**EN**

**This action is funded by the European Union**

Annex I

to the Commission Implementing Decision on the Annual action plan in favour of the Republic of North Macedonia 2024

Action Document for EU for Fundamental Rights

**Annual Action plan**

This document constitutes the annual work programme in the sense of Article 110(2) of the Financial Regulation, and annual and multiannual action plans and measures in the sense of Article 9 of IPA III Regulation and Article 23(2) of NDICI - Global Europe Regulation.

# SYNOPSIS

# Action Summary Table

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Title** | EU for Fundamental Rights  Annual Action plan in favour of North Macedonia for 2024 | | | |
| **OPSYS** | [/OPSYS business reference][[1]](#footnote-2): <reference> | | | |
| **ABAC** | ABAC Commitment level 1 number: <reference> | | | |
| **Basic Act** | Financed under the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA III) | | | |
| **Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)** | Yes[[2]](#footnote-3) | | | |
| **EIP Flagship** | Yes  “Rule of Law, Governance and Public administration reform” – 100% | | | |
| **Team Europe[[3]](#footnote-4)** | No | | | |
| **Beneficiar(y)/(ies) of the action** | The action shall be carried out in the Republic of North Macedonia | | | |
| **Programming document** | IPA III Programming Framework | | | |
| **PRIORITY AREAS AND SECTOR INFORMATION** | | | | |
| **Window and thematic priority[[4]](#footnote-5)** | Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights and democracy  Thematic Priority 5: Fundamental rights | | | |
| **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** | Main SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, and SDG 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.  Other significant SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels. | | | |
| **DAC code(s)**[[5]](#footnote-6) | Main DAC code - 11560 Human rights  15180 Ending violence against women and girls  111 Education, Level Unspecified  16030 Housing policy and administrative management | | | |
| **Main Delivery Channel** | 12000 Recipient Government | | | |
| **Targets** | Climate  Gender  Biodiversity | | | |
| **Markers[[6]](#footnote-7)**  **(from DAC form)** | **General policy objective** | **Not targeted** | **Significant objective** | **Principal objective** |
| Participation development/good governance |  |  |  |
| Aid to environment |  |  |  |
| Gender equality and women’s and girl’s empowerment |  |  |  |
| Reproductive, maternal, new-born and child health |  |  |  |
| Disaster Risk Reduction |  |  |  |
| |  | | --- | | Inclusion of persons with  Disabilities | |  |  |  |
| Nutrition[[7]](#footnote-8) |  |  |  |
| **RIO Convention markers** | **Not targeted** | **Significant objective** | **Principal objective** |
| Biological diversity |  |  |  |
| Combat desertification |  |  |  |
| Climate change mitigation |  |  |  |
| Climate change adaptation |  |  |  |
| **Internal markers[[8]](#footnote-9) and Tags** | **Policy objectives** | **Not targeted** | **Significant objective** | **Principal objective** |
| EIP |  |  |  |
| EIP Flagship | YES  ☐ | | NO |
| Tags[[9]](#footnote-10): | YES | | NO |
| Transport |  | |  |
| Energy |  | |  |
| Environment and climate resilience |  | |  |
| Digital |  | |  |
| Economic development (incl. private sector, trade and macroeconomic support) |  | |  |
| Human Development (incl. human capital and youth) |  | |  |
| Health resilience |  | |  |
| Migration and mobility |  | |  |
| Agriculture, food security and rural development |  | |  |
| Rule of law, governance and Public Administration reform |  | |  |
| Other |  | |  |
| Digitalisation[[10]](#footnote-11) |  |  |  |
| Tags[[11]](#footnote-12)  digital connectivity  digital governance  digital entrepreneurship  digital skills/literacy  digital services | YES | | NO |
| Connectivity |  |  |  |
| Tags  digital connectivity  energy  transport  health  education and research | YES | | NO |
| Migration[[12]](#footnote-13) |  |  |  |
| Reduction of Inequalities |  |  |  |
| COVID-19 |  |  |  |
| **BUDGET INFORMATION** | | | | |
| **Amounts concerned** | Budget line: 15.020101.01  Total estimated cost: EUR 14 650 000  Total amount of EU budget contribution EUR 13 700 000 | | | |
| **MANAGEMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION** | | | | |
| **Implementation modalities (management mode and delivery methods)** | **Direct management** through:   * Grant * Procurement | | | |
| **Final Date for conclusion of Financing Agreement** | At the latest by 31 December 2025 | | | |
| **Final date for concluding contribution / delegation agreements, procurement and grant contracts** | 3 years following the date of conclusion of the financing agreement, with the exception of cases listed under Article 114(2) of the Financial Regulation | | | |
| **Indicative operational implementation period** | 72 months following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement | | | |
| **Final date for implementing the Financing Agreement** | 12 years following the conclusion of the Financing Agreement | | | |

# Summary of the Action

This Action aims to combat discrimination and ensure the protection and social integration of vulnerable people, including children, women, LGTBI individuals, persons with disabilities, and minorities. The EU assistance will support North Macedonia in improving the country’s response to gender-based and domestic violence, school exclusion of Roma children and children with disabilities, and huge gap in Roma access to housing.

EU will continue to invest in improving the services for prevention and protection of gender-based violence. The Action will support specialised and other essential social services such as domestic violence and human trafficking shelters, providing immediate protection from danger to victims of abuse and their children/families, as well as a full range of psychological support, counselling, employment and legal services. This will be paired with strong outreach activities, creating awareness and fostering violence prevention among institutions, health care establishments, schools, municipalities and community organisations.

The Action will also ensure the right of vulnerable children to quality education in a safe and accessible school environment. It will invest in improving the physical access to educational establishments for children with disabilities thus promoting an inclusive schooling process. The scholarships to Roma and children with disabilities will create incentives for children and parents for improving the school attendance and will support the closing of the educational divide.

The Action will contribute to ensuring the right of Roma people to legal housing. It will support the preparation of urban-spatial plans for six municipalities with a high concentration of Roma people and complete technical documentation for future EU investments in urbanising Roma settlements.

## Beneficiary of the Action

The Action shall be carried out in North Macedonia.

# RATIONALE

# Context

# Gender-based and domestic violence

# North Macedonia has made significant efforts to address gender-based violence against women and domestic violence[[13]](#footnote-14). The country adopted the *Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence*[[14]](#footnote-15) in January 2021, which provides a comprehensive framework for preventing, protecting, and responding to such cases. However, further steps are needed to align related laws and adopt operational procedures. To address this, the country adopted an *Action Plan for implementing the Istanbul Convention* in 2018, which outlines key activities and institutions to incorporate the Convention's provisions into national legislation. The *Gender Equality Strategy 2022-2027* also includes gender-based violence as a specific objective[[15]](#footnote-16). The 2019 *Law on Social Protection[[16]](#footnote-17)* also outlines a framework for establishing and operating specialised services.

The *Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence* outlines actions and measures for victims' prevention, protection, and reintegration, including economic empowerment. The Law emphasises the importance of institutions acting with *due attention* to victims' interests and needs and acknowledges the problem of underreporting of violence due to distrust in institutions. It proposes a protocol for practical multi-sectoral cooperation involving all relevant institutions at national and local levels.

The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) currently tracks gender-based and domestic violence against women through data collected from 30 Social Work Centres (SWC) [[17]](#footnote-18), but only for victims under the 2014 Law on Prevention, Protection and Combat against Domestic Violence. The new Law, enacted in 2021, requires all state administration bodies, courts, public prosecution, local self-government units, legal entities exercising public powers, and associations to collect statistical and administrative data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence based on various data points. The new Law emphasises integrated data collection and protection and is subject to the *Law on Personal Data Protection*[[18]](#footnote-19)*.*

The *Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence* designates police officers, professionals from social work centres, and health institutions and workers as competent institutions for dealing with women victims. SWC provide temporary care, medical assistance, social and health care access, and psychosocial intervention and treatment. Police officers perform risk assessments during their first contact with the victim, considering all factors that may increase the risk of future violence. The MLSP has established specialised services for women victims of gender-based and domestic violence in seven regions, as mandated by the Law. These services include 13 centres for women and their children who are victims of domestic violence, including eight that are part of local social work centres, two funded by the Ministry and managed by civil society organisations, and one supported by local self-government and managed by an association. There are also 11 specialised counselling centres for women victims of violence and domestic violence and eight specialised counselling centres for psychosocial treatment for perpetrators of domestic violence. Additionally, there are free SOS lines established and managed by civil society organisations, with the Ministry financing a mobile SOS line for the past four years.

**Improving of access and inclusion of vulnerable people in education system**

North Macedonia has incorporated the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the UNESCO Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education into its legal system. These agreements require States to include children with disabilities in traditional education, with the UNESCO Salamanca Statement emphasising that this should be the norm. The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities seeks to achieve holistic development of children with disabilities, considering their unique developmental needs and capacities.

The *Law on Primary Education* in 2019 established a normative framework to ensure no discrimination and equality of children, including those with disabilities. The law requires the inclusion of students with special needs in mainstream education, with special schools set to stop enrolling students by the 2022/2023 school year. In July 2020, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced a *Concept for Inclusive Education*, which guides the country's implementation of inclusive education. The *Law on Secondary Education* has been aligned with the included provisions in the Law on Primary Education.

The two laws have provisions on compulsory enrolment in education of all children from 5 to 18 years old.

The *Health Strategy of North Macedonia 2021-2030* is a comprehensive plan for improving the population's overall health status, including mental health. The *National Mental Health Strategy 2018-2025* aims to promote the mental health and well-being of all citizens in the country while ensuring equitable and high-quality access to mental health services. The 2015 *Law on Mental Health* is designed to protect and promote mental health and establish the rights and responsibilities of individuals with mental health conditions. Together, these policies represent a robust framework for addressing mental health concerns in North Macedonia.

**Roma**

The Roma community in North Macedonia is the most vulnerable minority group and faces institutional and social obstacles. The community comprises 2.52% of the population and experiences discrimination in daily life, including a higher school dropout rate and exclusion from formal employment. Consequently, many Roma live in substandard conditions, lacking access to necessities like sanitation, safe drinking water, and public transportation.

The Constitution of North Macedonia guarantees non-discrimination and equality before the law, and the Ohrid Framework Agreement ensures adequate and equal representation of communities. The *Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination* defines different types and establishes the Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. The new *Strategy for the Inclusion of Roma 2022-2030* focuses on areas like employment, housing, education, health, culture, and poverty reduction. Implementing the previous strategy 2014-2020 and corresponding action plans still need to be completed.

In 2020, many Roma children could not attend primary or secondary school due to a lack of electronic devices or internet access for online classes. Only 1.16% of new enrollees were Roma children, and dropout rates for primary and secondary education were estimated at 6% and 4%, respectively. There is no system or baseline data for reintegrating children who have not enrolled or left school early. While Roma education mediators are included in the Law on Primary Education, they still need to be considered for secondary education. Additionally, segregation in schools remains a significant issue. The percentage of Roma that have not completed the primary education is significantly higher than national average (eg. in Bitola Municipality there are 20% of such cases among Roma community).

Discrimination against Roma in health care is still widespread and goes largely unreported. Although there are no disintegrated data in the field of health statistics by ethnicity, the reports of UNDP 2011, UNDP 2017, AECOM 2018, and ESE 2019 show that the health status of the Roma community is significantly worse compared to other ethnic communities. Roma are at a disadvantage compared to non-Roma and have a considerably shorter life expectancy than non-Roma (ranging from 10 to 20 years), higher infant mortality rates by 25% compared to others and a higher incidence of chronic diseases.

According to the Social Mapping report in 2018, the employment rate of Roma is 23%, almost twice lower than the national average, while the unemployment rate of Roma is at a record high of 67%. The number of unemployed Roma is continuously increasing; 13,703 Roma were registered as unemployed in 2020, compared with 9,239 in 2019. The number of Roma benefiting from active measures for employment is increasing (431 in 2021 against 86 in 2020).

The proposed Action will address the findings and recommendations of the European Commission’s 2022 Report in **Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental Rights**, **Chapter 19: Social Policy and Employment** and **Chapter 26: Education and culture**.

This Action is designed to contribute to the achievement of the objectives of the IPA III Programming Framework, **thematic priority 5: Fundamental rights** within **Window 1: Rule of law, fundamental rights, and democracy**, related to ensuring gender equality, combating all forms of sexual and gender-based; domestic violence and discrimination.

The Action will contribute to achieving objective 5.2 of the **Strategic Response 2021-2027**, which aims to fightdiscrimination and protect children and women, people with disabilities, LGBTI and minorities.

The proposed Action will also contribute to achieving the **Western Balkans’ Economic and Investment Plan (EIP)** objectives**.** The EIP states that the Rule of law, respect for human rights, and the functioning of democratic institutions and public administration are the heart of the accession process and the main engines for the region's economic recovery.

The interventions under this Action have been selected based on their relevance and contribution to the implementation of national sector strategies and their link to the accession negotiations:

* The **Strategy for Gender Equality 2022-2027** aims at accomplishing gender equality in a society in which women and men, girls and boys have equal rights, access to resources, opportunities, and protection in all spheres of life, as a condition for complete and sustainable economic, demographic and social development and progress of the country.
* The **National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2022-2026 and Operational Plan 2022-2024** define measures for preventing hate speech and violence as all forms of discrimination**.**
* The **National Strategy 2020-2025 and its Action Plan 2020-2022 for Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence** aims to prevent and protect children from violence in North Macedonia. The plan includes measures to address peer violence and related mental health issues through primary and secondary school prevention programmes focusing on non-violent communication and conflict management skills. The Strategy also aims to build the capacity of institutions and services within the health, social, educational, police, and justice systems to support all children who are victims of violence.
* The **National Strategy for Roma Inclusion 2022-2030,** among other objectives, seeks to provide permanent, dignified, and non-segregated housing for Roma, increase the coverage of Roma children and improve their success in all spheres of education.
* **Action Plan for protection, promotion, and fulfilment of the human rights of Roma women and girls 2022-2024** foresees activities regarding improved effective support of Roma women and girls of all forms of gender-based and domestic violence**.**
* The **Education Strategy 2018-2025** and Action Plandefines a vision of comprehensive, inclusive, and integrated education. The Strategy covers six main pillars of the education system: -Pre-school Education; -Primary Education; -Secondary Education; -Vocational Education and Training; -Higher Education and Research; and –Adult Learning and Education.

# Problem Analysis

Short problem analysis

*Gender-based and domestic violence*

Due to inappropriate evidence of violence and a lack of systematic follow-up, it is challenging to assess the burden of gender-based and domestic violence against women in North Macedonia. However, an OSCE-led study[[19]](#footnote-20) found that 45% of women in North Macedonia have experienced some form of intimate partner violence since the age of 15, and 30% have experienced sexual harassment. Recent data also shows that 82% of domestic violence victims are women. Women's attitudes and perceptions of violence against women[[20]](#footnote-21) contribute to low disclosure and reporting rates. In 2020, registered domestic violence cases increased to 1,531 victims, including 1,161 women, 249 men, and 121 children[[21]](#footnote-22).

The Safe Community Affiliate Support Centre was established by the Institute of Public Health in 2004 for violence prevention in the health sector. Multiple shelter centres have been opened nationwide since then, followed by the first Family Centre for specialised counselling and psychotherapy services for victims and perpetrators of domestic violence. Although these efforts are a step forward, further action is necessary to achieve Sustainable Development Goals related to violence. Services do not reach all areas of the country, leaving many victims in rural areas without adequate protection.

The proposed Action will build on the IPA III Action 2022 *"EU to improve health and social protection and gender equality"*, which provides seed funding for the establishment and functioning of new specialised services and the expansion of existing ones for victims of gender-based and domestic violence by creating modern services to provide counselling, sheltering, support and reintegration services for victims, including the LGBTI community. This Action will provide operating grants to successful IPA III 2022 grantees and other service operators in the country to maintain, expand and introduce new protection and support services and integrate them into the national public social services system. The operating grants will support service operators to (1) improve the in-house services provided to them, which should cover a broad spectrum of support, such as prevention, counselling, sheltering, legal assistance, labour market activation, assistance healthcare and others, and (2) ensure that services meet national and international standards and get/remain licenced by the MLSP[[22]](#footnote-23). Special attention will be paid to the social reintegration of victims into the labour market, health, education and the social protection system.

The fight against gender-based and domestic violence requires coordination across different institutions and policies. One of the main challenges is the lack of comprehensive data on the topic, including cases involving women with disabilities, convictions, and sentences. The Action aims to address this data gap by implementing a national online register for cases of violence against women and domestic violence, supported by an interoperability platform and integrated into existing data management systems in the country.

*Improving of access and inclusion of vulnerable people in education system*

The Law on Primary Education requires primary schools to establish inclusive teams for students with individual educational plans. Still, only 34% of schools have developed such programmes for students who need them.[[23]](#footnote-24). Factors hindering inclusion include inaccessible infrastructure, inadequate learning environments, negative attitudes and lack of acceptance, insufficiently developed professional competencies, larger class sizes, and a shortage of teaching assistants and systematic support. Students with disabilities in inclusive schools receive lower teaching quality, knowledge, and skills than their regular school counterparts.

This Action will promote the inclusive education of children and students from vulnerable groups, such as children and students from low-income families, school dropouts (focusing on women, Roma and other ethnic communities), and children and students with disabilities and special educational needs. It builds on a successful model to support the school integration of Roma students in the country, which will be enhanced and expanded by including a more comprehensive range of vulnerable children (children with disabilities and children from other vulnerable groups). The planned actions (scholarship scheme and capacity-building measures to raise the skills and motivation of the teachers working with vulnerable students and their parents) are expected to increase student retention rates, raise individuals’ Grade Point Average (GPA) and decrease dropouts in line with the EU Guidelines on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child-Leave no Child Behind.

In the school year 2021/2022, 185.874 students were enrolled in regular primary and lower secondary schools. Of them, 911 are SEN students. In secondary schools, there are 69.223 students enrolled. 312 SEN students are enrolled in regular secondary schools and 232 in special schools. Regarding infrastructures, only 14% of the schools dispose of partially adapted facilities. The EU financing under IPA 2017 has improved the accessibility of 14 key educational establishments in the most underdeveloped regions – Polog, North-East, South-West + Prespa.

The programme provided 735 scholarships to Roma children and around 560 scholarships to Children with disabilities. Additionally, the physical infrastructure of schools was improved together with capacity building of teachers and other school staff for better inclusion of vulnerable children in the educational system in the first three years of primary school.

Inclusive education is a high priority in the educational policy, a Concept for inclusive education was adopted in July 2020. All bylaws have been adopted in accordance with the new Law on Primary Education to support the process for transformation of special schools into primary schools with a resource center that will provide didactic support to the institutions where students with disabilities are enrolled. Inclusive teams have been formed in Primary and Secondary schools and individual educational plans have been prepared for students with disabilities.

The present Action will continue adapting the educational infrastructure to the needs of students with disabilities/special needs (SEN).

*Legal housing for Roma*

The Roma community suffers from some of the most inadequate housing conditions in the country, residing in poorly developed settlements with badly constructed housing units that often lack formal registration following urban-spatial and construction legislation. Overcrowding is widespread, with many Roma families living in homes that provide less than 5 square metres per person. This situation has resulted in a negative perception of Roma by most non-Roma communities, leading to discrimination in various areas and a lower quality of life. In addition, these conditions have contributed to lower school attendance, lower employment rates, shorter life expectancies, higher mortality rates, increased migration, and higher participation in the informal economy.

The Covid-19 pandemic exposed systemic shortcomings, particularly in the Roma community, where many settlements lacked basic infrastructure such as access to water, sewerage, and paved roads. The lack of such infrastructure was especially critical during the pandemic, as frequent hand washing and disinfection were recommended but not readily accessible in many Roma settlements[[24]](#footnote-25).

Previous analysis and mapping have shown that approximately 28% of Roma have yet to legalise their housing units, mainly due to the lack of a detailed urban plan in their municipality or the financial burden of the legalisation procedure, which involves several stages and various documents. However, a new draft Law on Legalisation of Illegally Constructed Buildings has been returned for further consultation and is anticipated to be approved by the Assembly.

A Detailed Urban Plan (DUP) is essential for achieving the legalisation process and meeting the housing standards. However, over the past 25 years, municipalities have failed to secure appropriate funding for the urbanisation and integration of Roma settlements into the general and detailed urban planning process. This has exacerbated legalisation-related problems, resulting in the exclusion of many Roma settlements from the legalisation process. The delay in implementing measures to prepare urban plans exacerbates the housing crisis for the Roma community. Consequently, the (re)construction of basic infrastructure such as water supply, sewerage networks, and electricity connections is not legally possible, leading to substandard living conditions. To address this issue, the EU provides financial support for creating new detailed urban plans and legalising several dwellings in municipalities, including Vinica, Suto Orizari, Bitola, Prilep, Stip, Delchevo, Kichevo, and Veles.

The proposed Action aims to support the preparation of urban-spatial plans in six municipalities with a significant concentration of Roma people based on feasibility studies conducted in 2022 by the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC). The aim is to enable the construction and improvement of urban infrastructure, including social housing, by legalising Roma settlements by creating detailed urban plans. The Action will produce technical documentation for future EU investments in urbanising Roma settlements and facilitate partnerships between the MLSP and Local Self-Government Units (LSGUs) to amend municipal General Urban Plans (GUPs) and Detailed Urban Plans (DUPs).

Main stakeholders

* **Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP).** *Gender and domestic violence.* One of the competencies of the MLSP is creating a legal, strategic and institutional framework for protecting victims from all forms of gender-based violence and domestic violence. As well, the MLSP is responsible for coordinating the line ministries and governmental institutions to integrate Roma issues into the main socio-economic policies and action plans.
* **Ministry of Interior (MoI).** The Ministry, within its competence, provides expert assistance to citizens, legal entities and state bodies in the realisation of prescribed rights and obligations, protection of life and personal security of citizens and property. All police stations dispose of specific instructions in case of reports and actions of victims of domestic violence. There are also handbooks prepared by the Ministry (Providing Gender-Sensitive Support Services to Victims of Domestic Violence and – Reminder for the conduct of police officers in cases of gender-based violence and domestic violence.
* **Ministry of Health (MoH).** The Ministry of Health is responsible for setting the health system’s overall strategic direction and priorities; developing legislation, regulations, standards, policies and directives to support those strategic directions. The Ministry of Health has integrated free examinations for victims of sexual violence in the programme of active attention to the health of mothers and children.
* **Ministry of Education and Science (MoES).** The Ministry of Education and Science's mission is to ensure a high-quality educational experience by utilising modern teaching techniques, fostering critical thinking, and integrating information technology and digital skills into the curriculum.
* **Bureau for Development of Education (BDE).** The BDE is a management body within the MoES with the capacity of a legal entity. It performs professional activities relevant to developing and promoting upbringing and education in the country. The BDE seeks to promote and improve teaching and learning by developing new curricula, developmental research, teaching staff counselling and training, evaluating student achievement, and publishing manuals, magazines and other didactic materials.
* **National Coordination Body for the Protection of Children from Abuse, Violence and Neglect** was constituted with Governmental Decision in December 2017. Its purpose is to monitor and coordinate the implementation of activities to protect children from abuse and neglect and ensure annual reporting.
* **Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD).** The CPPD is the main body for prevention and protection against discrimination, established based on the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination adopted in January 2021. As an independent legal entity, CPPD has the competency to process complaints against all natural and legal persons.
* **National Coordination Body for Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.** It includes representatives from the MLSP, MH, MoI, MoES, MoJ, and other civil society organisations. The National Coordination Body performs, among others, the following tasks: coordinates the work of the institutions in the field of prevention and protection from gender-based violence against women and domestic violence; promotes the principle of equality and elimination of stereotypes about gender roles; coordinates and monitors the collection of data on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence according to predetermined indicators.
* **Social Work Centres (SWCs).** The SWCs are institutions with public authorisations for performing social protection activities, such as administering social protection rights, taking decisions about family law matters, acting per the criminal law regulations, and performing other activities determined by law. Eight SWCs operate centres for women victims (and their children) of domestic violence, which are an integral part of their organisational structure.
* **National Coordination Body (NCB) Roma.** The NCB has the specific role of observing and directing the implementation of strategies and policies for Roma's social inclusion and integration. The NCB should ensure effective coordination between state institutions and civil society organisations; oversee the implementation of national action plans; prepare annual operations plans, periodic monitoring and evaluation, including the preparation reports, and a database on the social inclusion of Roma.
* **Inter-Party Parliamentary Group for Support of Roma.** This Parliamentary Group was formed in February 2021. One of the goals is to support Roma’s rights, inclusion, and integration in societal flows in the Republic of North Macedonia.
* **Ministry of Local Self-Government (MLSG).** The MLSG allocates funds in the budget to support the implementation of the Local Action Plans for integrating Roma people on the local level. The Ministry provides funds for implementing housing, employment, education and healthcare activities, depending on the area where the municipality has developed a Local Action Plan (LAP).
* **Local Self-Government Units (LSGUs) - Municipalities.** Municipalities as local self-government units are legal entities under the Law on the territorial organisation of local self-government and the Law on the City of Skopje. According to these laws, the country has 80 municipalities and the city of Skopje. According to the competencies and responsibilities of the LSGUs, the municipalities are directly responsible for the municipality’s local economic and urban development.

# Lessons Learned

Since 2017, the EU has allocated over EUR 100 million for the development of human capital and support for the most vulnerable people in North Macedonia, turning into the biggest donor to fundamental rights protection, education, employment, and social inclusion. This Action is a continuation of the EU support for these sectors and is based on the following lessons:

* Strong political commitment to reform the sectors and political steer over the EU assistance shape the implementation framework and improve the effectiveness of the planned interventions. The EU accession process creates an important leverage, which can turn into a game changer if paired with intense, regular and inclusive of all stakeholders policy dialogue in the country. The existing sector working groups are an appropriate platform to host the sector dialogue in support of the political commitment and ownership. However they need to be strengthened to effectively channel various inputs, visions, and concerns. Enhanced sector working group, in synergy with sector-focused EU assistance, has a strong potential to impact the sector reforms.
* Given the horizontal and complex nature of the fundamental rights, the success of any intervention is proportional to the national consensus on mainstreaming the concept of human rights across all sectors and spheres of life and to the degree to which the various stakeholders adopt the rights lens. Human rights perspective needs to be promoted early in policymaking in all sectors to enlarge the support basis and ensure critical reading of the proposed policies and measures. To support this process, strong outreach at central and local level has to be combined with active awareness and involvement approaches, targeting institutions, communities, CSOs, academia, private sector and society at large. In addition, successful interventions require simultaneous work with central and local levels of decision-making and actions reinforcing the collaboration between state, regional and municipal structures and civil society organisations to deliver better community-based social services and expand other basic and essential social services provisions locally.
* The inclusion of the beneficiaries from designing through implementing support measures is necessary to guarantee the results. This is particularly important when Roma people are concerned due to the significant confidence gap, which creates mistrust and reluctance to participate of Roma people in inclusion activities. Therefore, it is essential to activate beneficiaries from the beginning, motivate them to join the support measures and empower them by giving them the right to propose, oppose and decide.
* Interventions under IPA 2017 supporting improvement of access and inclusion of vulnerable children in education provided positive feedback from the beneficiaries and lowered dropout of vulnerable children from education. The methodology needs to be further integrated in the regular measures for supporting inclusive education, managed by the Ministry of Education and Science.
* The capacities of Ministry of Education and Science to directly manage and implement IPA funded programmes remains low. Parallel capacity building, technical assistance and policy advice measures need to be put in place to mitigate the risks and increase the chances to obtain all planned results.

# DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTION

# Intervention Logic

The **Overall Objective (Impact)** of this Action is:

*To fight discrimination and protect the human rights of children and women, persons with disabilities, LGBTI and minorities.*

The **Specific(s) Objective(s) (Outcomes)** of this Action are:

* 1. *To enhance response to gender-based and domestic violence.*
  2. *To ensure the right of vulnerable people to quality education in a safe and accessible environment and their well-being at school.*
  3. *To promote the right of Roma people to legal housing.*

These Outcomes will be achieved through the delivery of the following outputs.

**Outputs linked to Outcome 1**

Output 1.1 Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence.

Output 1.2 Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence.

**Outputs linked to Outcome 2**

Output 2.1 Strengthened policy and practice on inclusive education

Output 2.2 Improved school accessibility for children with disabilities

Output 2.3 Enhanced chances for vulnerable children to attend school

**Outputs linked to Outcome 3**

Output 3.1 Detailed urban planning for Roma settlements established.

# Indicative Activities

The Action will be implemented through the following main activities:

**Output 1.1 Improved protection and prevention services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence.**

The Action is an extension of IPA 2022 Action “EU for Health, Social Protection and Gender Equality” (ACT-60970), which supports the establishment and initial operation of at least 3 shelters for victims of domestic violence, and prepare them for licensing as providers of specialised social services in line with the applicable national legal framework. The IPA 2024 Action will provide additional funding for sustaining and improving the existing social services, and designing and putting in place of new ones, to ensure the full range of services are available to those in need. The expected result of the two actions will be at least 3 fully functional domestic violence and human trafficking shelters, offering immediate crisis help, round-the-clock secured housing along with psychosocial support, advice and counselling related to acute situations, along with additional services such as reintegration, counselling, mentoring, legal assistance, labour market activation, medical care. These services will be paired with strong awareness raising and communication activities targeting local communities, institutions, health and school establishments, and media, with the objective to promote the available services on gender violence issues and raise the public intolerance to gender discrimination and violence.

**Output 1.2 Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence.**

* Establishing the legal and methodological grounds for data collection and management on gender-based and domestic violence that involves harmonising the relevant legislative act with other related laws.
* Definition of the architecture and the optimal data collection and exchange model also involves defining the roles of relevant institutions and developing business processes following data protection principles and concepts (privacy by design and default).
* Development of the business processes and technical specifications for software to support the existing IT system's register and/or interface and preparing technical specifications for the necessary equipment in relevant institutions.
* Development, testing and operating the software, including support for rectifying defects, information security and training.
* Linking databases of all relevant institutions via the Interoperability Platform of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, testing and optimisation.

**Output 2.1 Strengthened policy and practice on inclusive education**

This output will be achieved through:

* Policy advise and technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science for monitoring, analysing and preparation of selected measures for ensuring safe and inclusive school environment in line with the country’s Educational strategy and the EU principle for inclusive education in safe school environment.
* Technical assistance to the Ministry of Education and Science for improving the planning and management of the EU assistance for improving the non-discrimination policies at school;
* Capacity building for school staff working with children from Roma origin and children with disabilities on inclusive educations
* Putting in place measures to monitor, analyse and respond to safety incidents at school involving abuse and discrimination and deteriorating mental health context in terms of improving inclusive education. This will involve also analysis of the existing legislation, school protocols and measures;
* Piloting of educational modules and training programs for teachers, professional associates, school management, and parents to improve children’s inclusiveness in education process.

**Output 2.2 Improved school accessibility for children with disabilities**

This output involves the adaptation of 20 educational establishments to the needs of students with disabilities. The adaptation covers the installation of accessibility ramps and elevators, toilets for children with special needs, and supply of audio and visual equipment to support the learning process for children with visual and auditory disorders. The action will benefit two types of establishments: *1)* *Inclusive schools*, mainstream schools with programmes and resources in place to support students with special educational needs, which offer a range of support services, such as individualised instruction, assistive technology, and specialised teaching strategies; and *2)* *Resource centres,* providing specialised support services to students with special educational needs who attend mainstream schools. Resources centres offer assistive technology, specialised instructions, and other services to help students succeed in the classroom. The benefitting schools will be selected through a call.

**Output 2.3 Enhanced chances for vulnerable children to attend school**

This output will be achieved through the implementation of a scholarship scheme to strengthen motivation for school participation of about 500 children of Roma origin and children with disabilities. The scholarships will cover tuition fees, textbooks, transportation, and other related expenses. This activity will be implemented in line with the methodology developed through IPA2017 project providing scholarships for children with disabilities.

**Output 3.1 Detailed urban planning for Roma settlements established.**

This output involves

* preparation and adoption of detailed urban plans for Roma settlements in six municipalities with a high concentration of Roma people.
* preparation of the full technical documentation for urbanisation of the selected Roma settlements in line with the adopted urban-spatial plans.
* support for the legalisation of individual homes Roma families.

The action will prepare the future EU investments in the urbanisation of Roma settlements.

# Mainstreaming

**Environmental Protection, Climate Change and Biodiversity**

The Action does not directly address environmental and climate change challenges but will support the achievement of the country’s environmental agenda. The activities addressing the illegal Roma housing, once completed, will contribute to decreasing the pollution in the Roma settlements. The envisaged urbanisation and adaptation activities related to school accessibility will promote sustainable building practices.

**Gender equality and empowerment of women and girls**

As per OECD Gender DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as G1[[25]](#footnote-26). This implies that the Action is gender sensitive and in line with the governmental commitment to adopt the principles and approach stipulated in the Gender Strategy of the European Union 2020-2025 and apply them in all sectoral reforms and support measures.

The Action will directly support the gender equality agenda by improving the system to address gender-based and domestic violence, focusing on women and girls from vulnerable groups living in rural areas, Roma or LGBTI.

In addition, the Action aims at stepping up the inclusive and safe education, increasing the chances of vulnerable children at high risk of dropping out to go to school and seek to support their professional realisation in long-term perspective. This will have a double effect. First, on activating women. Due to the traditional nature of the Macedonian society, women are having key role in caring for children with special needs. The promotion of inclusive education will decrease women involvement in care activities and allow mothers assume more active role in economic, social, political life. Second, improving the school environment will also improve the working conditions for the workforce in the education sector, which is women dominated.

Finally, the right of decent living conditions respond to the needs of Roma women and children who, living in squat and slums, experience increased security risks, and more acute physical and mental health challenges due to lack of services including water, sanitation, electricity, solid waste removal, health and social care support, police protection and legal aid. The shift to regular housing for Roma will allow the realisation of a   
broad range of human rights for the Roma women, such as education, employment and health care, opportunity for community and public participation, protection against violence.

**Human Rights**

The Action will support the human rights agenda in the country in practice by addressing the needs of people who suffer gender-based and domestic violence and consequently experience a violation of certain human rights such as the right to life, freedom from torture and degrading treatment, freedom from discrimination and the right to safety and security. The Action focuses to reinforce the right to education for vulnerable people, and will allow North Macedonia to apply in practice the "leaving no one behind" principle. Finally, the Action addresses a critical aspect of fundamental rights such as the right to decent housing for Roma, who leaving in squats and slams are deprived of many rights.

**Disability**

As per OECD Disability DAC codes identified in section 1.1, this action is labelled as D1. The Action will contribute to improving the chances of children with disabilities to quality and safe non-segregated education. EU funding will be invested in ensuring the accessibility of 20 educational establishments, thus allowing students with special education needs (SEN) follow the mainstream education. In addition, the support for the urbanisation of the Roma settlements will comply with all accessibility norms and standards.

**Civil Society**

The Action has been developed in an inclusive process involving civil society as a part of the established sector policy dialogue. This approach will also apply in the next stage, as civil society organisations are part of the Sector Working Groups (SWGs), channelling the policy dialogue on sector priorities, IPA programming and reporting. Civil society organisations will participate also in implementing the Action, particularly in the parts related to combating gender-based violence and domestic violence, where community organisations will be engaged in the implementation of the measures for prevention and detection of gender-based violence.

# Risks and Assumptions

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Risks** | **Likelihood**  **(High/**  **Medium/**  **Low)** | **Impact**  **(High/**  **Medium/**  **Low)** | **Mitigating measures** |
| People and the organisation | Lack of political will to continue the implementation of the reforms related to gender-based and domestic violence, vulnerable students and Roma inclusion. | H | H | Engage in continuous policy dialogue with national authorities through the Sector Working Group on Health engaging authorities, donors and international partners and civil society organisation. |
| Planning, processes and system | Weak administrative capacity, lack of adequate number and quality staffing and insufficient coordination among institutions. | M | M | The ongoing Public Administration Reform (PAR) is expected to address the high staff turnover in all institutions by proposing a viable retention and merit-based policy and modern human resource management. As intermediate mitigation approach, technical assistance and capacity building measures, including by this action, will be put in place. |
| Planning, processes and system | Slow establishment of functional services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence | M | M | The project is a second phase Support to provide good practice models and encourage networking and peer-to-peer exchange between providers of the services to facilitate and foster their operationalisation according to the provisions of Law on Social Protection and relevant bylaws. |
| Planning, processes and system | Lack of interest and resistance among local authorities on the matters linked to legalisations of Roma settlement | M | M | Intense policy dialogue and strong outreach to showcase the benefits of the action for the municipalities and the communities from improved urban-spatial planning in the Roma settlements |

**External Assumptions**

The external assumptions encountered to have an impact on the proposed Action are:

* Stable political situation and consistent reform orientation of any new government in support of the fundamental rights agenda.
* Political determination and effective decision-making procedures are maintained.
* Positive dynamic on the societal flows and improved socioeconomic conditions impacting on the human rights.
* Social dialogue at the sector level is efficiently working.
* Adequate coordination and cooperation mechanisms between stakeholders to ensure the smooth implementation of the projects.
* Relevant institutions are committed and dispose with the sufficient resources to implement the project, in including staff, infrastructure and mandates.

**Preconditions**

The signature of the Direct award to the MoES for implementation of Outcome 2 is conditioned by:

1. adequate staffing of the relevant departments within MoES responsible for scholarships, infrastructure and procurement
2. MoES has in place proper accounting, procurement and reporting system to implement projects in line with EU rules

# Indicative Logical Framework Matrix

| **Results** | **Results chain:**  **Main expected results** | **Indicators** | **Baselines**  **(values and years)** | **Targets**  **(values and years)** | **Sources of data** | **Assumptions** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Impact** | To fight discrimination and protect the human rights of children and women, persons with disabilities, LGBTI and minorities. | At-the-risk of poverty rate[[26]](#footnote-27) | 21.8% (2020)  21,9% (women)  21,7% (men) | ≤ 18 % (2027) | EUROSTAT |  |
| Gender Equality Index[[27]](#footnote-28) | 62 points | 66 points (2027) | European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) |
| Human Development Index[[28]](#footnote-29) | 0,77 (2021) | 0,790 (2027) | HRD UNDP |
| Percentage of pupils coping with stress | 87% (2018)[[29]](#footnote-30) | 70% (2026 survey with results in 2027) | HBSC[[30]](#footnote-31) Study BDE (MoES) |
| **Outcome 1** | Enhanced response to gender-based violence and domestic violence | Percentage of direct beneficiaries (women, LGBTI, disables and minorities) reintegrated in the active life (in employment) | 0 (2021) | ≥ 20%  (2027) | Project reports | Stable political situation and consistent reform orientation of any new government in support of the fundamental rights agenda.  Political determination and effective decision-making procedures are maintained.  Positive dynamic on the societal flows and improved socioeconomic conditions impacting on the human rights.  Social dialogue at the sector level is efficiently working. |
| **Outcome 2** | Ensured right of vulnerable people to quality education in a safe and accessible environment and their well-being at school. | Number of SEN students enrolled in the regular primary, lower secondary, and special schools | 1364 (Primary) + 544 (Secondary) 1908 (2022/2023)[[31]](#footnote-32) | ≥ 1,908 (2027) | MoES |
| Percentage of the population over the age of 15 in the country with unsatisfactory level education (2020) | 38% (2020) | ≤ 30% (2027) | PISA  NEC  MoES |
| **Outcome 3** | Promoted right of Roma people to legal housing | Percentage of urbanized Roma settlements[[32]](#footnote-33) | 0 % (2022) | 60% (2027) | Regional research |
| **Output 1.1**  **Related to Outcome 1** | Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence | Number of supported victims of domestic violence in the frame of the services supported by this Action by type of services (psycho-social assistance, legal aid, employment measures, etc.), gender and age | 0 (2022) | At least 300  (2027) | Reports of the service providers supported by the Action | Adequate coordination and cooperation mechanisms between stakeholders to ensure the smooth implementation of the projects.  Relevant institutions are committed and dispose with the sufficient resources to implement the project, in including staff, infrastructure and mandates |
| **Output 1.2**  **Related to Outcome 1** | Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and -domestic violence | Number of users of the integrated systems for data collection on Gender Based Violence | 0 (2022) | >60 (2027) | MLSP  Project progress reports |
| **Output 2.1**  **Related to Outcome 2** | Strengthened policy and practice on inclusive education | Number of measures on inclusive and safe educational environment developed and tested | 0 (2022) | >5 (2026) | MoES  Project progress reports |
| **Output 2.2**  **Related to Outcome 2** | Improved school accessibility for children with disabilities | Number of refurbished inclusive schools and resource centres with this intervention | 20 (2022) | ≥ 40 (2027) | MoES  Project progress reports |
| **Output 2.3**  **Related to Outcome 2** | Enhanced chances for vulnerable children to attend school | Number of scholarships awarded to vulnerable students with special needs | 0 (2022) | ≥500 (2027) | MoES  Project progress reports |
| **Output 3.1**  **Related to Outcome 3** | Detailed Urban planning for Roma settlements established | Number of new Roma settlements integrated in urban plans at municipal levels | 0 (2022) | ≥ 3 (2027)[[33]](#footnote-34) | Project report |
| Number of legalised houses of Roma families in selected municipalities | 0 (2022) | ≥ 200 (2027)[[34]](#footnote-35) | Project report |

# IMPLEMENTATION ARRANGEMENTS[[35]](#footnote-36)

# Financing Agreement

In order to implement this Action, it is envisaged to conclude a financing agreement with the North Macedonia.

# Indicative Implementation Period

The indicative operational implementation period of this Action, during which the activities described in section 3 will be carried out and the corresponding contracts and agreements implemented, is 72 months from the date of conclusion of the financing agreement.

Extensions of the implementation period may be agreed by the Commission’s responsible authorising officer by amending this Financing Decision and the relevant contracts and agreements.

# Implementation Modalities

The Commission will ensure that the EU appropriate rules and procedures for providing financing to third parties are respected, including review procedures, where appropriate, and compliance of the action with EU restrictive measures[[36]](#footnote-37).

# Direct Management (Grants)

# *(1) Grant “EU against Gender Violence” II*

# (a) Purpose of the grant(s)

# To ensure the implementation of *Outcome 1: Enhanced response to gender-based violence and domestic violence* through delivering Output 1.1. Improved protection services for victims of gender-based and domestic violence. The grants will be selected after a call for proposals.

# (b) Type of applicants targeted

# Applicants must be legal entities, civil society organisations, public bodies, or international organisations established in North Macedonia and licenced to implement social services.

***(2) Grant “EU for the right to quality education for vulnerable people in a safe and accessible environment***

**(a) Purpose of the grant(s)**

To ensure the implementation of *Outcome 2: Ensure the right of vulnerable people to quality education in a safe and accessible environment and their well-being at school* through delivering all Output 2.2 Improved school accessibility for children with disabilities and Output 2.3 Enhanced chances for vulnerable children to attend school.

**(b) Type of applicants targeted**

Public body of North Macedonia with legal competency and national mandate to implement the national laws and regulations in the area of education has a direct responsibility for the management of scholarships in North Macedonia and the refurbishments and supplies in school environment.

**(c) Justification of a direct grant**

Under the responsibility of the Commission’s authorising officer responsible, the grant may be awarded without a call for proposals to the Ministry of Education and Science (MoES) on the grounds of Article 195(c) and (f). The MoES has the administrative power and competencies to implement the relevant activities, possesses de jure and de facto monopoly over the educational system of the country, and is the key institution responsible for ensuring inclusive education in line with the EU standards. The direct grant to the MoES represents the most efficient financial instrument to support a wide range of activities such as scholarships and infrastructure works and supplies at school, promoting the right to education for vulnerable people and preventing and reinforcing non-discrimination at school. This approach will allow encompassing the EU funding and the national funding in one single operation, which creates ownership, leverage and sustainability.

# Direct Management (Procurement)

# Procurement will be used for achieving the following outcomes and outputs:

* ***Outcome 1: Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at the national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence,*** Output 1.2 Enhanced inter-institutional cooperation at national and local level on gender-based and domestic violence.
* ***Outcome 2: Ensured right of vulnerable people to quality education in a safe and accessible environment and their well-being at school,*** Output 2.1 Strengthened policy and practice on inclusive education
* ***Outcome 3: Promoted right of Roma people to legal housing****,* Output 3.1 Detailed Urban planning for Roma settlements established

**4.3.3. Changes from indirect to direct management (and vice versa) mode due to exceptional circumstances**

In the case the preconditions for grants award are not met and/or the quality of the proposed description of activities proposed by the MoES is not sufficient within 1 year of invitation for submission of grant proposal, the action may be implemented through indirect management with an entrusted entity, selected by the Commission’s services on the grounds of the following criteria: financial and operational capacity, including (1) existing well-staffed and equipped operational structure in North Macedonia, able to manage the intervention as of day one of the contract implementation, and (2) experience in the implementation of similar projects.

# Scope of geographical eligibility for procurement and grants

The geographical eligibility in terms of place of establishment for participating in procurement and grant award procedures and in terms of origin of supplies purchased as established in the basic act and set out in the relevant contractual documents shall apply, subject to the following provisions.

The Commission’s authorising officer responsible may extend the geographical eligibility on the basis of urgency or of unavailability of services in the markets of the countries or territories concerned, or in other duly substantiated cases where application of the eligibility rules would make the realisation of this action impossible or exceedingly difficult (Article 28(10) NDICI-Global Europe Regulation).

# Indicative Budget

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Indicative Budget components** | **EU contribution**  **(amount in EUR)** | **Indicative third-party contribution, in currency identified** |
| **Methods of implementation, cf section 4.3** |  |  |
| **Outcome 1: Enhanced response to gender-based violence and domestic violence** composed of | **4 000 000** | **350 000** |
| Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1 | 3 000 000 | 350 000 |
| Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2 | 1 000 000 |  |
| **Outcome 2: Promoted right of vulnerable people to quality education in a safe and accessible environment** composed of | **7 200 000** | **600 000** |
| Grants (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.1 | 5 200 000 | 600 000 |
| Procurement (direct management), cf. section 4.3.2 | 2 000 000 |  |
| **Outcome 3: Ensured the right of Roma people to legal housing** composed of | **2 500 000** |  |
| Procurement (direct management) – cf. section 4.3.2 | 2 500 000 |  |
|  |  |  |
| **Grants-**total envelope under section 4.3.1 | **8 200 000** | **950,000** |
| **Procurement**- total envelope under section 4.3.2 | **5 500 000** |  |
| **Evaluation** – cf. section 5.2 | Will be covered by another Decision | N.A. |
| **Audit/Expenditure verification**- cf. section 5.3 | Will be covered by another Decision | N.A. |
| **Communication and visibility** – cf. section 6 | Will be covered by another Decision | N.A. |
| **Contingencies**[[37]](#footnote-38) | 0 | N.A. |
| **Totals** | **13 700 000** | **950 000** |

# Organisational Set-up and Responsibilities

# The Delegation of the European Union (EUD) to North Macedonia is in charge of implementing the Action. It will collaborate with the NIPAC Office within the Secretariat for European Affairs, the line ministries, and all stakeholders and implementing partners.

# At the policy level, the implementing partners will be accountable to the relevant Sector Working Groups (Education, Employment and Social Policy and Justice and Fundamental Rights) and the IPA Monitoring Committee.

At the contract level, the implementation arrangements will be discussed through the project Steering Committees having advisory functions and composed of EUD, the relevant national authorities and all relevant implementing partners.

As part of its prerogative of budget implementation and to safeguard the financial interests of the Union, the Commission may participate in the above governance structures set up for governing the implementation of the action.

# PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

# Monitoring and Reporting

The day-to-day technical and financial monitoring of the implementation of this action will be a continuous process, and part of the implementing partner’s responsibilities. To this aim, the implementing partner shall establish a permanent internal, technical and financial monitoring system for the action and elaborate regular progress reports (not less than annual) and final reports. Every report shall provide an accurate account of implementation of the action, difficulties encountered, changes introduced, as well as the degree of achievement of its Outputs and contribution to the achievement of its Outcomes, and if possible at the time of reporting, contribution to the achievement of its Impacts, as measured by corresponding indicators, using as reference the logframe matrix (for project modality) and the partner’s strategy, policy or reform action plan list (for budget support). The Commission may undertake additional project monitoring visits both through its own staff and through independent consultants recruited directly by the Commission for independent monitoring reviews (or recruited by the responsible agent contracted by the Commission for implementing such reviews).

Arrangements for monitoring and reporting, including roles and responsibilities for data collection, analysis and monitoring: The implementation of the Action will be monitored at the sector level through the established 2020 Performance Assessment Framework (PAF), which includes outcome and impact indicators, targets and baseline data. PAF has been established as a web-based application (backed up by a government decision on responsibilities and deadlines), allowing regular electronic data input, processing, and analytics. The PAF data will be used in the Sector Working Groups on Education, Employment and Social Policy and Justice and Fundamental Rights, which is also the inclusive platform for all stakeholders to monitor the implementation of the sector priorities.

At the output level, data about each project and contract implementation will be collected in OPSYS. They will be based on official reports, acceptance certificates or equivalent documents. The competent actors (e.g. MLSP and MoES) are expected to produce timely and meaningful data to monitor the results and impact of the Action.

# Evaluation

Having regard to the importance of the action, a final evaluation will be carried out for this Action or its components via independent consultants. It will be carried out for accountability and learning purposes at various levels (including for policy revision).

The Commission shall form a Reference Group (RG) composed by representatives from the main stakeholders at both EU and national (representatives from the government, from civil society organisations (private sector, NGOs, etc.), etc.) levels. If deemed necessary, other donors will be invited to join. The Commission shall inform the implementing partner at least 2 months in advance of the dates envisaged for the evaluation exercise and missions. The implementing partner shall collaborate efficiently and effectively with the evaluation experts, and inter alia provide them with all necessary information and documentation, as well as access to the project premises and activities.

The evaluation reports shall be shared with the partner country and other key stakeholders following the best practice of evaluation dissemination[[38]](#footnote-39). The implementing partner and the Commission shall analyse the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluations and, where appropriate, in agreement with the partner country, jointly decide on the follow-up actions to be taken and any adjustments necessary, including, if indicated, the reorientation of the project.

# Audit and Verifications

Without prejudice to the obligations applicable to contracts concluded for the implementation of this action, the Commission may, on the basis of a risk assessment, contract independent audit or verification assignments for one or several contracts or agreements.

# STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND PUBLIC DIPLOMACY

All entities implementing EU-funded external actions have the contractual obligation to inform the relevant audiences of the Union’s support for their work by displaying the EU emblem and a short funding statement as appropriate on all communication materials related to the actions concerned. To that end they must comply with the instructions given in the 2022 guidance document [*Communicating and raising EU visibility: Guidance for external actions*](https://international-partnerships.ec.europa.eu/knowledge-hub/communicating-and-raising-eu-visibility-guidance-external-actions_en) (or any successor document).

This obligation will apply equally, regardless of whether the actions concerned are implemented by the Commission, the partner country, service providers, grant beneficiaries or entrusted or delegated entities such as UN agencies, international financial institutions and agencies of EU Member States. In each case, a reference to the relevant contractual obligations must be included in the respective financing agreement, procurement and grant contracts, and contribution agreements.

# SUSTAINABILITY

The Action has a high potential for sustainability at various levels, including institutional, regulatory, and financial. This potential is determined by several factors, such as policy, institutional, methodological and operational improvements, administrative capacity, investment in social infrastructure, and raised public awareness.

The action is expected to result in new facilities, particularly shelters for victims of violence and trafficking and accessibility improvements to educational buildings allowing children with disabilities to attend school. The beneficiary institutions and organisations undertake the responsibility to maintain all infrastructure delivered through the Action in good conditions and ready to serve the target groups, and to maintain and upgrade the relevant facilities. The urbanisation plans for the Roma settlements will create the necessary pre-conditions to channel EU, national and other donors’ investments to urbanisation of the Roma quarters and dramatic improvement of the living conditions.

The action is expected to result in policy improvements related to prevention and protection of violence and inclusive education. The established data on gendered based violence will guide the future policy-making and will support the inter-institutional coordination in mid-term perspective. The action will support the definition and piloting of measures on inclusive education with special focus on addressing school violence and discrimination at school. These measures are expected to be mainstreamed in the schools, which will ensure a high multiplication effect of the EU funding. Inclusive political dialogue is another vector of sustainability expected to support the implementation of coherent sectoral policies in future.

In addition, through outreach and awareness raising activities, the Action will contribute to a culture of respect, tolerance, and non-violence within schools and society and to promoting positive behavioural norms.

**Appendix 1: IDENTIFICATION OF THE PRIMARY INTERVENTION LEVEL FOR REPORTING IN OPSYS**

A Primary intervention[[39]](#footnote-40) (project/programme) is a coherent set of results structured in a logical framework aiming at delivering development change or progress. Identifying the level of the primary intervention will allow for:

* Differentiating these Actions or Contracts from those that do not produce direct reportable development results, defined as support entities (i.e. audits, evaluations);
* Articulating Actions and/or Contracts according to an expected common chain of results and therefore allowing them to ensure a more efficient and aggregated monitoring and reporting of performance;
* Having a complete and exhaustive mapping of all results-bearing Actions and Contracts.

The present Action identifies as

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Action level** (i.e. Budget support, Blending) | | |
|  | Single action | Present action: all contracts in the present action |
| **Group of actions level** (i.e: i) top-up cases, ii) second, third, etc. phases of a programme) | | |
|  | Group of actions | Actions reference (CRIS#/OPSYS#): N/A |
| **Contract level** (i.e. Grants, Contribution Agreements, any case in which foreseen individual legal commitments identified in the budget will have different log frames, even if part of the same Action Document) | | |
|  | Single Contract 1 | N/A |
| **Group of contracts level** (i.e: i) series of programme estimates, ii) cases in which an Action Document foresees many foreseen individual legal commitments (for instance four contracts and one of them being a Technical Assistance) and two of them, a technical assistance contract and a contribution agreement, aim at the same objectives and complement each other, iii) follow up contracts that share the same log frame of the original contract) | | |
|  | Group of contracts | N/A |

1. Depending on the availability of OPSYS at the time of encoding, a provisional CRIS number may need to be provided. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. The share of the priority areas should be linked to the NEAR EIP sub-tags: Transport, Energy, Environment and climate resilience, Digital, Economic development (incl. private sector, trade, and macroeconomic support), Human Development (incl. human capital and youth), Health resilience, Migration and mobility, Agriculture, food security and rural development, Rule of law, governance and public administration reform, Other. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Please specify if this action is going to be part of the Team Europe approach. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. Indicate the lead window and thematic priority as identified in the relevant programming document. Please indicate for each thematic priority the approximate share (%) of the window budget it represents. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. Development Assistance Committee (DAC) sectors (codes and descriptions) are indicated in the first and fourth columns of the tab ‘purpose codes’ in the following document: [DAC and CRS code lists - OECD](https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/dacandcrscodelists.htm) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. For guidance, see [Development finance standards - OECD](https://www.oecd.org/development/financing-sustainable-development/development-finance-standards/) (Go to “Data collection and resources for reporters”, select Addendum 2, annexes 18 (policy) and 19 (Rio) of the reporting directive. If an action is marked in the DAC form as contributing to one of the general policy objectives or to RIO principles as a principal objective or a significant objective, then this should be reflected in the logframe matrix (in the results chain and indicators). [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. Please check the [Handbook on the OECD-DAC Nutrition Policy Marker](https://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/OECD_PolicyMarkerNutrition.pdf). [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
8. These markers have a different scope/rationale than the DAC codes. They are drawn from the level of budget allocation and emphasise the action in terms of main objective(s) selected. The definition of objectives and outputs in the description of the action should be in line with this section. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
9. When a marker is Significant or Principal Objective, please indicate the relevant tags by selecting “YES” or “NO”. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
10. Please address the digitalisation marker in line with the note ARES(2019)7611708, which provides internal guidelines on the criteria to be used to assess the degree of relevance of the marker for the action (not targeted, significant or main objective). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
11. When a marker is “Significant Objective“ or “Principal Objective”, please indicate the relevant tags by selecting “YES” or “NO”. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
12. Please address the migration marker in line with the note Ares(2021)6077013. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
13. Macedonian legislation recognised and criminalised domestic violence, initially in 2004, by adding a separate chapter for domestic violence in the Family Law and in the Criminal code as an aggravating circumstance for several criminal acts include bodily injury, serious bodily injury, coercion, unlawful deprivation of liberty, endangerment of security and murder. The first separate law on domestic violence was adopted in September 2014 –Law on Prevention, Protection and Combating Domestic Violence, which came into force on the 1st of January 2015. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
14. <https://mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2021/1a28a922f364401e94935d4d694b9d75.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
15. https://mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/2022/strategija\_2022\_2027.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
16. <https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/e19ef6763a344beeaddf059157344512.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
17. According to figures from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, in the first six months of 2022 social services registered a total of 622 victims of gender-based violence and family violence, including 463 women, 116 men, and 83 children. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
18. https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/606043d405e847ee92c7eaed5c8bd389.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
19. https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/3/5/419264\_1.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
20. https://eca.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2022/04/2021-public-perceptions-of-gender-equality-and-violence-against-women [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
21. Source of data: Administrative data obtained by MLSP based on information gathered from 30 Social Work Centers. Due to type of violence, the most present were physic and physical violence, and less present were economic and sexual violence. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
22. Another EU-project will support the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy to establish a monitoring system of the quality of the social services and upgrade the methodological basis for the state financing of the public services in the social area. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
23. Inclusion of children and youth with disabilities in mainstream secondary education. Research Report. Ombudsman, Republic of North Macedonia. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
24. North Macedonia Roma COVID-19 Emergency Response and Social Inclusion Project", November 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
25. Principal objective / significant objective/ not targeted. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
26. <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/databrowser/view/tespm010/default/table?lang=en> [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
27. <https://eige.europa.eu/north-macedonia> [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
28. <http://hdr.undp.org/en/composite/HDI> [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
29. Results from the HBSC study 2022 will be published in 2Q 2023 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
30. https://hbsc.org/ [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
31. Administrative data from the Department for Primary Education and Department for Secondary Education in MoES [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
32. It is calculated dividing the number of Roma settlements with urban plan by the total number of Roma settlements. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
33. Roma settlements will be selected based on housing feasibility study prepared for assessment of social housing in Roma communities. So far, housing feasibility study have been prepared for municipalities of Kumanovo and Stio (https://www.rcc.int/romaintegration2020/download/docs/Housing%20Feasibility%20Study%20for%20Roma%20settlements%20in%20the%20cities%20Stip%20and%20Kumanovo.pdf/786c89469a5d951f73887f50c7dea12e.pdf), in which certain percentage of Roma population live. In total 6 settlements had been encompassed with the studies (3 settlements per each municipality). The housing feasibility study was prepared with the support of RCC – Roma Integration 2020. It is expected housing feasibility studies to be prepared for Roma settlements in other municipalities in forthcoming period. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
34. Number of legalized houses of Roma families will be encompassed in selected municipalities in which urban planning will be done previously. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
35. This section is to be completed by the EU Office/Delegation. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
36. [EU Sanctions Map](https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main). Please note that the sanctions map is an IT tool for identifying the sanctions regimes. The source of the sanctions stems from legal acts published in the Official Journal (OJ). In case of discrepancy between the published legal acts and the updates on the website it is the OJ version that prevails. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
37. Consider that contracts where no financing agreement is concluded, contingencies have to be covered by individual and legal commitments by 31 December of N+1. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
38. See best [practice of evaluation dissemination](https://europa.eu/capacity4dev/evaluation_guidelines/wiki/disseminating-evaluations) [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
39. For the purpose of consistency between terms in OPSYS, DG INTPA, DG NEAR and FPI have harmonised 5 key terms, including ‘Action’ and ‘Intervention’ where an ‘Action’ is the content (or part of the content) of a Commission financing Decision and ‘Intervention’ is a coherent set of activities and results which constitutes an effective level for the operational follow-up by the EC of its operations on the ground. See more on the [concept of intervention](https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/fpfis/wikis/display/PCM/Concept+of+intervention) *[to access the link an EU Login is needed]*. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)