



Republic of North Macedonia

**Ministry of Labor
and Social Policy**

Twenty-fifth anniversary of the
Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the
Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)

**REPORT OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH
MACEDONIA on the application of the Beijing Declaration and
Platform for Action (1995) and the results of the 2nd special session
of the UN General Assembly (2000) – Beijing +25**

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ACRONYMS

AVMS	Agency for Audio and Audio-visual Media Services
BDE	Bureau for Development of Education
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women
CSE	Comprehensive sexual education
CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CSWs	Centers for Social Works
EU	European Union
ESA	Employment Service Agency
GRB	Gender Responsive Budgeting
GBV	Gender-based Violence
GEF	Global Environment Facility
IOM	International Organization for Migration
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
IPARD	Instrument for pre-accession assistance for rural development
ISA	Institute for Social Activities
LAG	Local Action Groups
MoE	Ministry of Economy
MBSP	Minimal Basic Service Package
MoES	Ministry of Education and Science
MoEPP	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
MoH	Ministry of Health
Mol	Ministry of Interior
MolSA	Ministry of Information Society and Administration
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MolSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
MP	Members of parliament
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SGBV	Sexual and Gender-based Violence
SPGs	Sub-sectorial permanent groups
SSO	State Statistical Office
STIs	Sexually transmitted infections
THB	Trafficking in Human Beings
UN	United Nations
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UPR	Universal Periodic Review
WG	Multi-sectorial expert working group
ZELS	Association of Local Self-Government Units
WHO	World Health Organization

INTRODUCTION

Gender equality presents a common obligation and a priority of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, and, as such, it is a part of the Government's Work Program 2017–2020 and a commitment from the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, both on national and local level.

The general priority of the Government's Work Program 2017–2020 reads that the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia shall carry out a policy of promoting women's rights, and of increasing their participation in the political, economic and public life.

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia aims to achieve equality in society, by ensuring equal rights and entitlements to human, social, economic and cultural development, as well as an equal voice in civil and political life for women and men.

Purpose of the report

The purpose of this report is to highlight the achieved progress and the challenges encountered by the Republic of North Macedonia regarding the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, as well as the outcomes of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly held in 2000.

The preparation of this report was used to take stock of the achievements and achieved progress, but at the same time identify the remaining gaps and challenges.

Structure of the report

The report starts with a short introduction and description on how this report was prepared, followed by four sections described below.

Section one provides an analysis of priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks, focusing on the past four years 2015 to 2019. The last report submitted by the Government of North Macedonia was in 2014. This section also provides a snapshot of new and emerging priorities for the future.

Section two provides a detailed analysis of undertaken measures in order to advance gender equality across the twelve critical areas of concern, namely: women and poverty, education and training of women, women and health, violence against women, women and armed conflict, women and the economy, women in power and decision-making, institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women, human rights of women, women and the media, women and the environment, and the girl-child. Where available, for each of the areas, there is a concrete example of the measures that were taken, the encountered challenges and the accomplished achievements.

Section three covers the national machinery and national policy on gender equality and the empowerment of women, as well as the formal mechanisms for the participation of various stakeholders.

Section four highlights the progress on the availability of data disaggregated by sex and gender statistics and monitoring the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action with gender-responsive implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

PREPARATION OF THE NATIONAL REPORT

Institutional setup and communications

Leadership: The Prime Minister had the overall leadership of national-level review. The Minister for Labour and Social Policy as the head of the national mechanism for gender equality and the empowerment of women, being tasked with the most important role in proposing gender policies to the Government, exercised a coordinating role.

All-of-government approach and coordination: Inter-ministerial working group was formed, chaired by the MoLSP included representatives from all relevant ministries. At the preparation of the National report all relevant ministries and other governmental institutions were actively included through their coordinators for equal opportunities. With the Support of UN Women office in Skopje, on 12th April 2019 was held one workshop with all relevant ministries and other governmental institutions for finalizing the report.

Access to data: Up-to-date and disaggregated data informed this comprehensive national-level review. The role of and collaboration with national statistical office was essential.

All-of-society approach and collaboration: The inter-ministerial working group, chaired by the MoLSP included representatives from all relevant ministries, UN Women, members of CSOs that operate in the area of gender equality, particularly CSOs representing marginalized groups of women and girls, as well as members of the academic community of Republic of North Macedonia.

Multi-stakeholder participation and contributions

The report was prepared based on a national consultative process including a variety of national stakeholders. The report also reflects the information from the international human rights treaty monitoring bodies and the international review processes.

Stakeholders: This report was prepared with a high involvement and participation from all stakeholders. It included representatives of different branches and levels of the national and local government, as well as the voices/opinions of the civil society organizations, particularly women's organizations, organizations representing women and girls subject to multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination, other representative organizations such as trade unions, women's self-help organizations, youth groups, faith-based organizations, and professional organizations, as well as the private sector, including employers organizations, ombudsman representatives, the private sector, the media, and reflects the views of UN agencies present in the country. Collaboration with and outreach to academia was initiated and resulted in collected inputs.

Contributions: The national review process ensured a systematic outreach to and involvement of all key stakeholders. One workshop was organized with relevant stakeholders from national institutions, member of women organization, academia and UN Women and a questionnaire was sent to all institutions including CSOs. This was an opportunity for all relevant stakeholders to provide concrete contributions to the review process.

Role of the UN system: UN-Women Country Team, provided technical inputs and support, served as convener for stakeholder engagement and participation, and supported the data collection and analysis.

SECTION ONE: ANALYSIS OF PRIORITIES, ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND SETBACKS 2015-2019

1.Achievements, challenges and set-backs in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action, the Republic of North Macedonia has made a significant progress in the development and implementation of gender equality agenda. Building upon the activities and measures implemented in the previous reporting period, the government of Republic North Macedonia has strengthened and improved the overall response to gender equality and empowerment of women in society. Legislation, which prohibits discrimination against women was adopted. Programs and measures that promote the implementation of substantive gender equality in all areas were adopted and implemented, and various activities were carried out to raise awareness and eliminate barriers to gender equality.

Gender equality is one of the priorities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and is part of the Program of the Government (2017-2020). The Government's priorities specific to gender equality are:

- To end every form of discrimination against all women and girls,
- To eliminate every form of violence against all women and girls,
- To ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership on every level,
- To implement reforms that give women equal rights for economic resources,
- To adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality, and
- To ensure a universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

These priorities correspond with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDG 5 to which Republic of North Macedonia has expressed commitment in 2011. The following are the most notable achievements for the 2015-2019 reporting period.

Key legislative achievements

The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia as the highest legal act establishes and guarantees the principle of equality of all citizens regardless of gender, race, color, national and social origin, political and religious beliefs, property and social status. When it comes to gender equality in the Republic of North Macedonia the legislator adopted two approaches on level of legislation: enacting a special law that regulates the equal opportunities of women and men; and mainstreaming gender equality in other laws by including provisions containing positive measures that ensure gender equality.

The fundamental provisions on non-discrimination and gender equality at legislative level are contained in the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. The Law was first adopted in 2006 and further amended in 2012 to be harmonized with EU Directives. The Law regulates the issues of equal treatment of women and men.

The Law is aligned with the Non-discrimination Law (adopted in 2010) and proscribes general prohibition of discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment based on gender, race, skin colour, being part of a marginalized group, ethnicity, language, citizenship, social background, religion or religious belief, education, political affiliation, personal or social status, mental or physical disability, age, family or marital status, wealth status, health condition or any other basis in the public and private sector, and it extends the prohibition of discrimination in the field of employment and labour, education, science and sports, social security, also including the field of social protection, pension and disability insurance, health insurance and health protection, judiciary and management, housing, public information and media, information-communication technologies, defence and safety, being and member and acting as part of union organizations, political parties, associations and foundations, other membership-based organizations, culture and other areas regulated with this Law or with another law.

In 2019, a new Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination was adopted. The Law adds sexual orientation and gender identity as grounds for discrimination, something that was omitted with the 2010 law. The Law is harmonized with international human rights standards and EU directives for non-discrimination, especially regarding the definition of discrimination. The Law refers equally to all natural and legal people without individually separating any groups.

In 2015, the Law on Prevention, Combating and Protection against Domestic Violence was adopted, serving as the first special systemic law in the area of domestic violence. The Law establishes a complete and coordinated system to prevent, protect and combat domestic violence. It foresees continuous preventive measures to be undertaken by all stakeholders at a national and local level; raise awareness and sensitize the general and professional public; raise the level of responsibility for urgent, due and efficient actions of professionals and institutions for prevention and protection of domestic violence; and ensure the necessary, efficient and effective protection of victims, in accordance with their needs and interests.

The Law on Audio Visual Services was adopted in 2018. The Law proscribes equal representation of women in decision making bodies and in other organs in media, as well as prohibition of the creation and broadcasting of programmes that are discriminatory *inter alia* on basis of gender and sexual orientation.

The 2015 amendments to the Electoral Code improved the legal solution for the participation of both genders in the candidate lists for members of the parliament and local councillors. This is an important achievement, having in mind the under representation of women in political decision making. The amendments introduced a quota of 40 per cent participation on the party candidates lists for the less represented gender at parliamentary and local elections. This means that out of each three places on the list, at least one place is reserved for the less represented gender and additionally one more place on the list for each ten places.

With the 2015 amendments to the Law on Labor Relations, equal pay for women and men was proscribed. The Law on Labor Relations is currently being further amended and made compliant to the EU Parental Leave Directive that refers to the equal application of parental leave for both parents, hence eliminating the traditional role of women and men, as well as recognizing the joint responsibility of both genders in raising and upbringing children.

With the adoption of the Law on Minimum Salary in 2017, for the first time, the minimum salary was equalized for workers in the textile, leather and shoe-manufacturing industry, in which the largest percentage of employees are women.

In 2017, the Republic of North Macedonia ratified the Council of Europe Convention for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and in 2018 adopted the 2018-2023 National Action Plan for implementation of the Convention. The first activity that was initiated with the financial support of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees is the preparation of the Law on Gender-Based Violence.

In 2018 the Law on Social Protection was amended and extra-institutional protection was provided through the adoption of a new service-Centre for people who are victims of trafficking in human beings and victims of sexual violence. The amendments of the law signify a big step forward for the country in the enhancement of social protection, in a way that for the first time through this law the Republic of North Macedonia will separate the financial entitlements from the services. The reform aims to commensurate the amount of benefits, to the citizens' needs, thus reducing the level of poverty.

In 2015 the Criminal Code's amendments referring to Article 418 "Trafficking in Human Being" were adopted, based on GRETA Recommendations of the Committee of the Parties (2014) aligning it with the international legal documents from this area.

In 2019 the Law on Termination of Pregnancy, was adopted. This law proscribes a new administrative form with shorter deadlines, aimed at preventing the endangerment women's health and wellbeing by long administrative procedures.

In 2018, Amendments to the Law on Textbooks for Primary and Secondary Education were adopted in line with the National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018-2020.

Key achievements of gender equality and empowerment of women policy

The Gender Equality Strategy 2013-2020 and the subsequent National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018–2020 contains the following priorities:

- Establishing an effective and efficient system for achieving gender equality by means of functional support mechanisms at the national and local level, harmonizing indicators for measuring the progress of gender equality, and providing gender-disaggregated statistics;
- Integrating gender-responsive budgeting in policy and program creation;
- Sensitizing the public to the various forms of violence against women, and strengthening institutional capacities for taking actions aimed at protection of such victims;
- Harmonizing the legislation with the EU and international standards;
- Enhancing the level of gender equality in priority thematic areas, that is, in healthcare, education and employment;
- Building a culture of equal opportunities and promoting equal treatment and non-discrimination on the ground of sex.

The Strategy is the first document that provides a definition on gender-based violence in a comprehensive manner.

Upon the ratification of the Istanbul Convention in October 2018, the government of Republic of North Macedonia adopted the Action Plan for its implementation until 2023. The Action Plan will

ensure the comprehensive implementation of the Convention into the national legal and policy system and will override identified current gaps in legislation and policy.

In 2017 for the fourth time the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration developed a strategic document, the National Strategy and National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration (2017–2020). The Strategy and the Action Plan are aimed at increasing the efficiency of institutions, at a central and local level.

The Republic of North Macedonia enacted the National Employment Strategy(2016-2020) that aims to increase employment, job quality and productivity, with special focus on vulnerable groups of population. The Strategy's goals are to:

- Increase the effectiveness and the efficiency of employment policy, offering special support to the vulnerable categories of the population;
- Improve the capacity of the private sector for creating jobs; and
- Tailor education to provide knowledge and skills that fit the employer's needs.

Additionally, on annual basis, an Operational Plan for active programs and measures for employment and services on the labour market is being implemented in order to activate the labour market of the vulnerable categories with specific focus on women, in general, and minority women in particular. The Strategy importantly points out the gender differences in the labour market and strives to eliminate the existing gender pay gap in the country between men and women (in 2014 the gender pay gap according to the SSO was 9.1 per cent, and according to the Gender Gap Study in 2017, the gender pay gap was 17.5 per cent assuming that men and women have the same level of education, same work experience, and operating in the same sector).

The Government adopted the 2012-2017 Strategy for Introducing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), which focused on three strategic areas: 1) Introducing a gender perspective in the programs and budgets of budget users on a central and local level; 2) Improve the legal framework for the inclusion of gender responsive budgeting, and 3) Strengthen the institutional mechanisms and capacities that are required for incorporation of the gender perspective in the creation of policies and programs and related budgets.

In compliance with the strategy, the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia amended the budget circular (instructions) in 2013, by introducing a specific gender provision for central level budget users. To operationalize the Strategy on Gender Responsive Budgeting and facilitate the implementation of the new requirement in the budget circular, a Methodology on gender responsive budgeting was adopted by the Government in 2014. From 2013 to 2018, fourteen line Ministries and 3 state institutions have successfully implemented the methodology and prepared Gender Budgetary Statements for selected sectorial programmes. These Statements are submitted together with the budget requests for the upcoming year to the Ministry of Finance (MoF). Introducing gender responsive budgeting is a great achievement because it serves as a mechanism for ensuring transparency and accountability of the institutions. It enables to track spending and promote equal opportunities for women on a central and local level. In addition, in 2018 the government for the first time introduced gender in the instructions for the development of line ministries triennial strategic plans, which further strengthens the institutionalization of gender mainstreaming at national level.

In 2016, the existing 2010-2020 National Reproduction Health Strategy was amended and consolidated with the Safe Motherhood Strategy in order to comply with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global and regional initiatives. It aims to ensure a universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive right, and safe motherhood. This

contributed to the decrease in the infant mortality rate in the first six months from 2018 -17 per cent as opposed to 26 per cent at the same time in 2017.

The Strategy for Development of Women's Entrepreneurship for 2018-2023 aims at strengthening the economic empowerment of women by creating a favorable business climate and providing support for the development of women's entrepreneurial potential, which will contribute to the development of the existing and opening of new enterprises, jobs, and thus strengthening the overall economy. Republic of North Macedonia is one of the few countries in Europe that has established a statistical data base for women's entrepreneurship.

Key achievements in mechanisms supporting the North Macedonian whole-of-government approach towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women

The Sector for Equal Opportunities within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, as well as promoting gender equality on a central and local level. The role of the Sector is to ensure a whole-of-government approach in providing better economic and social outcomes for women. It also helps facilitate a whole-of-government approach to mainstreaming gender policy. From 2007 to 2015, funds allocated to the Sector were sufficient only to cover staff salaries. For the first time, the 2018 budget allocated separate funds for implementing activities foreseen by strategic documents in the area of gender equality.

There are coordinators and deputy coordinators for equal opportunities for women and men assigned in all ministries, and municipalities. They are civil servants, with obligations and responsibilities prescribed by the Law of Equal Opportunities of Women and Man.

Furthermore the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia established a Commission for equal opportunities of women and men on a national level, as a part of the national gender mechanism composed of members of the Parliament.

In 2017 the Government of Republic of North Macedonia established inter-sectorial consultative and advisory group in order to further strengthen the national gender equality mechanism. This is a diverse group with participants coming from the public, private sector, CSOs, and academia. The purpose of this group is to support the implementation of gender equality agenda and empowerment of women, including the implementation of Beijing Platform of Action.

In 2018, a Legal Representative has been appointed in compliance with Article 21 of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, whose legal obligation is to implement the procedures for identification of unequal treatment of women and men.

Challenges and set-backs in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women

Despite the progress in promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, it has been a challenge to fully implement the legislation. The main obstacles identified are low awareness of gender equality issues, gendered biased, gender stereotyping, prejudicial and confining "mind-sets", attitudes, values, beliefs and perceptions. Thus, the government recognizes that changing attitudes, behaviours and gender stereotypes in favour of gender equality is a long-term, but critical endeavour.

Even though women and men enjoy the same political rights, and despite of introducing a 40 per cent representation quota for women in politics, women are still underrepresented. This is especially evident in the Parliament and Municipality politics where quotas have not yet been reached.

Despite the intensive work of the government in the area of employment the achieved decrease in unemployment rate in 2018 was 1.4 per cent for men and 1.9 per cent for women. In 2018, 38 per cent of employed persons were women *vis-à-vis* 62 per cent of men. Low level of employment of women still remains a challenge especially with vulnerable groups of women.

Institutional challenges were also identified such as insufficient communication, coordination and capacity impeding the mainstreaming of gender across the government sector; insufficient technical, and financial resources, especially for the national women's machineries; and less efficient monitoring and evaluation of initiatives. Such limitations are perceived as impediments to economical, efficient, effective and equitable means of achieving, and being accountable for, gender equality and therefore government intends to address them in the up coming five-year period.

2.The priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls 2015-2019

During the reporting period (2015-2019) the Government of Republic of North Macedonia devoted due attention to the following top five priorities for accelerating the progress for women and girls in the country:

Eliminating violence against women and girls

In the last ten years, significant progress has been made in combating violence against women and girls. Working towards the elimination of violence against women remains a priority for gender equality policy. In recent years, efforts were primarily directed at passing appropriate legislation and policies, implementation of programmes leading to better protection of victims, improving inter-sectorial response and increasing capacities of relevant institutions tasked with the prevention and fight against violence against women and girls.

In 2017, the Government ratified the Council of Europe Convention for Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and gathered momentum in harmonizing its legislation and practice with the Convention.

In 2015, the Law on Prevention, Combating and Protection against Domestic Violence was adopted. For successful implementation of the provisions of this Law-five regulations were enacted: two by the MoLSP, two by the MoI and one by the MoH. These regulations prescribe:

- The method of implementing and monitoring the measures for protection against domestic violence,
- The assessment of risks on the life and bodily integrity of the victims and the risk of the violence repeating,
- The manner of enforcement of issued interim measures for protection of domestic violence victims and members of their family, and
- The method of enforcement of the interim measure for protection against domestic violence.

Pursuant to the law, multi-sectorial teams on local level have been established, tasked with ensuring protection of victims of domestic violence and referring cases of domestic violence to the competent institutions.

In 2015, a Protocol for cooperation between competent institutions and associations for protection and combating domestic violence was adopted. The Protocol ensures comprehensive and efficient implementation of measures for prevention, combating and protection against domestic violence.

In 2017, a National Coordination Body against Domestic Violence was established. The Minister of Labour and Social Policy is the Chairperson of this body, and members are representatives from: the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MoLSP), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Justice (MoJ), Ministry of Education and Science (MoES), the Parliament, the Judicial Council, the Public Prosecutors' Council, the Ombudsman and civil society association.

Inter-agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) for prevention and response to gender-based violence (GBV) in crisis situations are part of the 2016 Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health. They relate to situations of crisis/emergency situations.

The MoI continuously conducts trainings related to gender-based violence of its staff, through experts in the specific area. In 2017, the training titled "Hate crime" was organized for employees in the Public Safety Bureau. A "Manual for police officers for providing gender sensitive services for supporting persons who have suffered domestic violence" was promoted in May 2018, adding to the enhanced reply from authorities to violence against women, and increasing the liability of persons committing domestic violence. Currently, there are four regional centres for sheltering people who are victims of domestic violence in Skopje, Kocani, Bitola and SvetiNikole (established at 2018), and 5 victims have been sheltered so far, in the centre in Skopje.

Based on GRETA Recommendations of the Committee of the Parties (2014) the new Law on Foreigners was adopted in 2018 that regulates the temporary stay permit for victims of trafficking, the period for recovery and reflection, and the securement of more rights for the trafficking victims.

The National Mechanism for Referral of Victims of Human Trafficking within the MoLSP is working on prevention of human trafficking and protection of the victims in the context of implementing the National Strategy and Action Plan for fighting human trafficking and Illegal migration (2017-2021).

In order to improve the identification and protection of trafficking victims and ensure effective prosecution of perpetrators, the following activities were implemented:

- A Programme for assistance and support during reintegration was developed targeting victims of human trafficking including children. This programme is implemented by social workers.
- The MoLSP in cooperation with key stakeholders developed indicators for identification of human trafficking victims.

In order to strengthen the cooperation and to identify the vulnerable categories of people, including victims of human trafficking, in January 2018 a Memorandum of Understanding between the MoI and the MoLSP was concluded. The Memorandum provides for the legal basis for the establishment of Mobile Teams for the identification of vulnerable categories of persons, including victims of trafficking in human beings. Mobile teams are established in five cities throughout the country: Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Bitola and Gevgelija. They are comprised of social worker, police officer and representative from the civil sector.

Furthermore, the Centre for Victims of Trafficking was adapted to encompass victims of sexual violence that shelters victims up to six months based on the amendments to the Law on Social Protection from 2018.

Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice

The government has strived to incorporate the equal possibilities principle that resulted in integration of the gender perspective in the laws, bylaws and internal acts in the area of internal affairs (Law on Internal Affairs, Article 8; Law on Police, Article 96; Police Code of Ethics, Article 58; Collective Agreement of the Ministry of Interior, Article 76 and Article 77; Decree on the Uniform and the Emblems of the Police, Article 28 and 33; Rulebook on Training in MIA-Article 2; Rulebook on the Manner and Procedure of Achieving a Career System of the Officials in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, Article 6; Rulebook on the Manner and Procedure of Assessment of the Authorized Officer, the Content of the Report on the Performed Assessment, Assessment Form and Manner of Keeping Records, Article 2; Rulebook on the Manner and Procedure of Selection and Election of Persons Employed in the Ministry of Interior Affairs, Article 3).

The 2013-2020 Gender Equality Strategy is based on principles of gender equality and enjoyment of human rights, as cross-sectorial issues. It provides specific goals regarding the integration of gender mainstreaming in the national processes of policymaking (through strengthening the gender equality mechanisms and developing harmonized indicators for measuring gender equality progress pursuant to the national laws and international conventions), and intervention in sectorial priority areas as well, such as in education, employment, agriculture, health, gender-based violence, human trafficking, media, human rights and in peacekeeping activities.

The principle of non-discrimination and equality was also embodied in number of other laws regulating various fields, such as in Law on Labour Relations and the Law on Higher Education.

The Law on Free Legal Aid established the legal frame for equal access of the citizens to justice and to the institutions of the system. Free legal aid is approved in all courts and administrative procedures. It can be used for rights in the area of social, health, pension or disability insurance, labour relations, protection of children and minors, victims of domestic violence, protection of victims of offences, protection of victims of human trafficking, recognition of asylum and property and legal issues. Regional offices of the Ministry of Justice and authorized citizens' associations are included in providing legal aid, while lawyers are included in providing the legal aid in the court and administrative procedures. These legal measures improved the access to justice of the vulnerable categories.

Political participation and representation

Even though in Republic of North Macedonia women's education is on a higher level than that of men, this is not reflected in the political participation and equal representation in politics. Therefore, the government of Republic of North Macedonia took steps to improve and promote the political participation and representation of women.

The persistent lobbying by CSO Macedonian Women's Lobby and the consensus reached by women politicians resulted in increasing of the quota for women participation in politics through legislation. This is in line with the Specific Strategic Goal 2.1 of the Gender Equality Strategy that envisages increased gender-responsible participation of women in decision-making processes in the legislative and executive branches, and in party politics.

Thus, given the new amendments to the 2015 Electoral Code, the legal solution for the participation of both genders in the candidate lists for members of the parliament and councilors have been improved by introducing a quota of 40 per cent participation on the party candidates lists for the less represented gender at parliamentary and local elections. In the parliamentary elections in 2016 there were 41 women MPs elected, out of a total of 120 MPs. In this MP mandate, the deputy Speaker of Parliament is a woman, 5 women are presidents of parliamentary commissions and 7 are deputy presidents of parliamentary commissions. There are 4 women ministers in the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. On the local elections in 2017, out of 260 candidates for mayors, only 15 were women candidates, out of which 6 were voted for a mayor. Out of 1388 councilors in local self-government, 415 women were elected as councilors.

Gender-responsive budgeting

Following the expiration of the duration of the Strategy for Introducing Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB), the Government has embedded gender-responsive budgeting as one of the key priority areas under the National Action on Gender Equality for 2018-2020. The Republic of North Macedonia has been involved in the UN-Women regional project for Promotion of Gender Responsive Policies in South East Europe, implemented since 2011 in several phases. From 2013 to 2016, the second stage of this project was implemented and involved development, adoption and implementation of a methodology for gender responsive budgeting, including strengthening capacities for its implementation. The methodology obliges budget users at the central level to choose one program for gender analysis and develop gender output indicators for that program. In this direction, the methodology establishes the process for selection of the programs, the steps for implementing a gender analysis and the method for defining gender indicators. This methodology guides the institutions in the process of developing Gender Budget Statements that the institutions should submit along with budget requests for the selected programs for the upcoming year. The project also focused on strengthening the capacity at central and local levels on gender responsive budgeting and facilitates exchange of experiences and knowledge for its implementation. By 2018, 14 line ministries and 3 state institutions have received capacity development training and continued mentoring on GRB, under leadership of the Department for Equal Opportunities. At local level 21 local self government units have been supported through the UN Women program and with the support by the MoLSPto pilot GRB initiatives and engender local programs and budgets. As a result, total of 88 local sectorial programs have been engendered by introducing gender specific measures, along with respective budgetary allocations. In addition, GRB was integrated into specific local development/or gender equality strategies in six LSGUs.

In cooperation with UN Women, the MoLSPis in a final phase of signing a memorandum to open a regional resource center for gender-responsive budgeting and knowledge-sharing. Given the Government's commitment to gender issues, the Republic of North Macedonia will coordinate this process, and thus, will contribute to the development of the economy and human capacity in the region.

Access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights

The Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health(2018 – 2020) was adopted in compliance with the United Nations SDG 2030. The Action Plan links the objectives and results stemming from the Agenda for Sustainable Development at national level, enabling efficient and effective monitoring of the state progress in the realization of sexual and reproductive health.

Annually, the MoH prepares and implements health programs that specifically target women. The Program for active health protection of mothers and children was implemented with the view/perspective to improve the health of children and women in the reproductive period and reduce infant and maternal mortality.

In 2016, an evaluation of the existing National Reproduction Health Strategy (2010-2020) was conducted in order to comply with the SDG 2030 and other global and regional initiatives. In addition the MoH assessed the programs for screening of breast and cervical cancer. An internationally recognized methodology based on evidence for developing reproduction health clinical guidelines is currently being implemented. The first pilot guideline is for postpartum hemorrhage, as number one cause of maternal mortality.

In 2013 and 2014, an assessment, was made of all the maternity hospitals. In 2015, based on this assessment an Action Plan was prepared and initial steps for implementing the WHO methodology on mother mortality and morbidity "Beyond the numbers" were taken.

In 2017, an assessment on the condition of the emergency obstetrics and infant care was made. The purpose was to ensure equal access and quality of the health services during pregnancy and childbirth, with special focus on vulnerable groups.

Pursuant the Government's commitment to improve access to health care for women, and to provide health care to women in pre-natal and post-natal period, the MoH has started to provide a free health care for pregnant women during the antenatal period regardless of insurance status including vulnerable categories of pregnant women. All the other diagnostic and laboratory examinations, as well as the act of giving birth are included in these check-ups. Currently 90 per cent of the women in the country have access to pre-natal and post-natal care.

The process of electronic submission of applications for compensation of sick and maternity leave of companies to the Health Insurance Fund has been promoted, thus making the administrative procedure more efficient. This model allows automatic control and calculation of the payments for sick leave, swifter payments of the compensation for sick and parental leave, reduced red tape, and smaller burdens for companies, thus preventing discrimination against women and limitations to access to the labor market.

3.Measures to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of women and girls who experience multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination

Racial, ethnic or religious minority women

Pursuant to the Government's adoption of the Strategy for Roma (2014-2020) the MoLSP adopted a National Action Plan (2016–2020) for implementation of the strategy aimed at strengthening the position of Roma women in society. The planned activities within this Plan provide increased access of Roma women to resources and opportunities for their development and participation in economic, social, and culture life; reduced level of domestic violence against women; decreased prevalence of marriages/communities between and with minors, and their impact on education, health and gender role.

The "Roma Health Mediators" project implemented during the reporting period aims to overcome the obstacles in communication between the Roma population and healthcare workers, to identify persons and families who have no access to healthcare, to improve the accessibility to healthcare, to provide healthcare insurance and free healthcare services through the MoH's preventive and curative programs, and to overall improve the health status of the Roma population.

This project is on-going and there are currently 15 healthcare mediators in eight municipalities with predominantly Roma populations. The healthcare mediators are placed in local healthcare centres of the concerned municipalities, and are easily accessible to the population and healthcare workers. In 2015, 9245 people were visited by the mediators, of which 4403 men and 4842 women. In 2016, 5492 people were visited by mediators, of which 2962 were men and 2980 were women and in 2017, 5498 people were visited by mediators, of which 2583 were men and 2915 were women. Furthermore, 12 Roma Information Centers in 12 municipalities are functioning in present time where 16 persons are engaged, out of which 5 are women. Roma Information Centers work in the field by providing timely information, counseling, referral and logistical support to the citizens in the realization of their rights and obligations. In the period from January to March 2018, 2354 services were provided, 46.5 percent of which targeted women who contacted the Centers (services to women were provided in the areas of employment 92 services, social protection 626, 53 in the field of health care, in the area of education 67, housing 85, anti-discrimination 2, personal documentation 108 etc.)

Women living in remote and rural areas

The National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development has been adopted for the period of 2014 to 2020 and it includes a chapter on improvement of the position and the role of women from rural environments with the view to improve their access to the labour market, having in mind their low rate of employment. (in 2014 only 28.3 per cent of rural women over 15 years of age were employed as opposed to 55.4 per cent of rural men over the 15 years of age).

The MoLSP in cooperation with the Committee of equal opportunities of men and women in the local communities and CSOs continuously organize public debates and meeting with women in rural areas of the country to familiarize them with national and local policies related to gender equality and equal opportunities.

In 2013, as part of IPA Component IV, IPARD 2, the project "Strengthening the Capacity for Integration of Women from Rural Environments in the Labour Market, with Special Focus on Women from Ethnic Communities" was implemented. The project's objective was to assess the needs of

marginalized women, especially women from ethnic minorities and women living in rural areas, so they may enhance their potential for employment on the labour market. The project aimed at strengthening the capacity and the cooperation between relevant subjects for integrating marginalized women on the labour market, with special focus on women from ethnic minority groups. The program makes a gender distinction between applicants in one of its measures- "Investments in agricultural holdings." Gender distinction is applicable for the benefit of women applicants-if the applicant is a woman more points are awarded in approving the applications. Thus, from its inception in 2009 until the end of 2016, the requests of 645 women's have been paid, representing 26 per cent of the total approved and paid applications in favour of women applicants. In 2018, the total applicants were 108 and from them 30 applications were from women, which makes 28 per cent of total applications of the IPARD Programme 2014-2020. The project resulted in recommendations in the context of greater attention to the needs of marginalized women and creating employment programmes according to their needs, as well as strengthening the existing partnerships on a national and local level.

Towards improving the living conditions of women in rural areas and their involvement in policy making processes and the utilization of available funds, women have been involved in the work of the sub-sectorial permanent groups (SPGs) for regulating agricultural markets for certain agricultural products or groups of products. The SPG are comprised of representatives from agricultural producers' associations, production and agricultural products, as well as from high-education scientific institutions from the respective field of agriculture, consumer associations and the Agency for agricultural development. In 2018, the number of female members in the SPG was 50, of which 19 were eligible to vote, and the others had an advisory role.

Migrant women

In 2016 during the migrant crisis in Republic of North Macedonia, the Parliament adopted amendments on the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection which addressed two issues: family reunification and the concept of a safe third country. Inter-agency standard operating procedures (SOPs) for prevention and response of gender-based violence (GBV) in crisis situations were developed as part of the 2016 Action Plan for Sexual and Reproductive Health in situations of crisis/emergency situations and the Standard Operational Procedures for dealing with unaccompanied minors.

In 2016, three specialized trainings were implemented on clinical management of rape for 64 service providers, out of which 50 were healthcare professionals. The MoH prepared the training in accordance with the Minimal Basic Service Package (MBSP) for Reproductive Health Services during humanitarian crises. These procedures cover the roles and obligations of each sector that is involved in the prevention of and response to gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV), both in unnatural and natural emergency situations and in a situation of peace. Inter-agency standard operating procedures in crisis situations (SOP) have initially been drafted in order to be implemented in the reception centers, as well as in other locations in the country, where refugees, migrants or internally displaced persons may be located.

In the transit Centers, through its social protection workers, the MoLSP provides assistance and support to all migrants registered by the police. Regarding women and girls, for the needs of transit Centers, the Ministry developed internal guidelines and a referral protocol for vulnerable migrants and identifying the victims of violence or human trafficking. The MoH offered 24/7 health services in the mobile clinics set in the reception and transit centers and set a mobile gynecological clinics that had female medical staff on board in order to provide comfortable environment for migrant and

refugee women. In 2016, 520 migrant/refugee women received medical services within the framework of the mobile gynecological clinics in the transit centers Tabanovce and Vinojug.

4.Increasing number of humanitarian crises—caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events-affected the implementation of the BPfA's influence on the country

The increasing number of humanitarian crises—caused by conflict, extreme weather or other events—had no effect on the implementation of the BPfA in Republic of North Macedonia and the processes of working towards gender equality.

5. Accelerating progress for women and girls through laws, policies and programmes 2019-2024

The Republic of North Macedonia has come a long way concerning gender equality. Various governments have worked with and prioritized the promotion of gender equality. However, even though a significant progress has been made in achieving gender equality and empowerment of women in many areas, particularly in legislation and policy, barriers to substantive gender equality still exist. The changing of social and cultural patterns is a long-term process, and actual gender equality cannot be achieved through short-term measures. This is also true for reaching equal representation of women in decision making a process interconnected to the changing of social and cultural patterns and improving economic status of women.

Therefore, the Government of Republic of North Macedonia sees the following areas as critical for accelerating the progress for women in girls for the coming five-year period.

Equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice

The Government intends to continue to actively mainstream gender and gender equality into concrete laws strategies and action plans, including on a municipal level, in order to improve public services.

During the following period the implementation of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination is a priority. Additionally, amendments to all laws that relate to this law will be implemented accordingly.

With the view of the limited effectiveness of the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men, at the municipal level, further amendments to the law will be defined.

The Government will work towards developing of the New Gender Equality Strategy for the period of 2020 onwards and Action Plan in line with Beijing Principles, SDGs and supporting alignment with gender equality facility EU *acquis*.

The government will include gender as a priority into the new National Strategy for implementation of the SDG and provide programs and measures that correspond with the SDGs targets especially regarding gender-Goal 5 and will mainstream the principle of equality and non-discrimination throughout all 17 Goals.

The Government sees the need to improve the transparency of its work in the area of gender equality and to strengthen the cooperation with the civil sector and the academic community in the creation of laws, policies and programs for gender equality.

The government intends to intensify the efforts to promote human rights of women and to create better institutional capacities for their effective protection. In order to achieve that the government intends to work with all national institutions to identify gaps and bottlenecks in the processes of protection of women and accordingly to devise programs and include additional solutions in already existing programs.

During the reporting period the government dedicated efforts to strengthen the function of the gender equality mechanism, and it intends to continue to enhance it, by strengthening the coordination and oversight function of gender equality mechanism implementing results-oriented reporting. Corresponding to the fact that the government will adopt measures to strengthen the decision-making capacity and authority of the Department for Equal Opportunities, currently under the MoLSP, and to secure sufficient funding allocated for its functioning and for implementing public policies and strategies relating to the Convention.

The government of Republic of North Macedonia intends to conduct gender equality assessment in the Public Sector with the view/perspective that gender and gender equality should be conceptually included in public administration and planning whenever relevant. A special focus will be allocated to core public services and citizen-centered service provision. This will contribute to a more efficient resource utilization, improved quality and increased diversity while at the same time promoting gender equality.

Finally, the government will strengthen its statistical and data collection systems at the national and local levels to ensure the collection, analysis and dissemination of comprehensive data, disaggregated by sex, age, ethnicity, location and socioeconomic background, on all areas covered by the CEDAW Convention and the SDGs.

Eliminating violence against women and girls

Pursuant the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence and the adopted National action plan for implementation of the Convention 2018-2023, the first activity that will be implemented is the preparation of the Law on Gender-Based Violence.

Draft amendments to the Criminal Code are in the process of further harmonization of the legislation of the Republic of North Macedonia with the Istanbul Convention regarding acts of sexual violence, including rape.

The Government intends to assess the judicial practices in the area of domestic violence with the view to identify whether the judicial practice is aligned with the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. This is based on the fact that the Government will undertake concrete measures, and improve the position of female victims of domestic violence involved in judicial procedures. For example, strengthen legal training and capacity-building programs for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other legal professionals on CEDAW and the Council of Europe Convention for preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence

Additionally, the Government intends to establish a mechanism for collection of information of legal processes at all levels within the justice system including the police, the prosecution and the courts, aiming at monitoring the effectiveness of all relevant actors regarding complaints filed by women, particularly of gender-based violence and other forms of discrimination.

Political participation and representation

The government will consider further amending the Electoral Code in order to extend the use of quotas and to include the elections of mayors at a local level in the law.

Additionally, targeted measures, such as a gender parity system, will be developed for the accelerated recruitment and appointment of women to decision-making positions in public administration, including the diplomatic service, law enforcement and military.

More importantly, programs promoting equal participation of women in decision-making processes at all levels in the public and private sectors will be developed. These programs will focus on ensuring that all ethnicities, women from rural areas and women with disabilities have access to decision-making positions and mechanisms in public institutions.

Gender-responsive budgeting

The government has identified gender responsive budgeting as a powerful tool to advance gender equality and will continue to enhance gender equality and the gender perspective in budgeting policies and practice. The ongoing reform in the Public Finance Management represents an entry point for systematic and sustainable application of GRB as a tool in the policy making and budgeting processes, as the means to improve transparency and accountability to gender equality commitments. Furthermore, it will enable the country to respond to the CEDAW Concluding Observations and the latest EU Progress Reports for the country, which recommend further efforts for increasing budget transparency, improving public financial management reforms and strengthening efforts to advance gender equality including through increased financial allocations. These recommendations are aligned with the 2030 Agenda and the adopted Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), where, among others, the level (share) of expenditure for gender equality and empowerment of women will be used as an indicator to measure the progress on gender equality.

Changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes

In order to change negative social norms and gender stereotyping, the Government will develop training programs for all relevant professionals across sectors on eliminating gender stereotyping.

Also, the Government will adopt a comprehensive and community-based strategy aimed at eliminating discriminatory gender stereotypes and harmful practices against women and girls, including by strengthening the review process of textbooks and curricula, ensuring access to education for girls in the most disadvantaged areas, and their regular attendance. For this the Government will engage with civil society organizations, including parents, youth organizations in urban and rural areas, private associations and the business sector and men.

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has established a National Coordinative Body for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect. The focus of the work of this body in the past period was on the development of indicators for collecting data for children victims of violence. In the course of 2019, the National Coordinative Body for the Protection of Children from Abuse and Neglect will work on the preparation and adoption of a Strategy for the Protection of Children against Violence and Abuse for the period 2020-2024 with the Action Plan 2020-2021.

Lastly, the Government of Republic of North Macedonia in cooperation with international organization, the CSOs and other relevant actors will continue to conduct regular public campaigns directed at promotion of the position of women in society and diminishing gender stereotyping.

SECTION TWO: MEASURES TAKEN TO ADVANCE GENDER EQUALITY ACROSS THE TWELVE CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

The country recognizes the need to advance the development, prosperity and labor agenda with respect to advancing gender equality. Following are some of examples of measures and programs taken during the reporting period.

6. Actions to advance gender equality in relation to women's role in paid work and employment

- **Introduced /strengthened gender – responsive labor market policies (education and training, skill, subsidies)**

In 2014, in the 15-64 age population 37.4 per cent of women were employed and 56.6 per cent of men were employed showing a very low level employment of women compared to that of men. In 2018, in the 15-64 age population 40.1 per cent of women were employed and 60.5 per cent of men were employed showing small but significant increase of 6.7 per cent of women's employment. The last five years, the Employment Service Agency (ESA) invested efforts to improve the equal participation of men and women in active employment programs/measures, including participation of at least 30 per cent of young people up to 29 years old. In order to meet the labor market needs, the ESA through its Employment Centers developed and implemented services for increasing the labor force competitiveness. Special attention was given to ensure the equal participation of men and women.

Table 1: Per cent of women participation

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Employment programs and measures	43	50	57	50	56
Total number of employment services	43	45	46	46	49

(* In employment services a person may be involved in multiple employment services or in a variety of activities within an employment service).

Additionally to overcome the barriers and increased employment of women (balancing private/professional life, and the discrimination on the labor market), the Employment Agency in 2015 prepared programs, measures and projects taking into account the equal participation of women and men. Some of the offered services were: job seeking assistance, where 44.8 per cent of participants were women; motivational trainings where 45.53 per cent of participants were women; and trainings for preparation for employment where 56.64 per cent of participants were women. In 2016 the Agency implemented training at the workplace with subsidized employment where 47.6 per cent of participants were women; trainings for basic computer skills and foreign language where 58.56 per cent were women; and training for satisfying demand occupations on the labor market where 68 per cent were women. The 2019 Operational Plan for Active Programs and Measures for Employment and Services in the Labor Market will continue to set out the employment programs, measures and services with the aim to ensure new jobs are available, support to create new jobs and

increase the employability of the unemployed persons, especially the youth, social welfare beneficiaries and women.

- **Strengthened/enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation**

The amendments of the Law on Labor Relations incompliance with the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination and the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, prohibit discrimination and stipulate that the employer must not place the applicant for employment or the employee in an unequal position based on racial or ethnic origin, skin color, gender, age, health status or disability, religious, political or other belief, union membership, national or social origin, family status, property, sexual orientation or other personal circumstances. The Law specially points out that women and men must be provided with equal opportunities and equal treatment in relation to:1) access to employment, including promotion and vocational and professional training in work;2) working conditions;3) equal pay for equal work;4) professional social security schemes;5) absence from work;6) working hours and7) cancellation of the employment contract.

In 2016 with the Decision of the Constitutional Court the legal age limit for women's retirement remains to be 62 years of age in accordance with the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance and that of men 64. However, in order to achieve equality between the men and women in retirement the Court has created the legal possibility of both genders to be able to extend the retirement limit up to 67 years of age equalizing their retirement limit.

Ministry of Economy (MoE) has developed a Strategy for Development of Women Entrepreneurship, with an Action Plan (2019-2023). The Strategy aims at economic empowerment of women, and elimination of discriminatory practices in the labor market towards women by creating enabling business environment and providing support to the development of their entrepreneurial potential, which shall contribute to the development of existing and starting new enterprises, creation of new jobs and hence, enhancing the overall economy.

- **Taken measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace**

In order to prevent harassment at a work place based on gender and in accordance with the Law on Protection from Harassment at the Workplace, from 2013, the Strategy for Gender Equality 2013-2020 and the Action Plan for Gender Equality 2013-2016, the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MoISA), in cooperation with the MoLSP, has developed modules for gender equality for employees of the state administration with the view, among other things, to prevent sexual harassment, or any other harassment based on gender. Therefore, every employee in the administration is obligated to complete the E-training on gender equality. The measure targets both central level public administration officials as well as local level administration officials. As of December 2018, 3,167 central level public officials have completed the training (basic 1,583, advanced 1,584) and the course is ongoing for 15,295 (8,120 basic, 7,175 advanced). There are approximately 12,000 employees in public sector institutions, so we envisage the second phase to continue through 2020.

The MoI created the "Unit for training and development of the staff and representation of communities and equal opportunities of the sexes," that will conduct trainings on gender equality for its employees aimed at achieving gender equality and eliminating work place harassment based on gender.

7. Actions to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work and promote work-family conciliation

- **Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable**

The MoLSP and the government of Republic of North Macedonia have developed a special social programs for parents of children with disabilities, that enables parents' access to shorter working hours with a full pay, that is substituted by the government thorough the Centers for Social Work.

In order to provide a comprehensive care for children that also meets the needs of parents in relation to working hours, in 2017 the MoLSP with the Decision on determining working time schedule in the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the ministries and other state administration bodies, has expanded the working hours of the kindergartens introducing a two-shift work including the first working Saturday of the month.

Table 2: Beneficiaries of the subsidies for full working hours of parents to children with disabilities

Year	Beneficiaries
2014	71
2015	81
2016	97
2017	108
2018	139

Additionally, the MoLSP intensively works on expanding the capacities of the institutions for care and education of preschool children. In the course of 2018, a total of 24 kindergarten facilities with a capacity for 1959 children have been opened, out of which 5 are private kindergartens with a capacity for 750 children. In 2019, construction, adaptation, extension and equipping of 25 kindergartens in different urban and rural areas are planned, with which the capacity of the kindergartens will increase by 1,669 children. At the same time, through the IPA 2017 project, the building of two new facilities for kindergartens are planned for which funds in the amount of 1,500,000 euros have been secured. In addition the MoLSP together with the World Bank intends to implement a program on further expanding the network of public pre-schools in rural and urban areas and to expand the existing capacities and building new capacities, especially in the municipalities where there is no access to institutional forms of childcare and upbringing. For this purpose, funds have been secured through a loan from the World Bank in the amount of 22 million euros. In the next four-year period, as a result of the planned activities, the coverage of children in pre-school institutions is expected to increase further by 50 per cent.

- **Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave**

Amendments to the Law on Labor Relations introduced the opportunity for parents to obtain an unpaid absence from work for caring of minor children, for a period of at least 3 months up to age of thereof child. Also, now during the use of the additional unpaid leave on the basis of parenting, the parents have the right to financial compensation based on pregnancy, childbirth and parenthood.

Table 3: Maternity leave compensations in 2017

Pregnancy and birth	Employed-New mothers	Total new mothers	Number of employed women	Number of maternity leaves on 1000 employed ensured women
9 323	470	9 793	251 063	39

Moreover, the government is constantly increasing the funds for maternity leave that corresponds with the increase of the rate of numbers of maternity leaves per year. Thus, the funds for 2017 are increased by 4 per cent comparing to the funds of 2016 and 9 per cent from the funds that were allocated for maternity leaves in 2015.

To ensure that men may care for their own children, Republic of North Macedonia will introduce paternal leave exclusively for fathers through the new amendment of the Law on Labor Relations in line with the EU Parental Leave Directive that refers to the equal application of parental leave for both parents. Thus we expect to have fathers drawing parental benefit in the upcoming period.

8. Austerity/fiscal consolidation measures introduced and their impact on women and men

Republic of North Macedonia has not introduced austerity/fiscal consolidation measures in the past five years, such as cuts in public expenditure or public sector downsizing, and thus there had been no impact on processes towards gender equality.

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

The country had invested continuous efforts to reduce or eradicate poverty, improve access to social protection, health and education for women and girls. In that context, the following are some of measures and programs undertaken during the reporting period:

9. Actions to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls

- **Promoted poor women's access to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures**

One of the government priorities through the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men is the reduction of the risk of poverty and increasing the social and labor inclusion of socially disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

Through the Operational Plan for Active Programs and Measures for Employment and Services on the Labor Market for 2017 of the Employment Agency, specific Services for Activating Individuals at Risk of Social Exclusion, were implemented. Through these services 510 unemployed persons (419 Roma and 91 persons from other categories of unemployed people, out of which 244 were women) were informed about the employment opportunities and active employment programs and measures. Services for activation of young unemployed persons were implemented as well involving 503 young unemployed people out of which 231 were women, by informing them about employment opportunities. In 2018, the activation service for unemployed Roma was implemented as well, including 1,125 unemployed Roma, out of which 549 were women.

In 2017, the Employment Agency participated in the project "Involving women from ethnic communities on the labor market". This project was funded by the European Union, managed by the Central Financing and Contracting Department and implemented by the CARE Germany/Luxembourg International Organization and the Women's Civic Initiative ANTIKO. The goal of the project was to achieve an inclusive labor market in North Macedonia, especially for vulnerable categories of persons. Through the project, a number of trainings were organized for women belonging to vulnerable groups. In the trainings for strengthening of economic capacities and potential organized under this program participated 1199 women, and internships were provided for 30 women in the business and public sector. In 2015 the Employment agency implemented a program for conditional monetary compensation for subsidized employment of people in social risk with the goal to encourage enterprises to employ persons in social risk, thus 29 contracts with employers were signed for the employment of 33 people, 10 of whom 30 per cent were women.

IOM Skopje in 2016-17 implemented a project on enhancing employability of Roma, especially Roma women through skills development- 47 women completed vocational trainings and 20 women took part in on-the-job trainings. As a part of the activities, IOM also organized Thematic sessions tackling obstacles that hinder women's participation in the labor market, such as discrimination stereotypes, traditional norms and lack of gender-based support services. Altogether 367 women took part in these sessions.

- **Supported women's entrepreneurship and business development activities**

The (MoE) as a responsible institution for creation of policies for development and support to micro, small and medium-size enterprises and entrepreneurship development, recognizes the importance of strengthening the role of women in the overall economic activities. From 2012, MoE implements

a specific measure called financial support for women entrepreneurs. This measure is foreseen within the Annual Program for Competitiveness, Innovation and Entrepreneurship. Through this measure, enterprises that are owned and managed by women are subsidized. Subsidized enterprises are provided with co-financing of 60 to 70 per cent of the costs for: equipment procurement, space arrangement, child care, product design, development of visual identity of the product/service and introduction of software solutions. The maximum amount that can be allocated per applicant is 150,000 Macedonian denars. Through this program the MoEco-funded projects of citizen associations and foundations aimed at supporting and promoting women's entrepreneurship.

In 2015 out of 9 co-funded projects, 2 were for women entrepreneurship. In 2016, out of 11 co-funded projects, 6 projects were for women entrepreneurship. In 2017, out of 24 co-funded projects, 11 projects were for women entrepreneurship and in 2018 out of 7 co-funded projects, 1 project was for women entrepreneurship.

The Self-Employment Program is an active measure of employment from the Government's Operational Plan for Employment, which has been implemented since 2007. This program aims to foster entrepreneurship and supports the creation of start-up businesses that will provide sustainable employment, not just for founders themselves, but also for others who will be employed in these early and sustainable businesses. An analysis conducted by the MoLSP in 2017 show that through this program women entrepreneurs have established businesses throughout the country

Table 4: Total amount of allocated funds, number of applicants and number of subsidized enterprises owned and managed by women, by years

Year	Budget for the Measure - financial support for women entrepreneurs (MKD)	Total amount of allocated funds (MKD)	Number of applicants	Number of subsidized enterprises
2012	1.820.000	1.667.117	78	18
2013	1.330.000	1.283.116	30	18
2014	1.400.000	1.107.546	26	12
2015	1.800.000	1.050.420	18	15
2016	2.000.000	1.999.999	39	23
2017	2.400.000	1.729.786	36	18
2018	2.000.000	1.993.598	46	16

and in all municipalities.

Below is a three-year breakdown of all registered businesses and how many were registered by women entrepreneurs.

Table 5: Registered business by gender and year

Year	Number of register business	Number of businesses registered by women, in numbers	Number of businesses registered by women, in per cent from all registered business per year
2015	947	331	35
2016	1008	427	42.3
2017	1316	493	37.5

10. Actions to improve access to social protection for women and girls

- Improved access to the above for specific populations (e.g. women in informal employment, including domestic workers; migrant and refugee women; women in humanitarian settings)

In 2018, the Parliament adopted the new Law on International and Temporary Protection. The law pays special attention to especially vulnerable groups in need of protection, such as pregnant women and victims of violence. At the same time, it provides MoLSP with a legal obligation to develop appropriate by-laws ensuring systematic and formal provision of social protection to these groups. In the case of emergencies, as well as within the refugee reception facilities, the MoLSP ensures 24/7 access to social workers and services to vulnerable groups.

During the 2015 and 2016 European Refugee Crises, around 1 million of migrants and refugees had transited the country on their way to seek asylum in western European countries. The Government had opened two reception-transit centers where migrants and refugees received basic humanitarian aid and temporary shelter. The governmental agencies, together with UN agencies and NGO representatives ensured implementation of several gender sensitive measures, as follows:

- Development, adoption and implementation of the Interagency SOP for prevention and response on gender-based violence in the time of humanitarian crises/emergencies
- Architectural design of the reception camps to include separate access to sanitary facilities for women and girls, locating temporary shelters at the secure locations with enough lighting of the paths
- Employment of female social workers and psychologists to ensure gender sensitive protection and psychosocial support
- Opening of SOS lines, info points and special women and children points to ensure access to information, mechanisms to report violence
- Establishment of women educational groups and groups for psychosocial support.

- Ensured access to health protection and specific reproductive-health care within the reception centers free of charge.

There are also examples of programs on local level directed at improving access to social protection of people belonging to specific population. For example, in 2017, the Municipality of Veles has allocated 330.000 denars under a special budget that supports the realization of the municipality's operational plan for equal possibilities. With the help of this budget, the municipality provided financial assistance to single-parent families and victims of domestic violence. The aim was to promote new forms of social services and encourage measures for vulnerable groups on a local level.

- **Introduced or strengthened conditional cash transfers**

In order to create an opportunity for children coming from households beneficiaries of social financial assistance to continue with secondary education, the government has implemented a conditional cash benefit program. Through the programme additional financial assistance of 12,000 denars per month is provided to the recipients of social financial assistance whose children attend classes regularly. Based on findings received through the program's evaluation that mothers manage these resources more efficiently than fathers and direct them only towards the children's educational needs conditional cash transfer is now transferred to mothers only. In 2014/2015 educational year, there were 6751 beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfers, in 2015/2016 - 5347 beneficiaries, in 2016/2017 there were 4900, and in 2017/2018 there were 3787 beneficiaries of the conditional cash transfers.

- **Introduced or strengthened social protection for unemployed women (e.g. unemployment benefits, public works programmes, social assistance)**

The Program for municipal-useful work is directed at the social inclusion of people who have difficulties entering the labor market. Through the program individuals that have difficulties entering the labor market are provided with trainings to acquire the needed skills and are gradually included in the labor market through initiating public work programs. The persons included into the program provide services for the needs of the citizens from the local community while gaining experience and professional skills which will improve their employability in the future.

The program also contributes to increasing of the social services offered in accordance with the needs of the local community. During the period of 2013 to the end of 2015, from the total of 518 unemployed individuals who were hired within the program, 74.52 percent were women and in 2016, the program involved 229 unemployed persons, of which 179 were women.

On a local level, programs were developed through the introduction of the Local Action Plans for Promotion of Equal Possibilities of Women and Men. For example, the Municipality of Bogdanci through the Local Action Plan of 2015, developed a program that aimed at helping single mothers and mothers of children with disabilities by organizing individual meetings with them and facilitating their inclusion in working arrangements such as public work programs, and providing free child care for single parents with low monthly income.

11. Actions to improve health outcomes for women and girls

- **Promoted women's access to health services through expansion of universal health coverage or public health services**

The existing 2010-2020 National Reproduction Health Strategy was amended and consolidated with the Safe Motherhood in order to ensure a universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive right, and safe motherhood to all women in the country.

The health care of women in the reproductive period is provided through a network of health facilities at all three levels of health care. On the primary level, prenatal health care is provided by gynecologists, as well as by patronage nurses. The percentage of pregnant women who have access and benefit from prenatal and postnatal care is relatively high and ranges about 90 per cent. Doctor assisted deliveries are maintained at a high level at 99.9 per cent. The policy measures implemented are contributing to lowering the infant mortality that have spiked in 2016. Numbers for 2018 are available only for the first six months and show decrease in the rate, 2018 -17 per cent as opposed to 26 per cent in the same time in 2017.

Table 6 Infant mortality

Year	On 1000 life births
2014	9,9
2015	8.6
2016	11.9
2017	9.2

The patronage service conducts patronage visits to the home of the mother after leaving the maternity ward. The number of pregnant women who have access and benefit post-natal health care (visits from a patronage nurse) is about 83 per cent.

The MoH has introduced several measures to increase the availability of health care for pregnant women, especially for vulnerable groups of women who are facing financial barriers:

- Free examinations and laboratory examinations during pregnancy for uninsured women;
- Free delivery of pregnant uninsured women, Roma women, women from socially vulnerable categories and persons without identification;
- Free hospital treatment of infants from uninsured mothers, Roma women, women from socially vulnerable categories and persons without identification, and
- Exemption from paying for pregnancy related health services, at all levels of health care. This is for pregnant mothers who have health insurance.

In 2015 the Government repealed the participation of citizens in the costs for the health services during the pregnancy. This included the costs for variety of health services such as: microbiological

swabs, laboratory examinations of blood and urine, urine culture, and PRISCA test for the detection of genetic anomalies. The costs are covered by the annual programs implemented by the MoH such as the program for covering the cost for participation (for insured women) and the Program for active healthcare for Mother and Child (for uninsured women). The later measure facilitates access to health services for vulnerable groups of women.

According to the annual Program for Early Detection of Malignant Diseases, free preventive examinations are continually provided for screening of breast and cervical cancer to all women.

- **Expanded specific health services for women and girls, including sexual and reproductive health services, mental, maternal health and HIV services**

Counseling centers for sexual and reproductive health are established within the ten Public Health Centers in the country. The counseling centers provide free counseling on sexual and reproductive health, contraception and promotional materials. At several different locations (Institute of Public Health, Public Health Centers, Clinics for Infectious Diseases and Febrile Conditions), free and confidential testing and counseling for HIV is performed. Two mobile clinics provide free and swift HIV and Hepatitis C testing in 11 cities in the country.

- **Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes**

In 2018, a multi-sectorial expert working group (WG) was established with the aim to propose a model for the implementation of comprehensive sexuality education as part of the formal primary education. Between March and November 2018, the WG met to discuss the opportunities and constraints related to the introduction of comprehensive sexuality education. The WG advocated for the implementation of an age-sensitive and comprehensive program on sexual and reproductive health and rights. The target group was children from the pre-school age, and children in secondary education. The WG prepared models for piloting the comprehensive sexuality education program. The models were submitted to the MoES to determine the financial implication of the piloting. At the same time, the WG is preparing an action plan and a Teacher Manual for the piloting of the model, including workshops on comprehensive sexual education.

In addition, two manuals have been prepared for sexual and reproductive health educators for adult learners, one for peer educators who will supervise training organized by the CSO HERA with cooperation of the MoH, and the other intended for primary school teachers who want to carry out teaching in the sphere of sexual and reproductive health, expanding the existing program for Life Skills Education for the first to the ninth grade.

- **Provided refugee women and girls as well as women and girls in humanitarian settings with access to sexual and reproductive health services**

During the 2015 European Refugee Crises, the Government opened reception and transit centers where migrants and refugees received basic humanitarian aid and temporary shelter. The Government ensured access to health protection and specific reproductive-health care within the reception and transit centers. In the transit centers of Tabanovce and Vinojug the Ministry of Health supported the work of mobile gynecological clinics that had female medical staff on board in order to provide comfortable environment for women in need. In 2016, 520 refugee women received medical services within the framework of the mobile gynecological clinics. Pregnant women were

taken to nearby hospitals for delivering their babies free of charge. In the reception center Vizbegovo the medical services were secured by the center itself, through subcontracting medical personnel free of charge. Secondary and/or tertiary medical protection was accessible to the migrant and refugee women and was free of charge as well. In the secondary health protection institutions in 2015 4 refugee women gave birth, in 2016, 8 and in 2018 1.

12. Actions to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls

- **Strengthened educational curricula to increase gender-responsiveness and eliminate bias, at all levels of education**

An analysis of the curriculum and the textbooks for Macedonian language conducted by the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) for the second grade in 2017 has shown that textbooks use stereotypical views of the role of women and men in private lives. The analyzed textbooks referred to women as homemakers (housewives), in charge of taking care of the home, children and the cooking, and were portrayed as kind and sensitive. Male characters were presented mostly as part of the public life, with professions such as doctors, dentists, workers and teachers. One of the recommendations that resulted from the analysis was to eliminate stereotypical representation of gender roles/professions, and to encourage diversity, individuality, solidarity and creativity, regardless of gender. Thus in 2017, the Working Group established to analyze the content of curricula, programs and textbooks in terms of promoting equal opportunities for women and men issued recommendation. As a result, the MoES withdrew two textbooks from use that discriminated against different grounds, including gender and sex. In 2018, again the Working Group analyzed the content of the curricula, and textbooks and it found that 90 per cent of the revised curricula, textbooks and plans are gender-sensitive and do not contain discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and gender identity. In the cases where it was found that there was discrimination promoted in the materials reviewed, recommendations were issued and were subsequently implemented by the MoES.

- **Promoted safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments for women and girls**

MoES aims to build a clean, safe and harmonious school environment. As part of promotion and prevention activities regarding security in schools and clean environments, the Ministry has been organizing a competition for "The cleanest and safest school" among the schools in the country for several years. The MoES makes a public call and defines specific criteria based on which the school's safety and cleanliness is assessed. From the submitted applications, three primary and three secondary schools are selected that had the highest ranking and are taken as example by other schools.

The Law on Child Protection specifically prohibits all forms of violence under all circumstances and provides for an obligation for all citizens to report any violence against children as soon as they find out about such an act/deed. Although there are no specific legal measures for dealing with peer violence at the moment, Article 64 of the Law on Primary Education provides certain steps and measures that should be taken in cases when the student / student participates in physical or other forms of violence, that includes, family, counseling and special programs.

A Parental Advice Program for Primary Schools and a Program for counseling of students in elementary schools were adopted by the MoES. The programs regulate the conduct of the professional services in the schools with the students and refer to primary school students who have been identified that have reduced learning success and/or manifest various forms of inadequate behavior in school.

In 2018 the first children's Embassy-Megashi in cooperation with MoES implemented a program that included four trainings on Bullying and violence in schools. A campaign against peer-to-peer violence named: "Words hurt too, Bullying? Not in my school" was carried out, with more than 30 billboards and a city light installed in several cities in the country. As part of the program trainings were also offered to teachers on resolving bullying cases in schools, with the aim to increase their knowledge on bullying and bullying forms including methods of peaceful resolution of bullying.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

The elimination of violence against women, stigma and the accompanied stereotypes has been a government' priority in the past ten years.

13. Forms of violence against women and girls prioritized for action

- **Intimate partner violence/domestic violence, including sexual violence and marital rape**

In the past five years the focus of the fight against domestic violence has been on establishing a more efficient system for prevention and protection against domestic violence. As a result, in 2015 the first special systematic Law on Prevention, Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence entered into force, adopting and implementing measures for the protection and redress of victims of domestic violence.

Pursuant to the new law, a multi-sectorial teams on local level have been established mandated to work on protection of victims and to refer cases of domestic violence to the competent institutions. Progress has been noted in the past five years in increased issuance of protection measures in cases of domestic violence identified with the participation of the teams that also indicates an increased awareness of domestic violence on the part of courts.

Table 7: Number of domestic violence victims 2014-2018, and services CSW-MoLSP data

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Victims of domestic violence	999	1129	1098	1081	919
Women	722	810	779	778	665
Initiated measure for protection before courts by the CSW	350	451	749	653	545
Shelter service	30	43	30	20	56

The MoI has strengthened the data collection processes on domestic violence and has been analyzing trends in this area in continuity. According to data collected in the last five years, the Ministry concludes that there is a continuous increase in the criminal acts related to domestic violence: a 12 per cent increase is noted in cases of domestic violence registered in 2014 with cases registered in 2018. Increase of 57 per cent was also noted in cases of murder during domestic violence from 2014 to 2018. The analyses show that the most vulnerable categories identified are the wives/intimate partners. The most common factors that influenced the commission of the criminal acts of domestic violence identified were mental disorder of the perpetrators and/or the use of alcohol.

In 2018 a crises center for women and girls victims of sexual violence was established with the cooperation of the MoH, CSO La Strada and CSO "Za srekno detstvo." In the city of Skopje the first Family Center for working on domestic violence is functioning continuously and it implements an

integrated approach to treating domestic violence, *i.e.* working with perpetrators, as well as working with victims of domestic violence- women and girls.

- **Trafficking women and girls**

The National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration developed a strategic document, the National Strategy and National Action Plan for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration (2017–2020). The Strategy and the Action Plan are aimed at increasing the efficiency of institutions, at a central and a local level. In order to strengthen the cooperation and in order to identify the vulnerable categories of persons, including victims of trafficking, in 2018 a Memorandum of Understanding between the MoI and the MoLSP was concluded. The Memorandum provides the legal basis for the establishment of Mobile Teams-for the identification of vulnerable categories of persons, including victims of trafficking in human beings. In the period March-December 2018, the mobile teams initially contacted, informed and assisted 390 beneficiaries (362 nationals and 28 international), out of which 9 victims of trafficking, 104 potential victims of trafficking, and 277 vulnerable categories. Out of the total number of assisted 169 were men (43 per cent) and 221 women (57 per cent). The number of identified victims all women, is almost 5 times more in comparison to 2017. According the age, 7 out of 9 victims were children below 18 years (77.7 per cent) while 2 were aged 19-30 years, while from the potential 81 (78 per cent) where below 18 years of age, while 23 (22 per cent) were aged between 19- >51 years. From the vulnerable categories 156 (56 per cent) where below 18 years of age, while 121(44 per cent) were aged between 19 – above 51 years. In addition, out of the total number of identified and supported victims and potential victims40 (9 victims and 31 potential victims) have been directly assisted through the established Direct Assistance Fund, with majority of them being women. The assistance for the beneficiaries included medical support (psychological, psychiatric, hospitalization, dental and medicines), education (online courses and vocational training courses), purchase of food (weekly or monthly needs), hygienic items (weekly or monthly needs), clothes and therapeutic assistance.

In 2014, the Government adopted a Program for Support in the Reintegration of Child Victims of Trafficking. The program aims at enabling a comprehensive application of legal instruments, providing for systematic support and assistance to children victims of trafficking by the relevant institutions, facilitating access to services, sustaining reintegration and preventing re-trafficking. The program is implemented through the MoLSP and staff from the centers for social work, in co-operation with NGOs. The SOPs for the Treatment of Victims of THB from 2018, regulate the procedure of the application of the Program of reintegration of children of trafficking. The procedure provide in case of identification of child victim of trafficking an expert team from the center for social work makes a risk assessment according to the Family Assessment Form, foreseen in the Program for Assistance and Support for Reintegration and Re-socialization of Children Victims of Trafficking. The assessment of the family is carried out in order to determine the eligibility of the family and its capacities for participation in reintegration and re-socialization. The monitoring of the implementation of the children's reintegration program lasts at least one year, but can be extended if the expert team of the center for social work considers this as necessary.

Children in street situations aged four to 14 are taken care of in day centers which have been opened by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy or are run by NGOs and co-financed by the Ministry. In addition to the three already existing day centers, one new center had been opened by

an NGO. Children in the day care centers receive health care, education and other necessary services aimed at including them into society and preventing their labor exploitation.

14. Priority actions to address violence against women and girls

- **Introduced and strengthened violence against women laws, and their enforcement and implementation**

In 2015, the Law on Prevention, Combating and Protection against Domestic Violence was adopted. As a first special systemic law in the area of domestic violence it establishes a complete and coordinated system to prevent, protect and combat domestic violence. It foresees continuous preventive measures to be taken by all stakeholders at a national and local level; to raise awareness and sensitize the general and professional public; to raise the level of responsibility for urgent, due and efficient actions of professionals and institutions for prevention of domestic violence; and to ensure the necessary, efficient and effective protection of victims, in accordance with their needs and interests. The Law regulates the mutual coordination and cooperation of the responsible institutions and associations, with aim to prevent domestic violence and to provide protection to victims. For the successful implementation of this Law, five by-laws were adopted. These by-laws regulate the manner of implementation and monitoring of the measures for protection against domestic violence, the assessment of the risk to the life and the body's integrity of the victim and the risk of repeating the violence, the manner of execution of the pronounced temporary measures for protection of the victim of domestic violence and members of her family and the manner of execution of the temporary measure for protection against domestic violence.

In 2015, a Protocol for mutual cooperation of the competent institutions and associations for protection and prevention from domestic violence was adopted. The Protocol ensures efficient and successful cooperation of the competent institutions and associations for the protection, assistance and support of the victims of domestic violence, as well as providing treatment to perpetrators of domestic violence. The Protocol regulates the types, manner and content of cooperation between the competent entities when undertaking measures for prevention, prevention and protection of victims of domestic violence and undertaking legal measures against perpetrators of domestic violence.

The legal framework was further strengthened by the Law on International and Temporary Protection, establishing protection on the basis of sex and gender in processes of international and temporary protection of asylum seekers and refugees, in 2018; the Amendment to the Law on Social Protection, providing for the protection of women who are victims of trafficking and sexual violence, in 2018; and the Ratification of the Convention of the Council of Europe on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, in 2017.

In 2018 the Criminal Code incorporated the principle of non-punishment of victims of trafficking in human beings. This legal amendment explicitly states that the trafficking victim who was forced to commit a criminal or other offense during the time of victimization, which is directly related to her position of victim, will not be punished. The same provision is foreseen for a child victim of trafficking.

Additionally, in 2018 the new Law on Foreigners was adopted based on GRETA recommendations from the previous reporting period that regulates the temporary stay permit for victims of trafficking the period for recovery and reflection and securing of more rights for the trafficking victims.

In 2018 the Amendments to the Law on Police provides that the weapon with the ammunition shall be temporarily confiscated from a police officer when the Ministry of Internal Affairs receives a notification from the competent social work center that he has committed domestic violence until the decision of the competent court for a temporary protection measure has become effective.

- **Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing)**

Each year the MoLSP provides funds to support CSOs projects for protection of domestic violence victims. This includes support to the national SOS line for reporting domestic violence, and temporary accommodation in a shelter for victims. Currently the following services are available to human trafficking victims:

- referral and accommodation in a shelter, needs assessment and crisis intervention;
- food, hygiene packages, clothes and footwear are provided during their stay in the shelter;
- psycho-social assistance and occupational/recreational activities,
- basic and specialized medical examinations;
- legal counselling and introducing the judicial system and representation before judiciary bodies
 - from an attorney, for previously initiated court procedures,
- inclusion in the educational process upon returning to the place of residence;
- psychological support for victims, including various types of treatments and sessions, group therapy and individual psychological counseling;
- support for overcoming stress and trauma, forming habits for improving reading skills, positive thinking, basic information about adolescent development problems, emotional relationships and relationships with peers, dangers from sexually transmitted diseases and unwanted pregnancy.

There are four regional centers for sheltering people who were victims of domestic violence: Skopje, Kocani, Bitola and Sveti Nikole and in 2018, the First Sexual Assault Center in the Kumanovo Hospital was opened. The aim/goal is to have a place, where a full range of services that victims' needs are offered. The center will also ensure that these services are tailored to the rights and human dignity of the person. The work of the center will be based on multi-sector approach, where different personnel involved – healthcare workers, police, prosecutors and social workers – will work together to ensure that the victim's interests always come first.

The State shelter for victims of trafficking and currently also for victims of sexual violence is located in Skopje. From 2013-2016 15 victims were accommodated at the shelter. The shelter is funded by government funds and in 2017, the MoLSP provided 295,836 MKD (around 4,800 Euros) from its budget for the running of the State shelter for victims of THB.

In 2015 and 2016, the CSO Open Gate in cooperation with Centers for Social Work implemented the Program for "Accompanying social work with victims of human trafficking and potential victims." The Program's goal is integration of human trafficking victims, after leaving the shelter. A diverse set of services was provided to the victims, depending on their individual needs. For example, health services (basic medical examinations, specialized gynecological examinations, laboratory tests, psychiatrist support, medications), specialized legal aid, psychosocial assistance and counseling,

support to attend school, or English language course. In addition, "Open Gate" held 23 joint meetings with 5 families of the victims in order to improve the family relations, the link between parent and child and to provide support for the victims in a home environment. In 2015, 12 persons were involved in the program.

In addition to the existing Reintegration and Re-socialization Programs that are implemented in accordance with the individual needs of trafficking victims, in 2018 within the IOM Project "Strengthening national capacities in the field of asylum, migration and trafficking in human beings", financed by the European Union, a Fund for direct assistance has been established that provides for psychological and medical assistance, provision of food and other assistance to victims, as well as access to socialization and reintegration.

15. Strategies to prevent violence against women and girls

- **Public awareness raising and changing of attitudes and behaviours**

In 2017 the Government in cooperation with CSOs and the municipal authorities organized a 54 activities related to raising public awareness on prevention and protection against violence. Educational workshops, panel discussions and regional trainings were organized targeting pupils, students, pensioners, Center for Social Work, professional staff on domestic violence, trafficking in children and child abuse.

In 2015 and 2016, 2017 and 2018, as part of 16 days of activism against domestic violence, the Government implemented a campaign against domestic violence aimed at raising public awareness for prevention and protection against domestic violence.

In 2014 and 2015, the MOL's Prevention Units, within the project "Security in Schools," implemented approximately 140 educational workshops with students from primary and secondary schools on violence, including domestic violence. The primary goal was to raise the students' awareness about violations of human rights and increase their understanding of the position of victims. In addition, on a local level the Prevention Unit of the Department of Interior of the city of Ohrid in cooperation with the CSOs held four panel discussions on the topic of "Say 'No' to Human Trafficking".

- **Grassroots and community-level mobilization**

The MOL Units for Prevention within the Sectors of Internal Affairs have identified domestic violence, sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational procedures/employment and human trafficking of women and girls, as priority issues for prevention activities. The following preventive activities were carried out:

- A pilot project entitled "Everyone has the Right to a City" that addresses the prevention of violence against women and girls and using public spaces. The goal of the project is to reduce gender inequalities in terms of access to public spaces. It also looks to establish a comprehensive policy in terms of participatory decision making, revitalization of public space and security in an urban environment. Within the project a safety assessment was conducted as a part of a broader study. This study examines the extent and the different dimensions of violence against women in public space, focusing primarily on women's perceptions of their safety, the impact on their lives, forms of violence they suffer and their coping strategies.

- In cooperation with NGOs and Center for Social Work, information sessions and educational lectures were organized to encourage reporting, seeking help and increasing of legal responsibility for this type of violence. The target group included young people in schools, citizens of all ages:
 - Human Trafficking educational lectures. The target group was high school students. The discussed topics were the methods used by traffickers and ways of protection from becoming a victim;
 - Theatre show- The play's "Let's not be late" purpose was to educate on timely recognition of violence and prevention of consequences that affect children and family;
 - Meetings with citizens to discuss protection from violence against women, respect and gender equality;
 - Trainings and workshops for capacity building of police officers for addressing violence against women and girls and treatment of victims;
 - Development and distribution of flyers and posters for raising public awareness.
- **Shifting the representation of women and girls in the media**

Starting from 2012, and based on Article 17 from the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual and Media Services (AVMS) prepares an annual analyses on representation of women and men in the program concepts and content of the media. In 2016 the Sector for Equal Opportunities within the MoLSP conducted a two-day basic training for the employees in AVMS and Media Services. The training was aimed at familiarizing the employees of the Agency with the basic gender concepts and definitions, and at the same time enable them to detect gender stereotypes and prejudices. The Agency translated the Recommendation CM / Rec (2017) 9 of the Council of Europe on gender equality in the audiovisual sector in Macedonian and in Albanian language and it presented it to the media, the civil sector, the parliamentarians and other interested stakeholders in December 2017 (www.avmu.mk).

In 2017, the Parliament Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men organized a debate on "Gender in Television Programs: Reports from research on gender treatment and the presentation and representation of women and men in the programs of broadcasters in 2016", adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia.

The AVMS, conducts regular opinion surveys among the radio and television programs' audience, on their perceptions of equal presentation of women and men in the TV news.

According to the opinion surveys awareness of the public regarding the presentation of women and girls in media is shifting. The comparison of the data from the 2014 and 2017 surveys (see the Table 8) shows that there is a shift in the opinion of the audience – the biggest one being among those who used to fully agree that the representation was equal (drop for 11 per cent). The percentage of those who think differently rises, with the biggest rise being amongst those who fully disagree (rise of 7 per cent). This is important because it shows that awareness of the citizens on the gender imbalances slowly but surely rises.

Table 8: Data from AVMS - audiences opinion on the representation of women and men in TV

news		
Are women and men depicted equally in the TV news	2014	2017
Fully agree	30,1%	19,0%
Partially agree	34,4%	38,0%
Do not agree partially	21,7%	24,0%
Do not agree at all	7,5%	14,0%
Do not know/No answer	6,4%	5,0%

16. Actions to prevent and respond to violence against women and girls facilitated by technology

- **Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and young women and men in educational settings**

A team of professors and BDE representatives was established and supported by CSO HERA. The team developed a proposal for a comprehensive sexual education curriculum that includes the curricular objectives, contents and competences of students, both in terms of knowledge and in a view of attitudes, values, and skills. It also includes indicators for the evaluation of each of the foreseen competences, together with examples of the way they would be measured. All these elements are divided into three adult cycles: first is 9 to 11 years, second is 12 to 14 years old, and third is from 15 to 18 years. One of the components is focused on how to prevent violence and how to protect students from violence when using information and communication technologies. In 2018 HERA with support of UNICEF and the MoLSP developed a Guide for Prevention Intervention on violence harassment and neglect in schools <https://hera.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/priracnik-nastavnici-print.pdf>. The Guide contains a chapter on violence against children in schools and use of information technologies and is intended to raise awareness and increase skills of teachers regarding peer-to-peer violence in schools.

17. Actions to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media

- **Enacted, strengthened and enforced legal reforms to combat discrimination and/or gender bias in the media**

The (MoISA) during the reporting period has made efforts to integrate gender perspective in policy-making. This has been done through the new on Law on Audio- and Audio-Visual Media Services:

- Article 12, paragraph 2 provides that the members of the Council should represent the diversity of the Macedonian society with adequate representation of both sexes and
- Article 48, paragraph 1 includes sex, sexual orientation and gender identity as forbidden grounds for discrimination in the radio and TV programs.
- Article 53, paragraph 4 line 2 forbids discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation in the commercials.

- Article 61 paragraph 1 line 2 asks that all broadcasters respect the equality of liberties and rights regardless of the sex of the person (among other things).
- Article 110 paragraph 1 line 6 prescribes that the Public Service Broadcaster produces programs that respect and promote equality among sexes
- Article 116, paragraph 4, the members of Macedonian Radio and Television Program Council should represent the diversity of the Macedonian society with adequate representation of both sexes.
- **Other-conducted data collection of gender related data in media and its presentation to government and media representatives, and the wider public**

From 2014 onwards, the AVMS continued collecting gender related data. One of the aims is to provide training/dialogue with media professionals based on relevant data. On annual basis, the AVMS prepares analyses of the treatment of gender issues by media and on the manner of portrayal and representation of women and men in the programs of the national televisions. In order to develop an understanding of the importance of reporting on gender issues and incorporating the gender aspect in everyday reporting, the AVMS presents the results to the broadcasters.

In the period 2014-2017, AVMS found that editors, journalists and TV houses did not recognize which topics could be handled from a gender perspective. Also, gender related topics had a low level of representation. Male grammatical gender is used as universal way in representing the professions and functions of women.

In 2018, the Agency analyzed the morning/noon shows on national televisions. The journalist teams were gender equated, but in these shows, gender issues appeared rarely. Treatment of gender topics varied from traditional, conservative and patriarchal, to affirmative to equality. All these surveys are published in Macedonian, Albanian and English on the Agency's website: <http://avmu.mk/rodot-i-mediumite-art/>. Based on these data, the Agency opened a dialogue with representatives of radio and television through public meetings and debates. From 2016, these debates are broadcasted live on the Agency's You Tube channel.

In 2018, a publication "Gender on television: A collection of annual research activities on the treatment of gender issues and the manner of presenting women and men on national TV stations (2012–2016), with comparable indicators" was promoted. It was published in Macedonian, Albanian and English language. The publication provides comparable indicators from the research activities 2012–2016, analyses of the structure of employees in the audio-visual sector, research on the opinions of the audience about radio and television programs and data on the gender structure of television ownership structures. This is the first analysis of this kind in Macedonia (<http://avmu.mk/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Collecton-2012-2016.pdf>).

- **Provided training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media**

Since 2012, the Agency pays special attention to gender issues. In 2013, a public session dedicated to gender and media was held with members of media organized by this regulatory body. In 2014 the Agency for within the framework of promoting media literacy monitoring gender treatment in the media, organized a debate with members of media, titled "Critical Understanding of the Media - Gender, Youth, Media Literacy". Workshop was held to strengthen the capacities of media professionals on issues of gender equality.

In 2018, the Agency created and promoted two TV and one radio clip from the campaign "Sexism humiliates", aimed at addressing sexism in the media. The clips were published on AVMS website, Facebook profile and YouTube channel. Two national TV stations (one with subtitles in Albanian) and two local TV stations aired the TV clips, while one national and one local radio station aired the radio advertisement.

- Promoted the participation and leadership of women in the media**

Annually AVMS provides gender-disaggregated data on the structure of employees in television and radio.

The latest comparable indicators for 2014-2017 are found in the publication "Gender on TV in 2018: Off-screen and on-screen" (available at: <https://bit.ly/2Tmvl4y>). They show that women in the audio-visual media industry rarely appear as owners the TV stations and as managers(s). Positions such as engineers, technicians, directors, camerapersons and other production staff are male dominated professions. Journalists, and the support staff are female dominated professions. The number of female editors and male editors of the newscasts in 2017 is almost equal, where as female journalists are more numerous than male journalists.

Table 9 -Representation of women in decision making positions in state media

Year	Editors		Directors	
	Women	Men	Women	Men
2014	36	29	1	9
2015	57	50	1	10
2016	37	34	0	10
2017	34	33	9	8

Through publishing of these data and its presentation to the media AVMS raises awareness and influences policymakers to overcome the barriers for equal representation of women in leadership positions in the media. The Agency also submits complaints to the Commission for protection of Discrimination in cases of identified television or radio programs that promote and use discriminatory language or portrayal of women and girls (in 2017 the AVMS submitted 1 complaint to the Commission).

18. Actions to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination

The Republic of North Macedonia in the last five years, has not taken any action specifically tailored to address violence against specific groups of women facing multiple forms of discrimination.

The only way that multiple forms of discrimination in the society are addressed is through the work of the Commission for Protection against Discrimination, which in the period 2014-2018, had a total of 580 complaints were submitted out of those 146 or 25.2 per cent were submitted by women.

From the 139 resolved complaints, there were 16 cases where discrimination based on different grounds was determined.

Table 10: Types of resolved cases based on discrimination complaints

Year	Basis for discrimination
2014	Intellectual or physical disability; gender, age; personal or social status
2015	Pregnancy
2016	Personal or social status, gender, pregnancy (2 cases)
2017	Age, health status; ethnicity, political affiliation, personal or social status
2018	Health state; religion or religious belief; gender (2 cases); personal or community status; political affiliation.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

19. Actions to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making

- **Reformed constitution, laws and regulations that promote women's participation in politics, especially at decision-making level including electoral system reform, adoption of temporary special measures, such as quotas, reserved seats, benchmarks and targets**

In 2015, the Parliament adopted amendments to the Electoral Code. It introduced a 40 per cent quota for participation of the lesser represented sex on the electoral lists of political parties. This applies for Parliament and municipal/local elections.

In terms of Roma women, the MoLSP developed and adopted a National Action Plan for strengthening the position of Roma women in society 2016–2020. The action plan contains special measures and activities that refer to Roma women and their representation in public life.

Regarding women from rural environments, a National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development (2014–2020) was adopted and contains a chapter on improvement of the position and the role of women from rural environments. The strategy recognizes that full involvement of women is important in the establishment of a sustainable social structure of rural communities and revitalization of the local economy, thus all measures and programs in the next programming period will contribute to improving the living conditions of women in rural areas and their involvement in the processes of policy creation and utilization of the available resources at the local and national level.

- **Collected and analyzed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions**

The Government in continuity collects and analyses data on women and their participation in politics. The data is used for raising public awareness, development of policy and legal amendments aimed to improving gender equality.

In 2018 from 112,164 employed in the public sector 60,593 are women, 54,02 per cent, and 51,571 are men, 45,98 per cent. Women are most represented in the Constitutional Court with 90.48 per cent. Generally women are more represented than men in most public institutions with exception to the Army of Republic of North Macedonia, Ministry of Interior, and the Agency of Intelligence.

Women participate with 9 per cent in the Army. Out of this 25 per cent are officers, 11 per cent are non-commissioned officers, 4 per cent are professional soldiers and the remaining are civilian personnel. There are 40 per cent women employed in the administration of the Ministry of Defense.

Political representation of women has been improved since the elections in 2014. In the last 2016 parliamentary elections, 41 female MPs or 34 per cent of 120 MPs were elected. In this parliamentary term the Deputy Speaker of Parliament is a woman, 5 women are chairmen of parliamentary committees, and 7 are deputy chairmen of parliamentary committees. There are 4 female ministers in the Government or 21 per cent.

In the 2017 local elections, out of 260 mayoral candidates only 15 were female candidates or 5.8 per cent. Out of those 6 female mayors or 7 per cent were elected in Tetovo, Bitola, Staro Nagorichane, Mogila, Makedonska Kamenica and Arachinovo. Out of a total of 1,388 councilors elected in the units of local self-government, 415 female councilors were elected or 30 per cent.

In the judicial power, there is a positive trend of equal participation of the elected male and female judges. In the Supreme Court, male judges are represented with over 71 per cent. In the public prosecutor's offices, the participation of women is above 61 per cent. In all courts 61 per cent are women.

Table11: Gender structure of employees in different institutions from the public sector 2018

Type of Institution	Women	%Women	Men	%Men	Total
Government	176	54,66%	146	45,34%	322
Public Administration	44.901	67,12%	21.992	32,88%	66.893
State Prosecution	310	68,43%	143	31,57%	453
Public Enterprises	2.999	16,48%	15.202	83,52%	18.201
Ministries	2.243	46,65%	2.565	53,35%	4.808
Human Rights Defender	46	62,16%	28	37,84%	74
National Bank	261	59,05%	181	40,95%	442
Municipalities	2.198	38,61%	3.495	61,39%	5.693
Organs part of Ministries	1.800	40,82%	2.610	59,18%	4.410
Juridical Person with Public authorization	922	59,52%	627	40,48%	1.549
Juridical Person with Public authorization on regional level	21	46,67%	24	53,33%	45
Office of the president	38	64,41%	21	35,59%	59
Regulatory Body	199	53,35%	174	46,65%	373
Independent State Organ	484	61,73%	300	38,27%	784
Independent State Organ of the state administration	1.575	46,54%	1.809	53,46%	3.384
Secretariat in the Government	607	36,11%	1.074	63,89%	1.681
Government service	197	49,87%	198	50,13%	395
Parliament	187	65,16%	100	34,84%	287
State Prosecutorial Council	5	71,43%	2	28,57%	7
Courts	1.379	61,32%	870	38,68%	2.249
Judicial Council	26	76,47%	8	23,53%	34
Constitutional Court	19	90,48%	2	9,52%	21
Environment	16	12,60%	111	87,40%	127
Health	14.926	72,39%	5.692	27,61%	20618
Agriculture, Forestry Departments	460	16,65%	2.302	83,35%	2762
Information society	28	23,53%	91	76,47%	119
Culture	1.582	48,89%	1.654	51,11%	3236
Education	23.024	64,03%	12.936	35,97%	35960
Transport	414	11,64%	3.143	88,36%	3557
Finance	268	59,56%	182	40,44%	450

20. Actions to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media

- **Taken measures to enhance access, affordability and use of ICTs for women and girls (e.g. free wifi hubs, community technology centres)**

During the past five years the MoISA opened 22 free internet clubs in the larger cities of the country. These clubs are intended for free internet usage for all citizens regardless of sex, age, nationality or ethnicity. The MoISA keeps records according to gender, on the level the clubs' visits and the rate of use of information technologies by the citizens. These data will serve to prepare an analysis on the application of information technologies by female population in the rural areas that is intended to be realized in the up coming period.

The MoISAis making efforts to integrate the gender perspective in policy making as well. In this regard, MoISA is one of the first institutions where gender budget analysis is being conducted in one of its programs-the program related to free internet clubs. The gender budget statement was implemented for a period of three years 2015-2017, which is expected to increase the benefits of communication information technology for women.

- **Other – gender segregated relevant data on ownership and representation in the audiovisual sector**

The (AVMS) keeps a registry of the radio and TV stations, where data on the ownership structure can be obtained (available on: <http://avmu.mk/en/broadcasters/>). In out of 53 commercial TV stations 13 are owned by legal entities (juridical persons), 36 are owned by natural persons and 4 are owned by legal entities and natural persons combined.

The gender structure can be analyzed in media from partially or fully owned by natural persons *i.e.* in 40 TV stations. A comparison of these data for the years 2017 and 2018 was published in the "Gender on TV in 2018: Off-screen and on-screen" (available at: <https://bit.ly/2Tmvl4y>). It shows that: only 3 TV stations are 100 per cent owned by women, which is one less compared to 2017; 29 TV stations are 100 per cent owned by men, *i.e.* 5 TV stations less compared to 2017 when 34 TV stations were 100 per cent owned by men; The remaining 4 TV stations are owned by men and women, whereby the women's ownership share varies – 10 per cent, 33 per cent, 50 per cent and 66.7 per cent (there is no change compared to December 2017); three TV stations are owned by legal entities and natural persons combined - two of them are owned by men together with a legal entity (same as 2017), while one TV station is owned by a woman together with a legal entity, whereby the woman has 48 per cent of the ownership, while the legal entity has 52 per cent and this is a new status compared to December 2017, when no such ownership combination was established; in one medium, the ownership is a combination of legal entity, man and a woman, whereby the man and the woman have 0.07 per cent of ownership each, while the legal entity has 99.86 per cent of the ownership. This is the only national medium where woman appears as an owner (same as 2017).

AVMS also provides, on a yearly basis, gender segregated data on the structure of the employees in the TV stations. Although the data for 2017 must be seen in the light of the big overall drop of the employees in the TV stations, the Table 11, shows that the number of women as managers is continually low, as is their share among the editors, journalism is always female profession, while

engineers and production staff are predominantly male. In 2017 marketing became position with more males and the support staff remained female.

Table 12: AVMS data on TV employees' structure

Managers	♀	♂
2014	17	49
2015	12	55
2016	11	52
2017	9	46
Editors	♀	♂
2014	65	61
2015	82	92
2016	62	80
2017	57	75
Journalists	♀	♂
2014	385	298
2015	481	369
2016	454	319
2017	397	281
Engineers	♀	♂
2014	17	180
2015	14	178
2016	25	188
2017	14	175
Production staff	♀	♂
2014	139	597
2015	146	728
2016	159	673
2017	150	608
Marketing	♀	♂
2014	38	34
2015	36	28
2016	41	34
2017	39	44
Support staff	♀	♂
2014	161	128
2015	218	186
2016	204	202
2017	195	176

21. Gender-responsive budgeting

The country does not have a system in place to track allocations to advance gender equality (SDG indicator 5.c.1). However, the Government of North Macedonia, was one of the three countries in Europe that took part in the process of development and testing of the methodology for SDG

indicator 5.c.1. and the MoF and MLSP participated in the survey (questionnaire) which was guiding the development of the methodology. SDG 5.c.1 requires that countries are introducing systems that would enable them to make and track allocations to advance gender equality. Now the country in the process of transition towards program based budgeting under the on going Public Finance Management reform and it is expected that the changes in the legal and operational framework will support the establishment of a system to measure budget allocations for gender equality.

22. Tracking the proportion of official development assistance (ODA) that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting)

Not applicable

23. National strategy or action plan for gender equality

Republic of North Macedonia has a Strategy and an Action Plan on gender equality. The Gender Equality Strategy 2013-2020 and the subsequent National Action Plan for Gender Equality 2018–2020 contains the following priorities:

1. Establishing an effective and efficient system for achieving gender equality by means of functional support mechanisms at the national and local level, harmonizing indicators for measuring the progress of gender equality, and providing gender- disaggregated statistics;
2. Integrating gender-responsive budgeting in policy and program creation;
3. Sensitizing the public to the various forms of violence against women, and strengthening institutional capacities for taking actions aimed at protection of such victims;
4. Harmonizing the legislation with the EU and international standards;
5. Enhancing the level of gender equality in priority thematic areas, that is, in healthcare, education and employment;
6. Building a culture of equal opportunities and promoting equal treatment and non-discrimination on the ground of sex.

The National Action plan is not coasted. It only foresees that the budget will come either from the MoLSP or donations.

The Strategy is partially aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5. Economic empowerment of women is one of the priorities listed in the Gender Equality Strategy. The specific strategic goal 2.3 provides for the following: Establishing and piloting policies on overcoming barriers/obstacles and increasing employment among women (balancing private with professional life, women entrepreneurship, discrimination within the labor market). This strategic goal which is defined in the aforementioned manner is significantly related to the SDA in the context of the empowerment of women.

Through its Specific Strategic Goal 2.1, the Gender Equality Strategy envisages the following: Increased gender-responsible participation of women in decision making processes in the legislative and executive branches, in party politics and editorial broadcasting. The goals of the GES on advancing political inclusion of women are by and large aligned with Target 5.5.36 of the SDGs and relate to the effective participation of women and equal opportunities in leadership/executive posts

at all levels of decision making in the political, economic and public life. More specifically, the Strategy provides an outlook on the lack of inclusion of women in the executive branch at both the national and local levels, as well as in the appointment of ambassadors and diplomatic representatives.

The National Gender Equality Strategy 2013-2020 as separate strategic goals 2.2 singles out the promotion of a legal framework, the protection from, and punishment for gender-based violence: to raise social awareness of gender-based violence and improve the legal framework that provides standards for effective protection from, and punishment for different forms of gender-based violence. The strategy recognizes that gender-based violence is founded upon the inequality between men and women in society and it dwells on recognizing different forms of gender-based violence. This goal and its results relate to the SDG 5.2. Furthermore, the anticipated results of the Strategy indicate that there is a need of systematic data collection of different forms of GBV.

24. Action plan and timeline for implementation of the CEDAW Committee or UPR recommendations

There is an Inter-Ministerial Body for Human Rights established in 2012. This Body is managed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, and functions as a National Mechanism for Reporting and Implementation of Recommendations Received by the Convention Bodies and the Universal Periodic Review. The body also has an Expert Group, which works on clustering of all received recommendations, including recommendations related to the promotion of gender equality and discrimination against women.

The implementation of the recommendations obtained during the Universal Periodic Review is conditioned by the type of recommendation itself, whether it is a matter of areas in which the need is to take continuous measures for its promotion or recommendations for legislation, which includes a detailed analysis of the relevant domestic legal framework and the accession or ratification of international agreements.

After the received recommendations, efforts are made to start their implementation in the shortest time possible after their receipt and acceptance by the Government and depending on the type, those which can be realistically realized to be implemented until the next review cycle of the Universal Periodic Review.

In addition, the MoLSP in cooperation with the relevant ministries and institutions prepared an Operational Program for 2014-2016 for the implementation of CEDAW Committee's recommendations.

25. National human rights institution

Since 1997, the office of the Ombudsman has been fulfilling its duties with a specific mandate focusing on eliminating discrimination, including gender-based discrimination.

The number of complaints on the grounds of gender-based discrimination have been low during the reporting period. In 2016 there were not any petition submitted, in 2017 there were four, in 2018 there were 3 and for the first three months of 2019 there none petitions submitted.

Each year the Ombudsman's prepares an annual report. The annual report is used to promote gender equality. There is a section on the representation of genders in the state administration. The findings of the report are public and shared with the Parliament and the Government. In addition to this report, the Ombudsman prepares special reports and analysis that are available on its website http://ombudsman.mk/MK/predmetno_rabotenje/posebni_izveshtai.aspx#nediskriminacija.

The Commission for protection against discrimination is independent body, whose members are appointed by the Parliament. For its work it submits an annual report to the Parliament. It has a mandate to:

- Acts upon complaints, give opinions and recommendations for specific cases of discrimination;
- Provides the complainant with information about his rights and possibilities for initiating a judicial or other protection procedure;
- Initiate a procedure for initiating a procedure before the competent authorities due to violations of this law;
- Informs the public about the cases of discrimination and takeovers activities for promotion and education of equality, human rights and non-discrimination;
- Monitors the implementation of the anti-discrimination law, and initiate amendments to the regulations because of implementation and promotion of protection against discrimination;
- Establishes a cooperation with the bodies responsible for achieving equality and protection of human rights in local self-government;
- Makes recommendations to the state authorities for undertaking measures for accomplishment of equality;
- Gives opinions on proposals of laws of importance for protection from discrimination;
- Collects statistical and other data, forms databases, conducts studies, research and training in relation to discrimination; and
- Cooperates with appropriate national bodies of other countries, as well as with international organizations in the field of protection against discrimination.

During the reporting period, the Commission for protection against discrimination produced two reports analyzing the gender pay gap, and the adjustments to the workplace for persons with disabilities. Some of the key finding from the two reports are:

- Albanian, Roma and women with completed primary education are three groups of women that are least represented in the working labor force;
- Gender pay gap exists. On average women receive 25 per cent lower salary compared to men, and man with disability have 40 per cent lower salary compared to man without disability,;
- Only 36 per cent of women hold management positions, which is for 20 per cent less compared to man;
- Approximately 40 per cent of all employers who have at least one employee with a disability, have made adjustment to the workplace. Women with disabilities have benefited less from such adjustments, compared to men;
- Women and persons with impaired vision, impaired speech, as well as with mental or intellectual disability are less covered in the process of appropriate adjustment with funds from the Special Fund, unlike men and persons with hearing impairments and physical / physical disability;

Peaceful and inclusive societies

26. Actions to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda

- **Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security**

The first National Action Plan of the Republic of North Macedonia for the implementation of the Resolution of the Security Council 1325 within the United Nations is implemented in the period 2013-2015. It contains three strategic goals:

- Strategic objective 1: Strengthening of the gender perspective in the formulation and implementation of the peace, security and defense policy of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- Strategic Objective 2: Strengthening of the participation and contribution of women in international civilian and military missions in which the Republic of North Macedonia participates;
- Strategic objective 3: Prevention of violence and protection of the rights of women in conditions of peace, conflicts and humanitarian disasters;

The Second National Action Plan for the implementation of the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is under preparation.

Strategic documents for gender mainstreaming in the Ministry of Defense are:

- The Strategic Defense Review 2018;
- The Human Resources Strategy;
- A code of ethics for the employees of the Ministry of Defense and the Army;
- A National Strategy the Republic of Macedonia for Prevention of Violent Extremism (2018-2022);
- **Other-raising awareness of the employees in of the Ministry of defense and the Army on gender equality**

Raising the gender awareness of the employees in the Ministry of Defense and the Army is done by organizing tribunes, broadcasting in the media, publishing articles in the publications "Stit" and "Sovremenamakedonskaodbrana" (Contemporary Macedonian Defense), information on the Ministry's web site www.morm.gov.mk -Gender perspective, sharing information on social networks (Facebook, Twitter).

Also, the Minister of Defense through direct communication - an open electronic letter addresses the employees in the Ministry and the Army in order to encourage the employees to react personally and institutionally and report violence.

- **Increased budgetary allocations for the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda**

Since 2018, the Ministry of Defense has implemented the Methodology for Gender Responsive Budgeting and a Gender Budget Statement. Thus the Program of Military Academy has been prepared, and accordingly, the budgetary resources are allocated within this Program. In 2018, 12,000,000.00 denars were approved for the Military Academy budget program while 9.510.524,00 denars were spent, *i.e.* 79.25 per cent, out of which 32.33 per cent were spent for the needs of the female cadets at the Military Academy.

Through this program the Ministry's 3-year goal (2017-2020) is to increase the number of registered women candidates, increase of the share of women cadets, include gender sensitive content within the subjects (Military Psychology, Military Sociology and Military Andragogy) and to establish a gender-disaggregated data. Budgetary allocations from the Ministry of Defense amounted to 12,000,000 denars for the program in 2018.

27. Actions to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peace building, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings

- **Promoted equal participation of women in humanitarian and crisis response activities at all levels, particularly at the decision-making level**

In the past 5 years, the participation of women in the Ministry, in managerial positions, in peacekeeping and in humanitarian missions has been promoted and supported.

The representation of women in the Army is 9.19 per cent or 13.83 per cent female officers, 11.15 per cent non-combatants, 4.54 per cent professional soldiers and 38.24 per cent of women are in the category of civilians. At the command positions, there are a total of 21 women.

- **Integrated a gender perspective in humanitarian action and crisis response**

The members of the Army are actively participating in the contribution of peace and security in peacekeeping missions to Afghanistan and Bosnia and Herzegovina, and a total of 156 *i.e.* 6.8 per cent are women in these missions.

- **Other, training of women in the Army and their promotion in society**

Event though there are no special programs only for women in the Army, programs are equally accessible to all according to the needs, criteria and conditions. Women in the Army are sent to vocational training and specialization same as men. In 2018 a female officer was nominated for the National Defense School; and 27 female officers have finished the Command Staff College. There are no elimination criteria in the process of selection of

personnel to be sent on courses, training, education, vocational training and specialization for the needs of the service and the obligations for performing the service after their completion.

An Army female employee is among the 10 women from the country that were pronounced as "Successful Women" for 2018.

Through participation in TV shows of female members of the Army, a TV stories about women at the Military Academy, articles in the Shield Magazine, information on the web site of the Ministry (www.morm.gov.mk), military stories at www.arm.mk, as well as information, stories and videos on social networks the position of women in the army is promoted.

28. Actions to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response

- **Strengthened capacity of security sector institutions on human rights and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence and sexual exploitation and abuse**

in 2018, the Public Security Bureau carried out four workshops on "Improving police gender sensitivity in relation to violence against women and dealing with domestic violence". The main aim of the workshops was to educate the police officers on the Law on Prevention and Protection against Domestic Violence, the Council of Europe Convention on the Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, and to familiarize them with the needs and the expectations of the victims of domestic violence from the police, as well as the manner in which the police officers take action concerning these persons.

- **Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children**

In order to overcome the shortcomings in investigating and prosecuting trafficking offenses, in 2018, the National Unit for the Suppression of Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking was established. The National Unit is formed to act in the direction of improving and strengthening national capacities to combat trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants.

The National Unit is headed by a Public Prosecutor from the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for prosecuting organized crime and corruption, and 50 representatives from the Ministry of Internal Affairs are its members. Such co-ordination between the prosecution and the police has proved successful in terms of an increased number of identified victims of trafficking (9 in 2018 and 1 in 2019).

In addition, in 2018, the National Unit for Suppression of Smuggling of Migrants and Human Trafficking (National Unit) filed 6 criminal indictments for committing a criminal act "Trafficking in children" article 418-d of the Criminal Code, against 17 persons. Acting upon

the filed criminal charges, the Prosecution established 4 cases. After the indictment for 4 persons (2 women and 2 men), first-instance convictions were passed on 13 and 12 years in prison, second instance convictions were passed on 17 and 14 years of prison and a main hearing is ongoing for 2 persons.

Unaccompanied and separated children are recognized as being at particular risk of trafficking and abuse. The number of unaccompanied foreign children in the country grew from 40 in 2011 to 3,199 in the period 19 June-30 September 2015, when the migratory flows reached their peak. Acknowledging the need for a multidisciplinary, inter-sectorial and international approach to the protection of the rights of unaccompanied and separated children, the national authorities have developed SOPs for Dealing with Unaccompanied and Separated Children which with the support of UNHCR and were launched in November 2016.

Regarding measures for the identification of potential and victims of human trafficking among refugees and migrants entering Republic of North Macedonia, reference has already been made to the adoption of the Indicators for the Identification of Victims of Trafficking in Human Beings in Mixed Migration Flows developed with the support of IOM in 2016.

29. Actions to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child

- **Tackled disadvantages in health outcomes due to malnutrition, early childbearing and exposure to HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases**

The health sector has a long tradition in promoting the health of children and the health of women in the reproductive period. Women and children have free access to Primary Health Care and access to services that provide prenatal health care, protection of new-born and women in reproductive age, voluntary counseling and testing services for HIV/AIDS integrated into health institutions, reproductive health services, compulsory vaccination for 12-year-old girls with HPV cough, free gynecological examinations with PAP test and others.

A protocol for the prevention of transmission of HIV from mother and child has been prepared, and all patients (including women) have access to antiretroviral drugs.

- **Strengthened girls' access to quality education, skills development and training**

With the view to increase the participation of Roma children that belong to vulnerable group of people into the education processes, and to contribute to the prevention of child labour and child marriages the MoES in cooperation with the Roma Education Fund form Budapest implements the project titled “Scholarship, Mentorship and Tutoring to Secondary School Roma Pupils.” The project is implemented for the ninth year in a row. Project’s general goal is through positive interventions to increase the mobility and success of the Roma pupils in first, second, third and fourth year from all state and private secondary schools in Republic

of Macedonia. This project covers 84 schools and 28 municipalities throughout Republic of Macedonia.

The project is implemented in three phases, *i.e.* providing scholarships, mentoring and tutoring. During the school year of 2016/17, a total of 582 scholarships were awarded to secondary school Roma pupils, 244 of which were male and 338 female. Total number of outflow is 9 scholarship pupils, 4 of which were female; In the school year of 2017/18, a total of 736 scholarships were awarded to secondary school Roma pupils, 318 of which were male and 418 female.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

The connections between gender and worldwide efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change are crucial but not widely understood. The effects of climate change, including floods, droughts and landslides, have the severest impact on the poor, the powerless, and those who work most closely with and depend most upon natural resources for their livelihoods. Women, who are commonly the lowest paid in society and who perform so much of the world's unpaid work, make up the majority of these vulnerable sections of the population. Thus the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia strives to achieve gender balance and commensurate inclusion of women in environment conservation, protection and rehabilitation.

30. Actions to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies

- **Taken steps to ensure that women benefit equally from decent jobs in the green economy**

In 2013, as part of IPA Component IV, the project "Strengthening the Capacity for Integration of Women from Rural Environments in the Labour Market, with Special Focus on Women from Ethnic Communities" was implemented. The project's objective was to assess the needs of marginalized women, especially women from ethnic minorities and women living in rural areas, so they may enhance their potential for employment on the labour market. The project aimed at strengthening the capacity and the cooperation between relevant subjects for integrating marginalized women on the labour market, with special focus on women from ethnic minority groups.

This project resulted in recommendations in the context of greater attention to the needs of marginalized women and creating employment programmes according to their needs, as well as strengthening the existing partnerships on a national and local level.

The program makes a gender distinction between applicants in one of the measures. It is the measure "Investments in agricultural holdings" for their restructuring and fulfilment of community standards. Gender distinction is applicable for the benefit of the women applicants, as follows: if the applicant is a woman, more points have awarded when approving the applications. Thus, from its inception in 2009 until the end of 2016, the requests of 645 women's have been paid, representing 26 per cent of the total approved and paid applications in favour of women applicants. In 2018, the total applicants were 108 and from them 30 application were from women, which makes 28 per cent of total applications of the IPARD Programme 2014-2020.

The criteria for selecting the economy association of agricultural holdings for joint carrying out of agricultural activities for investments in procurement of agricultural mechanization - Participation of female farmers and young farmers in the total number of members of the agricultural cooperative - up to 5 points, is as follows:

Table 13: Participation of women farmers and young farmers in the total number of members of the Agricultural Cooperatives

- if woman farmer takes participation with 10-30%	2 points
- if woman farmer takes participation with more than 30%	3 points
- if one member is between 18-25 years of age	1 point
- if more than one member is between 18-25 years of age	2 points

One of the conditions and scoring for registering the Local Action Groups (LAG) in records is the ratio between the members of the Managing Authority of the LAG:

- if female members participate with 10-30 per cent receive 1 point and
- if female members participate with more than 30 per cent, they receive 3 points

There are 13 LAGs registered, which will be financially supported through the National Program for Rural Development, and by 2020, IPARD Program co-financing is expected to be supported.

Table 14: Registered LAGs

No. of members in Managing Authority of the LAG	No. of women in the Managing Authority of the LAG	Woman- Manager of the LAG
133	49	5

The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy is working to amend the National Program for Agriculture and Rural Development 2018-2022 with a view to introduce specific measures for women living in rural areas and which are part of the agricultural economy. The Ministry plans to provide support through non-refundable grants up to 180,000 Macedonian denars per applicant, for performing additional activity within the agricultural holding. This will enable women to start a processing or craft business, using the resources of their own production and by adding benefit to the products will provide greater income.

There are 41 cooperatives registered in the Register of Agricultural Cooperatives in which 93 women are members and 8 are managers.

- **Improving women's access to Management of Protected Areas**

In 2017, a new project "Protecting nature for sustainable future" was launched by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning. The project's central feature is a grant scheme aimed at three goals: 1) to address priority needs in improving the management of protected areas, where possible including those proposed as pilot Natura 2000 sites; 2) to promote more sustainable use of natural resources; and 3) to demonstrate through practical examples that nature protection and local economic development can go hand in hand. In 2018, a document Gender Mainstreaming in the Management of Protected Areas was prepared. With this document, the existing gender different needs and roles for women and men living in the Protected Areas have been determined, analyzed and considered. As a result, active participation of men and women in conservation, management and use of natural resources should be secured.

MoEPP is the coordinator of the working group for linking green jobs with youth unemployment. The 2018 Action Plan has been developed and implemented. In the course of 2018, the working group developed a national definition of green jobs, mapped the green jobs in the national occupational classification and prepared a list of green jobs for which no standard of occupation was developed but which are known on the labor market. It also prepared an analysis of the need for retraining. In addition, a public awareness campaign on the importance of green jobs was prepared. In this phase of the work of the working group, the gender integration in the activities is not included.

31. Actions to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction, climate resilience and mitigation

- **Strengthened the evidence base and raised awareness about the disproportionate vulnerability of women and girls to the impact of environmental degradation and disasters**

In North Macedonia, efforts to highlight the connections between gender and climate change first began five years ago. The starting point for these efforts was the collection and communication of data to raise awareness among policy-makers to bring about change. Working with the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, UNDP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) set about this task by first translating technical climate change reports into climate-friendly tools to initiate transformational change in sectorial policies.

The data collected show a substantial gender gap in earnings and productivity, affecting women's ability to make choices, invest resources and influence decisions, leaving them most exposed and powerless in the face of climate change threats and social inclusion. For example in 2018:

- Women make up only 39.6 per cent of the formal labor force and contribute a substantial amount of unpaid family labor.
- Women in rural areas face challenges in accessing all levels of policy and decision-making, constituting 28 per cent or less of all employees in municipal administrations.
- In agriculture, women comprise 40 per cent of workers in farming enterprises but are much more commonly engaged in unpaid agricultural activity, with tasks such as planting bringing them more directly into contact with the effects of climate change, including threats to water resources.
- Women's responsibilities for cooking and cleaning make them more vulnerable to water-borne diseases and the pollution of water sources, while natural disasters further increase the work burdens on women and girls, who are commonly most responsible for providing care, water and food for households.

Strategy entry-points for acting on gender and climate change have been identified, including:

- Working with governments, NGOs, communities and the private sector to integrate gender considerations and expand women's participation in the development and implementation of climate-related policies.

- Mainstreaming gender in disaster and risk reduction policies in key sectors such as water, agriculture, health and education.
- Analyzing sex-disaggregated data and climate risk from a gender perspective.
- Engaging women as key stakeholders in all phases of climate change strategies.
- Gender-related data on vulnerability to climate change has been gathered into a single communicable document.

Priority entry points relevant to climate change mitigation (energy and transport) and adaptation (water, disaster risk reduction, tourism) have been identified.

- An action plan on gender and climate change has been elaborated.
- Gender-sensitive indicators have been developed to measure the effect of policies/actions on women.

The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning of the Republic of North Macedonia and UNDP as a partner together began to take into account gender perspectives on climate change in 2016, during the preparation of the First Biennial Report on Climate Change. Within this report, the first analysis of gender representation and climate change was developed (link <http://www.unfccc.org.mk/content/FBUR/Gender%20and%20climate%20change%20in%20Macedonia.pdf>). The results showed that while women are involved in the decisive climate change process, gender issues are not integrated into the activities. Therefore, with the preparation of the 4th National Communication and the second biennial report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Republic of North Macedonia in 2018 developed a short-term gender / climate action plan that identifies specific steps and responsibilities for integrating gender perspective in climate change policies (link <http://klimatskipromeni.mk/data/rest/file/download/af6bc1369a036974bf5d5a05ce4d655c234651c7f4b94a04c547b17440e2e5c3.pdf>).

In addition, a workshop with the participation of representatives from several countries was held in Skopje in 2017 to support the Republic of North Macedonia and other Western Balkan countries to integrate gender perspectives in the National Communications into the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

- **Gender equality and climate change**

The Republic of North Macedonia is the only country in the region that nominated a contact person for gender equality in climate change. This is accordance with the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Additional efforts have been invested to move gender mainstreaming into climate change from national to city level, while preparing the Progress Report (<https://zivotnasredina.skopje.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Resilient-Skopje-Progress-Report.pdf>) for the Resilient Skopje – Climate Change Strategy (Resilient Skopje – Climate Change Strategy). Initial gender analyses in Resilient Skopje provides solid baseline for more detailed gender analysis in future.

SECTION 3: NATIONAL PROCESS, MECHANISMS AND POLICY

32. National machinery for gender equality and the empowerment of women

Gender equality mechanisms have been established in accordance with Law of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men. The Commission for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men of the Parliament plays a significant role in the structure of national mechanisms for gender equality. Along with the Women Parliamentarians' Club, these bodies contribute to the promotion of equal opportunities for women and men in the decision-making processes.

Coordinators and deputy coordinators for equal opportunities for women and men are assigned in all ministries, coming from the lines of civil servants.

Commissions for equal opportunities for women and men (as part of the local self-government councils, comprised of councillors with a mandate of 4 years) and coordinators for equal opportunities for women and men (civil servants, local self-government units' staff) have been established on a local level.

They all have the legal obligations to implement the Law of Equal Opportunities of Women and Men, the strategic documents from the field of gender equality and to incorporate the gender perspective in strategic documents, plans and budgets, on a national and local level.

The Sector for Equal Opportunities, as part of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is the competent institution for coordinating of all remaining entities responsible to implement Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men and to promote gender equality on a central and local level. The role of the Sector is to ensure a whole-of-government approach in providing better economic and social outcomes for women, and better facilitation of the whole-of-government approach to mainstreaming gender policy.

State administration bodies and 20 local self-government units are involved in the process of gender responsive budgeting, which will become a legal obligation for all in the upcoming period based on the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men that introduces an obligation for central (article 11) and local (article 14) government to: incorporate the principle of equal opportunities of women and men in the strategic plans and budgets and follow the effects and impact of their programs on/upon women and men.

The members of the Commission for protection against discrimination are appointed by the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, following an announced public competition. The Commission is an independent body functioning in accordance with the competencies prescribed by the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The principle for adequate and fair representation is taken into consideration in the selection of members of the Commission.

In 2016, amendments and supplements were made to the Law on the Ombudsman, aimed at meeting the criteria for a status of a national institution. Thus the Ombudsman became authorized within his/her competencies to submit a request to the Standing Inquiry Committee of Civil

Freedoms and Rights of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for examining cases of violation of constitutional and legal rights and taking measures.

An obligation is introduced for the Commission for Protection of Human Freedoms and Rights to review requests of the Ombudsman for examining cases of violation of constitutional and legal rights and to submit a report, as well as an obligation for the Assembly to establish adequate measures;

Further regulation is introduced for the provisions of misdemeanour liability in cases of obstruction of the work of the Ombudsman, which will strengthen the mechanism for implementation of the recommendations issued by the Ombudsman.

An additional mechanism is established to enable implementation of the special reports regarding obstruction of the work of the Ombudsman and for violations and failure to implement the requests, suggestions, opinions, recommendations of the Ombudsman by institutions and organizations.

33. Head of the national machinery a member of the institutional process for SDG implementation

The MoLSP through the Sector for Equal Opportunities of Women and Men oversees the work of the gender mechanism. The Minister of Labor and Social Policy is also a member of the National Council for Sustainable Development. The National Council for Sustainable Development and the Deputy Prime Minister of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, in charge of economic issues and coordination with the economic departments, is responsible for the implementation of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and Implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

34. Formal mechanisms for different stakeholders' participation

A specific body that works only on the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Platform of Action and SDG in Republic of North Macedonia does not exist. But Pursuant the Law for Equal Opportunities for Women and Men,in 2017the Government of Republic of North Macedonia established the inter-sectorial consultative and advisory group as a form/way of ensuring different stakeholders' participation and *inter alia* for implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Platform of Action. The inter sectorial consultative and advisory group reports to the government of Republic of North Macedonia.

The National Council for Sustainable Development is responsible for the implementation and monitoring of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development and Implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Through the work of the Council all members of the body can participate in implementation and monitoring of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In the 2018 session of the National Council for Sustainable Development, the proposal of the Minister of Labor and Social policy to include the Goal 5 - gender equality as an integral part of the realization of all remaining goals was adopted.

The process of integrating the Sustainable Development Goals takes place in three phases:

First phase: Conducting national consultations with key line ministries, institutions and stakeholders and setting up a proposal-priority Sustainable Development Goals that are relevant for the Republic of Macedonia.

Second phase: Integrating the Sustainable Development Goals into national strategic documents and local development plans and appropriately planning funds from the Budget of the Republic of Macedonia for the realization of the activities.

Third phase: Establishing a monitoring system for the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals, as well as analyzing and measuring the progress in their implementation, according to Eurostat methodology.

In 2012 a Technical Working Group of the National Council for Sustainable Development was established, which is coordinated by the Cabinet of the Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia. The Technical Working Group is in charge of economic issues in cooperation with other state institutions and experts from various areas. The Technical Working Group established three Support Groups that worked in three priority areas (defined in accordance with the three priority pillars of sustainable development: economic pillar, social pillar and ecological pillar). The Support Groups are tasked to ensure adequate allocation of available resources, as well as active and dedicated work of the responsible institutions regarding the continuous updating of information and data in the Document on the degree of integration of the Sustainable Development Goals in the national strategic planning and everyday work and institutions.

Participation in the national coordination mechanisms

The inter sectorial consultative and advisory group consists of 26 members of state institutions, representatives from local self-government, civil society organization including women's rights organizations unions of employers (private sector) and workers union, and independent experts from academia. The work of the group is coordinated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

The National Council for Sustainable Development is chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister, and consists of two members of parliament, all relevant ministries, representatives from the union of employers, members from academia and the CSO sector.

Mechanisms to ensure that women and girls from marginalized groups can participate

In June 2018, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia established a National Coordinative Body for monitoring the situation with non-discrimination and the implementation of laws, by-laws and strategic documents in this area in order to promote the endpoint for non-discrimination and equal opportunities and monitoring of the situation in this field in all spheres of social life. The coordinative body is composed of 36 members, representatives of state institutions, local self-government units, associations, trade unions, employers' associations, CSO member and independent experts. The work of the Coordinative Body is coordinated by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The Program and Rules of Procedure have been prepared for the work of this body. This body ensures participation of women and girls from marginalized groups and reflection of their concerns and views.

Also, through the work of the inter sectorial consultative and advisory group women and girls from marginalized groups can participate and reflected their views. This is ensured by the participation of women's rights organizations in the Group, such as the Macedonian Women Lobby that includes women members belonging to minority religious and ethnic groups, the women rights organization of Turkish Women "Derja; and the organization of local self-government units also consisting of women representatives from various minority, ethnic and religious groups.

Moreover, Strategy for Cooperation of the Government with the Civil Sector, with Action Implementation Plan for 2012-2017, valorized the contribution of the civil sector and its important role in the development of the society including in issues pertaining gender equality.

The MoLSP through the Sector for Equal Opportunities transparently includes the representatives of the civil sector including those representing marginalized groups of women and girls in creating policies from the area of gender equality, equal opportunities and protection from discrimination in each and every process.

More specifically, the Sector for Equal Opportunities consults with the civil sector in three consecutive phases during the processes for development of strategic documents from the area of gender equality. Initial consultations are made in the first phase when the implementation of previous strategic document (if any) is evaluated, initial analysis of the condition in the country is made according to the current statistical data and a discussion for strategic priority goal for the future period is opened. In the second phase data are collected, relevant analyses are made and several joint working meeting are held where the draft versions of the documents are formulated; after which the third phase of consultations follows where the draft documents are uploaded on the website of MoLSPas draft versions for comments and series of consultation meeting are organized in order obtaining comments and inputs in terms of the documents. The third phase ends with organization of public discussion in the Assembly regarding the final draft version of the strategic documents before they are given to the Government for adoption.

Stakeholder's contribution to the preparation of the present national report

An inter-ministerial working group for the preparation of the National report was established, and was chaired by the Minister of Labor and Social Policy. The inter-ministerial working group included representatives from all relevant ministries, human rights institutions, representatives from UN Women, members of CSOs that work in the area of gender equality, particularly CSOs representing

marginalized groups of women and girls, and members of the academic community of Republic of North Macedonia.

The National Report was presented and discussed at a Government session, as part of the efforts to gain the highest level of commitment to implement the future priorities.

The process of the development of the report included three consultative meetings with relevant ministries representatives where inputs, information and proposals were gathered, distribution of questionnaires to relevant ministries and other national institutions and one consultative workshop with representatives from competent ministries, other national institutions including human rights institutions and CSO active in the area of gender equality, whose views opinions and proposals were voiced and were implemented into the final version of this report.

35. Gender equality and the empowerment of women as a key priority

The National Strategy for Sustainable Development has been prepared in 2011, the Millennium Sustainable Objectives have been implemented as well as conducting an evaluation of the achievements. Consequently, a number of strategies, studies and documents that support the process of sustainable development have been prepared. Since then three action plans have been developed. However, neither the national strategy on SDG nor the action plans have gender equality and empowerment of women as a key priority.

The Goal 5 - gender equality will be covered in the next period in the Republic of Macedonia through other goals.

However, gender equality in the context of SDG has been mainstreamed in various national Strategies and Action Plan that include gender equality. Thus national strategic documents are narrowly correlated to the goals concerning gender equality.

The process of implementation of the SDGs at the highest governmental level, support of UN agencies in the country initiated by the Deputy Prime Minister for Economic Affairs and the National Coordinator for Sustainable Development, started in 2016, with the support of the UNDP Office in Republic of North Macedonia. With the United Nations, through the existing coordinator in Republic of North Macedonia, the new five-year strategy "Partnership for Sustainable Development" was signed between government and UN Agencies in the country.

The goal of the document is to promote balanced and sustainable development, as well as to support the integration of Republic of North Macedonia into the European Union. The Partnership with the UN agencies will be nationally executed under the overall co-ordination of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and five priority areas for cooperation have been agreed: employment, good governance, social inclusion, environmental sustainability and gender equality.

The Strategy "Partnership for Sustainable Development" of Republic of North Macedonia has/predicts gender as one of its priorities. The Government has defined the advancement of the rights of women and girls as human rights priority in its recent report to the Universal Periodic Review. The Strategy focuses on gender-based violence, particularly domestic violence, on the

reduction of discrimination against women and on fostering greater participation by women in the political and economic life building on past work by UN Women to strengthen national capacities in gender-sensitive policy-making and budgeting.

SECTION 4: DATA

36.Priorities on gender statistics at the national level

- **Improved administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps**

The Institute for Social Activities (ISA) has an electronic information management system. The system is recording all recipients of social service provided through the 30 Centers Social Work. In this system, the gender of the person who is using services is a compulsory indicator for all social risks. This way, the ISA has at their disposal gender divided statistics for all users of social services. In addition, the information management system has an option for processing numerous indicators from social risks and generating reports.

In 2016 the State Statistical Office, calculated the gender pay gap indicator for the first time and was approved by the EUROSTAT. The base for calculating of this indicator is the statistical survey on the structure of earnings, available on <http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/2.4.16.03.pdf>. The indicator is also published in the MAKSTAT database as an index of gap in earnings between men and women by sector, a gap in earnings between men and women with full and part-time employment and gap in earnings by age group.

The SSO has been working on analyzing the database of the administrative source –Agency for Taxation. In 2018, for the first time, it calculated the average net and gross salary, and it is planning to include desegregation by gender in the calculation of the net and gross salary in the upcoming period.

- **Produced knowledge products on gender statistics (e.g., user-friendly reports, policy briefs, research papers)**

In 2018, the gender equality index was calculated, which is considered as a great progress for the State Statistical Office. In accordance with the updated methodology for calculating the Gender Equality Index of 2017 (<http://eige.europa.eu/rdc/eige-publications/gender-equality-index-2017-methodological-report>), the SSO has reviewed the available indicators from the existing surveys that are regularly conducted and by other relevant sources (EWCS 2015, EQLS 2016, EIGE's database Women and men in decision making).

Each year, the State Statistical Office publishes the publication "Women and Men in the Republic of Macedonia." There are eleven editions published so far. The publication is prepared on the basis of data collected by the State Statistical Office through its ever-developing gender statistics. The publication provides an insight into the demographic characteristics of women and men in the Republic of North Macedonia and their participation in the social and economic life of the country.

The publication for 2018 is available free of charge on the website of the Office of the link: <http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikacii/Gender2019.pdf>. This data is to a great extent used in the writing of this report.

37. Strengthening national gender statistics 2019-2024

- **Re-processing of existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics**

Within IPA 2017, the State Statistical Office plans to conduct a survey on gender-based violence that will provide data for gender-based violence for the first time in the country, and with the implementation of the population census in 2020, data on disability disaggregated by gender will be produced.

38. Monitoring progress on the SDGs

National set of indicators for monitoring progress on the SDGs has not been defined yet.

Currently there are activities going on (operating) in the State Statistical Office to build set for monitoring SDGs according to the structure of EU SDG data set having in mind the commitment for harmonization with the European statistics and requirements. However, in parallel, on the state level, through the Technical Group (established as a supporting one to the National Council for Sustainable development chaired by the vice president), activities are going on to assess the available framework for monitoring of SDG implementation.

39. Data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on gender-specific indicators under other SDGs

Data collection and compilation on SDG 5 indicators and on- gender specific indicators under other SDG has begun and in general assessment of available SDG indicators as well as their collection and integration has started. However, five SDG are identified as a priority at the moment: SDG 1, SDG 4 SDG 8, SDG 13 and SDG 16.

40. Disaggregation routinely provided by major surveys in the country

Disaggregation routinely provided by major surveys in Republic of North Macedonia is usually by: location, sex, age, income / income groups, level of education and marital status.

CONCLUSION

Since the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Beijing Platform for Action, the Republic of North Macedonia has made a significant progress in the development and implementation of gender equality agenda. Building upon the activities and measures implemented in the previous reporting period, the government of Republic North Macedonia has strengthened and improved the overall response to gender equality and empowerment of women in society. Legislation, which prohibits discrimination against women was adopted. Programs and measures that promote the implementation of substantive gender equality in all areas were adopted and implemented, and various activities were carried out to raise awareness and eliminate barriers to gender equality.

Gender equality is one of the priorities of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and is part of the Program of the Government (2017-2020). The Government's priorities specific to gender equality are:

- To end every form of discrimination against all women and girls,
- To eliminate every form of violence against all women and girls,
- To ensure women's full and effective participation and equal opportunities for leadership on every level,
- To implement reforms that give women equal rights for economic resources,
- To adopt and strengthen sound policies and enforceable legislation for the promotion of gender equality, and
- To ensure a universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights.

These priorities correspond with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the SDG 5 to which Republic of North Macedonia has expressed commitment in 2011. The following are the most notable achievements for the 2015-2019 reporting period.

The progress and achievements made during the reporting period particularly refer to the straitening the already existing national legislative and policy system, including enacting of new legislation and policies that mainstream gender and are mostly aligned to the SDG -5. The most notable achievements are noted in the five priority areas: eliminating violence against women, equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice, political representation, gender responsive budgeting and access to health care, including sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights. Also, the government paid particular attention to improving rights and status of women belonging to vulnerable groups: racial, ethnic or religious minority women, rural women and migrant women. Furthermore, achievements were made in improving the mechanisms supporting the North Macedonian whole-of-government approach towards achieving gender equality and the empowerment of women with a view to better the implementation of legislation and policy directed towards elimination of discrimination and achieving equality and promoting gender equality on a central and local level through specific measures and programs.

Despite the efforts few critical areas of concern still remain, and the government expresses its commitment to address them in the upcoming period. They refer to: furthering the action towards eliminating violence against women, equality and non-discrimination under the law and access to justice, political representation, gender responsive budgeting and changing negative social norms and gender stereotypes.

Annex –DATA

Available Gender specific indicators across the 17 sustainable development goals

GENDER-SPECIFIC INDICATORS ACROSS THE 17 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS						
Indicator	Tier Classification	Description	Indicator	Year	Data	Source
1.2.1	Tier 1	Proportion of population living below the national poverty line, by sex and age	EU-SILC	2017	22.2	http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikaciji/2.4.18.13.pdf
3.1.1	Tier 1	Maternal mortality ratio	Vital statistics	2017	0.0	
3.1.2.	Tier 1	Proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel	Vital statistics	2017	99.0	
3.7.2	Tier 1	Adolescent birth rate (aged 10–14 years; aged 15–19 years) per 1,000 women in that age group		2010-2014	0.4	
				2015-2019	16.0	
4.3.1.	Tier 2	Participation rate of youth and adults in formal and non-formal education and training in the previous 12 months, by sex	AES	2016	12.7	http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikaciji/2.4.17.08.pdf
5.5.2	Tier 1	Proportion of women in managerial positions	LFS	2017	19.4	http://www.stat.gov.mk/Publikaciji/Gender 2019.pdf
8.3.1	Tier 2	Proportion of informal employment in non-agriculture employment, by sex	LFS	Unpublished	9.0	Labor Force Survey
8.5.1.	Tier 2	Average hourly earnings of female and male employees, by occupation, age and persons with disabilities	SES	2014 without disabled persons	174 denars	http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikaciji/2.4.16.03.pdf
8.5.2	Tier 2	Unemployment rate, by sex, age and persons with disabilities	LFS	2018 without disabled persons	20.7	http://www.stat.gov.mk/pdf/2019/2.1.19.06.pdf

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