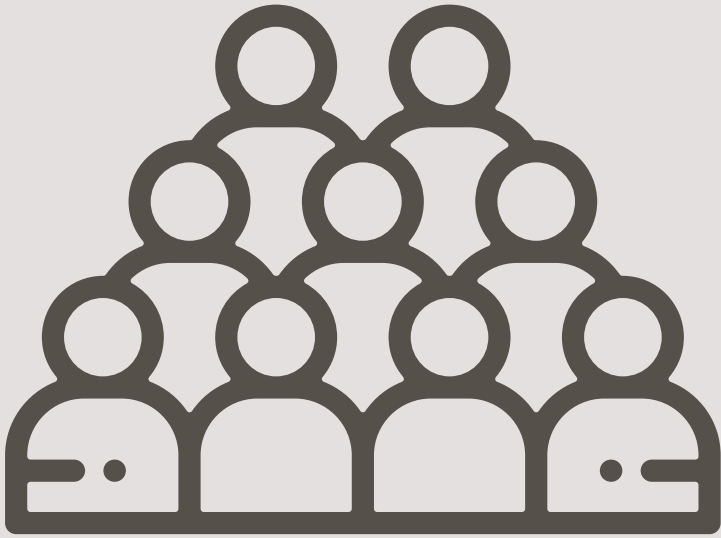
In addition to the ministry's initiative for formal adoption of draft rules of procedure that has failed, in December 2021, the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) initiated a meeting with all institutions that chair sector working groups to present and discuss the new draft rules of procedures for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

As regards transparency of SWG Environment and Climate Action, the ministry has still not published any information on this sector group on its official website. Information shared is sporadic and does not provide links to documents discussed. Hence, it is important to address this situation and make efforts to inform civil society organizations, as well as other interested parties, about work performed by this sector group.

## 2.2 ANNUAL PLAN AND ANNUAL WORK REPORT

As noted in 2019 and 2020, SWG Environment and Climate Action does not have annual work plans. Depending on the volume of materials and documents, this sector group usually organizes one to two plenary sessions per year, with meeting invitations of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning being forwarded to designated participants through the Secretariat for European Affairs.







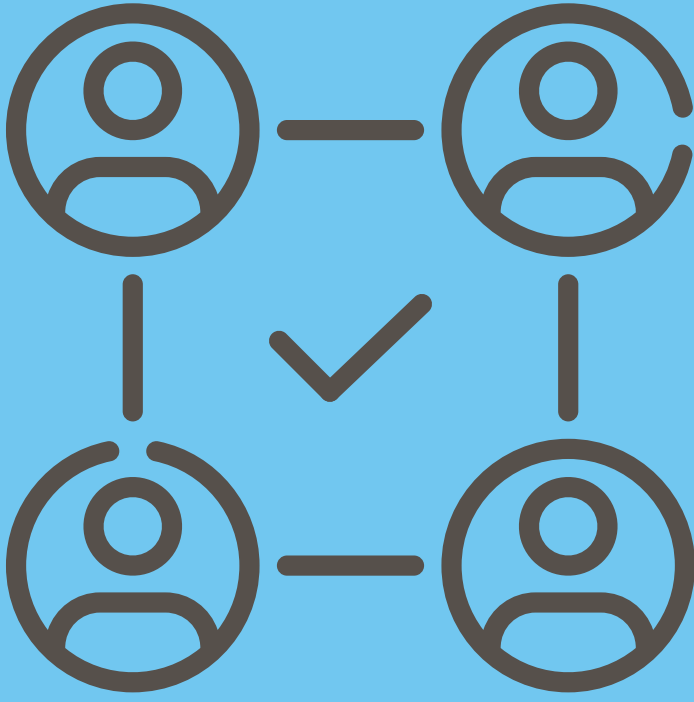
# PART 3

## CIVIL SOCIETY PARTICIPATION

Civil society representatives in SWG Environment and Climate Action are the same ones nominated by the Ministry of Environment back in 2016. In that, total of three civil society representatives participate in this sector group, of which one is member and the other two are deputy members. They represent the following civil society organizations:

- Eco-Life, member;
- Florozon, deputy member;
- Macedonian Ecological Society, deputy member.

According to insight into invitations distributed to SWG participants, it could be concluded that civil society representatives were invited to participate in the only plenary session held in 2021. However, civil society organizations that participated in the focus group were unsure of their role and whether they have been invited to attend SWG meetings. Having in mind that it was possible to establish that their e-mail addresses are included in the invitation for this meeting, the question is raised whether they have actually received the invitation mail or have not been sufficiently informed by persons responsible for leading these processes within the sector group. Hence, one main conclusion in this segment concerns the fact that communication among SWG members, the ministry and other civil society organizations that are active in the sector on environment and climate action need to be raised to higher level, primarily by means of timely information for civil society organizations and their representatives about anticipated activities of the working group, and by ensuing greater involvement of these organizations in the ministry's work.



# PART 4

## CSO CAPACITY

Capacity of civil society organizations that participate in SWG Environment and Climate Action remain on relatively high level, both in the opinion of civil servants from the ministry and according to the self-assessment of these organizations. On the other hand, there is actual lack of additional participation of civil society organizations that are not members of the sector group and the need for these to be involved in discussions on topics for which they have greater expertise compared to civil society organizations nominated for SWG membership. In the past and in 2021 as well, the ministry puts the emphasis on one topic within the sector on environment and climate action. For example, main topics covered by this sector group in the past concerned sectors such as waste, water and climate action, with different focus in the given year. Therefore, it is important to include expertise of other civil society organizations that are not SWG members, but have relevant expertise in different subtopics covered by this sector.

Having in mind that the project team was not invited to attend the plenary session held by this sector group, it is impossible to measure direct participation of appointed civil society representatives. On the other hand, lack of information reported by the two interviewed civil society representatives about what happens within the sector group, again prevents the project team to measure their impact on SWG work and their participation in competences covered by this sector working group.



# PART 5

## EFFECTS FROM SWG WORK

### 5.1 PLENARY SESSIONS

Given that SWG Environment and Climate Action does not have formal rules of procedures, it does not have a determined minimum or maximum number of plenary sessions. Based on previous practices, this sector group holds one to two plenary sessions during the year, depending on the needs and scope of planned activities.

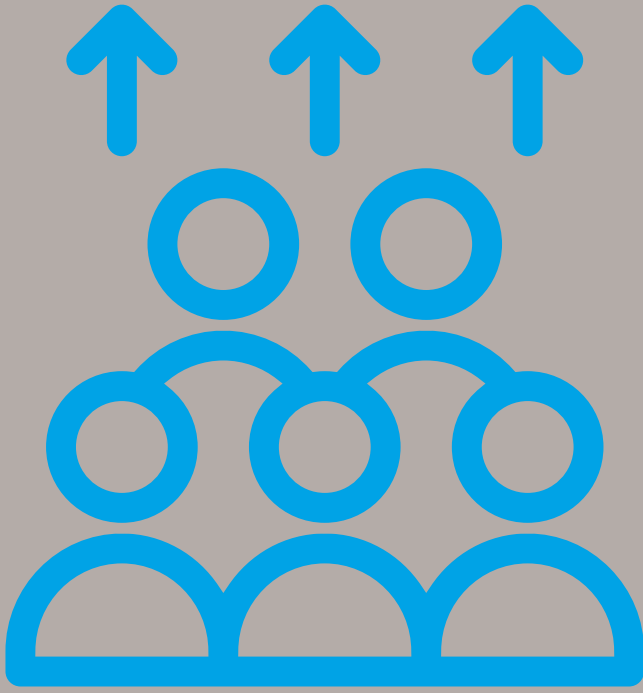
In 2021, this sector group held one plenary session on **17 June 2021**. The invitation for this meeting was distributed on 15 June 2021, but meeting agenda and accompanying documents were additionally forwarded by the Secretariat for European Affairs on 16 June 2021.<sup>8</sup> E-mail addresses of civil society organizations are on the list of invited stakeholders. Among total of 117 e-mail addresses, 3 belong to civil society actors, accounting for around 2% of the total number of participants invited to attend this plenary session.

As regards the meeting agenda, it featured discussion about the strategic response of the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning regarding thematic priority on environment and climate action under IPA III programme and action fiches for IPA III 2021 and 2022 action programmes. In addition, this plenary session included presentation of strategic indicators of UN agencies in respect to the sustainable development programme.

### 5.2 OPERATIONAL MEETINGS

SWG Environment and Climate Action did not hold any operational meetings in 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Insight into communications of SWG Environment and Climate Action.



# 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>9</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>9</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 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

IPA III funds anticipated for the sector on environment and climate action are part of WINDOW 3: Green Agenda and Sustainable Connectivity, thematic priority 1: Environment and Climate Action. Two action documents are developed for the year 2021 “EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air”, with total budget of 26,000,000 EUR, of which 22,000,000 EUR are anticipated from IPA III, and “EU for Prespa”, with total budget of 21,726,000 EUR, of which 18,000,000 EUR are anticipated from IPA III. Another action document is planned for the year 2022 “EU for Modern Waste Water System”, with total budget of 63,000,000 EUR of which 26,500,000 EUR are anticipated from IPA III.

Action fiches are still not developed for the action “EU for Clean Environment and Modern Crisis Management”, anticipated for implementation in 2023 and 2024, meaning that at the moment this action is addressed with strategic indicators in the earliest stage of development and they can be changed in the future.



**TABLE 1:**

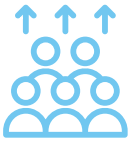
OPA III programming (2021-2027) in the sector  
on environment and climate action

**WINDOW 3:  
GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY**

**Thematic priority 2: Environment and Climate Action**

**Implementation period: 2021**

Action	Estimated total budget (million EUR)	Requested contribution from IPA (million EUR)	Implementation plan/arrangement
<a href="#"><u>EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air</u></a>	26	22	This action is anticipated for implementation under direct and indirect management by international organizations. <b>The action document</b> was submitted in March 2021 and the implementing decision was adopted by the European Commission in December 2021.
<a href="#"><u>EU for Prespa</u></a>	21.73	18	This action is anticipated for implementation under direct and indirect management by international organizations. <b>The action document</b> was submitted in March 2021 and the implementing decision was adopted by the European Commission in December 2021.



#### Implementation period: 2022

##### EU for Modern Waste Water Systems

63.0

26.5

This action is anticipated for implementation under direct and indirect management by the beneficiary country (or alternatively by international organization). Implementation includes service, goods and work contracts. **The action document** is developed and submitted to the European Commission's service in November 2021.

#### Implementation period: 2023 and 2024

##### EU for Clean Environment and Modern Crisis Management

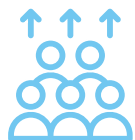
15.0

15.0

This action is anticipated for implementation under direct management.

**TABLE 2****2021 Action Document “EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air”**

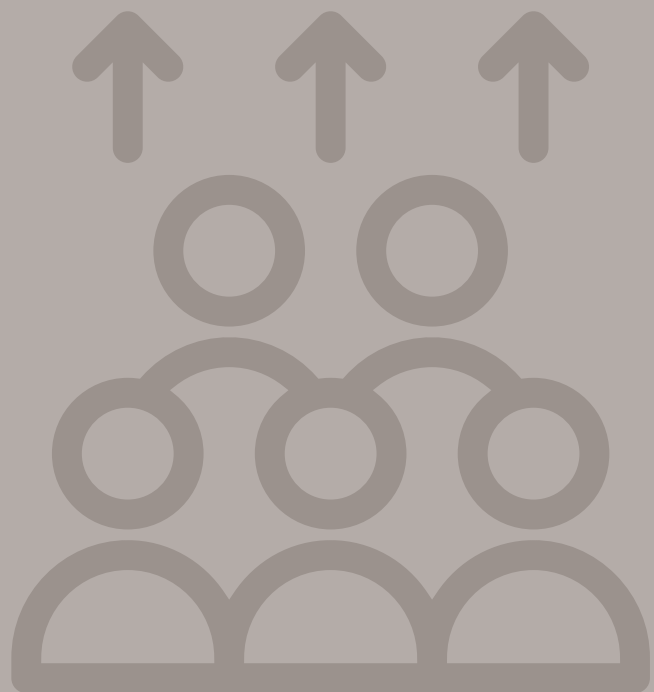
<b>2022 ACTION DOCUMENT “EU FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS AND CLEAN AIR”</b>		
<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<b>EU contribution (EUR)</b>	<b>Indicative third party contribution</b>
Legislative framework better aligned with the EU acquis and institutional framework enforced	4,450,000	
Planning and technical documentation for building the integrated waste water system for Skopje Region prepared	5,000,000	
Small pond of OHIS industrial site cleaned up	2,500,000	4,000,000
Pollution generated by the heating systems reduced	6,000,000	
Pollution generated by the public transport reduced	1,600,000	
Green belts created	400,000	
Preconditions for expansion of the central district heating in Skopje established	2,000,000	
Contingencies	50,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>22,000,000</b>	<b>4,000,000</b>

**TABLE 3*****2021 Action Document “EU for Prespa”***

<b>2021 ACTION DOCUMENT “EU FOR PRESPA”</b>		
<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<b>EU contribution (EUR)</b>	<b>Indicative third party contribution</b>
Decreased pollution from human activities	10,570,000	1,143,000
Natural resources preserved and protected	2,260,000	273,000
Increased share of environmentally friendly agriculture	1,270,000	20,000
Sustainable tourist product promoted and diversified	1,100,000	350,000
Strengthened strategic vision for development of the Prespa Trans-Boundary Area	1,820,000	1,770,000
Established border crossing point with Greece (Markova Noga)	930,000	170,000
Contingencies	50,000	
<b>Total</b>	<b>18,000,000</b>	<b>3,726,000</b>

**ТАБЕЛА 4*****2022 Action Document “EU for Modern Waste Water Systems”***

<b>2022 ACTION DOCUMENTS “EU FOR MODERN WASTE WATER SYSTEMS”</b>		
<b>Expected outcomes</b>	<b>EU contribution (EUR)</b>	<b>Indicative third party contribution</b>
1. Improved waste water collection and treatment infrastructure in the Municipalities of Shtip, Veles and Vinica in compliance with the Directive 91/271/EEC	26,500,000	36,500,000
<b>Total</b>	<b>26,500,000</b>	<b>36,500,000</b>





# 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>10</sup> In that, the ultimate goal is to achieve 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>11</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>12</sup> At the same time, EU membership is conditioned with respect and

<sup>10</sup> European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1185?lang=mk>

<sup>11</sup> 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.

<sup>12</sup> Article 2 of the consolidated version of the Treaty on the European Union, available at: <https://bit.ly/3s4gjyR>



promotion of fundamental European values.<sup>13</sup> 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,<sup>14</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>15</sup> GAP III is organized into five pillars and the third pillar anticipates activities in six key areas of engagement.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, GAP III reflects goals and objectives defined under the EU Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, IPA III defines gender equality as specific objective, but also thematic priority eligible for support.<sup>18</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>19</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>20</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid. Article 49, paragraph (1)

<sup>14</sup> 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>

<sup>15</sup> 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)

<sup>16</sup> 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.

<sup>17</sup> A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025, available at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A52020DC0152>

<sup>18</sup> 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>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> 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)



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.<sup>21</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 ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE ACTION

By the cut-off date for this report, the Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning (MESP), as the lead institution for SWG Environment and Climate Action, has not disclosed information requested under the instrument for free access to public information. In 2021, this sector group held one plenary session on 17.06.2021. Based on available data about documents reviewed at SWG meeting, it could be concluded that MESP's strategic response for IPA III under thematic priority on environment and climate action does not integrate the gender perspective, while strategic priorities of UN agencies presented at the same meeting imply gender mainstreaming. However, since MESP did not disclose any data and the project team was not invited to monitor the meeting, it cannot be concluded whether different needs and interests of women and men had been taken into account. According to IPA coordinator, thus far SWG meetings have not included discussion of gender mainstreaming in policies and documents.<sup>22</sup> In addition, MESP is the key institution competent for the action plan under IPA 2022 programme "EU for Modern Waste Water Systems" where gender equality is not enlisted among the objectives.<sup>23</sup>

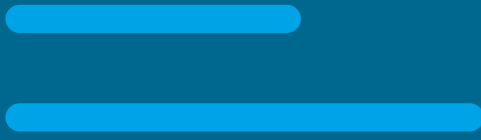
In 2021, the coordinator for equal opportunities of women and men at MESP was changed several times and was invited, but did not attend SWG meeting. Also, employees at IPA operational structure within the ministry have not attended any training gender-responsive operation.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>21</sup> EIGE, Glossary and Thesaurus, A-Z Index, available at: <https://eige.europa.eu/thesaurus/terms/1359?lang=mk>

<sup>22</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022

<sup>23</sup> Secretariat for European Affairs, IPA 2021-2027, available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/page/?id=1120#.Yfusd-rMJPY>

<sup>24</sup> Interview with IPA coordinator, 2022



## FINAL CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**1.** Efforts are needed to create and put into function the rules of procedure for SWG Environment and Climate Action, with clearly defined competences for SWG members and method for their selection. In addition, the rules of procedure should regulate technical aspects related to holding plenary sessions, for example, method for distribution of invitations and documents to be discussed at SWG meetings. Based on previous practices, especially in 2021, the role of civil society representatives remains unclear, and there is general lack of information for civil society organizations about the method of operation applied by this sector working group.

**2.** Greater communication is needed with civil society organizations in respect to expectations from their participation, and proactivity on the part of the ministry in terms of initiatives for strategy documents and laws. In particular, civil society organizations should be involved in earlier stages of policy creation and strategy documents, depending on topics for which they have relevant expertise.

**3.** Efforts should be made to increase transparency of SWG Environment and Climate Action by publishing information on SWG meetings held, allowing greater access to strategy documents, minutes and information on SWG members and participants. On one side, that would increase transparency of the sector group, but on the other hand, it will allow possibilities for organizations that are not members and/or are not invited to participate to obtain information about developments within this sector group.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY



- ◆ European Commission's 2021 Progress Report for North Macedonia
- ◆ Draft Performance Assessment Framework Indicators for SWG Environment and Climate Action
- ◆ National Programme for Adoption of the EU Acquis (NPAA) 2021-2025
- ◆ Transcript from interview with the representative from state institutions that participate in SWG Environment and Climate Action
- ◆ Transcript from focus group held with civil society representatives that participate in SWG Environment and Climate Action
- ◆ Insight in electronic communication with members of SWG Environment and Climate Action
- ◆ Strategic response for IP III WINDOW 3: GREEN AGENDA AND SUSTAINABLE CONNECTIVITY
- ◆ 2021 action fiche "EU for Environmental Standards and Clean Air" ????
- ◆ National Plan on Waste Management 2020 - 2030
- ◆ Environment Strategy 2014-2020



