

FOUNDATION OPEN SOCIETY –
MACEDONIA

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FOUNDATION ФОНДАЦИЈА
OPEN ОТВОРЕНО
SOCIETY ОПШТЕСТВО
MACEDONIA МАКЕДОНИЈА

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|| SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED BY THE END OF 2017 ||

Under the strategy 2017-2020, *Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM)* focuses its resources and efforts towards rebuilding democracy and democratic governance as its ultimate long-term goal, by means of:

- Supporting civil society organizations to advance state-of-affairs in the fields identified as the most threatened: 1) youth activism; and 2) rights-based health policies. These organizations hold adequate expertise, access to relevant target groups, and have well developed coalitions and alumni networks, allowing them to efficiently articulate their strategies and respond to emerging challenges and circumstances.
- Implementing four concepts, those being: 1) Grassroots Mobilization and Community Activism; 2) Civic Action for Urgent Reform Priorities; 3) Inclusive and Transparent Education Policies; and 4) Shared Framework: Legal Empowerment.

Total amount of funds spent on implementation of FOSM's activities in 2017 accounted for 196,127,695 MKD, of which 166,393,242 MKD were awarded by the Open Society Foundations, while 29,734,453 MKD were secured from other donors.

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|| SUPPORT TO STRATEGIC FIELDS ||

Key milestones and/or activities that marked work of CSOs supported under FOSM's strategic fields in 2017

#YOUTH ACTIVISM

• YOUTH EDUCATIONAL FORUM •

The Youth Educational Forum (YEF) was awarded grant in the amount of 100,000 USD to implement activities in 2017, thereby securing space for activism and learning opportunities for high-school students and youth in 8 towns across Macedonia: Skopje, Kumanovo, Tetovo, Veles, Negotino, Prilep, Bitola and Struga, in the form of weekly lectures delivered as part of *Debate*, *Street Law* and *Media/Art* clubs. In the period February-May 2017, 29 clubs with 280 students were operational and their number was increased to 34 clubs with 380 members in the period October-December 2017. In October, YEF applied and was issued positive opinion by the Bureau for Development of Education and the Ministry of Education to organize promotion events for its clubs at secondary schools. Based on programs presented by youth workers and YEF trainers, these clubs delivered training to young people on argument-based expression, developed their critical thinking, educated them about their rights and the legal system, and developed their skills for expression and activism through alternative arts.

Training event was organized for new generation of debate lecturers, which was successfully completed by 22 high-school and university students from 5 towns. Training for new lecturers on *Street Law* was completed by 24 law students from 10 towns. 14 debaters participated in 3 international debate conferences and events. 9 visits were organized to local courts and institutions, aimed to introduce high-school students with their operation, including the first visit of *Street Law* club members to the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, whereby 55 high-school students visited the legislative house and met the Parliament Speaker and MPs. Youth Amateur Theatre Group “Kunstwerkstatt”, established and operational within YEF, applied and was admitted in official program at 2017 Drama Theater Festival. In addition to their performance, festival jury awarded them 2017 Grand Prix, which represents major encouragement and acknowledgement for *Media/Art* club members.

YEF was vigilant and active advocate for keeping youth and education policies high priority in the state. In 2017, this organization took part in the Berlin Process, whereas after the Trieste Summit YEF representatives - in cooperation with the Young European Federalists of Macedonia and the National Youth Council of Macedonia - organized the conference titled “Youth Policies through the Prism of the Berlin Process”. At this conference, held at CEM Club, youth organizations, director of the Agency for Youth and Sports and ambassadors of states acting as holders of the Berlin Process spoke before an audience of 50 guests from domestic and international organizations. Several months later, YEF representative participated in the first public debate “Youth and the Berlin Process” organized at

the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia. YEF was actively involved in development of 2017 CSO Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms, with contributions in policy areas, such as *Education and Youth, Civil Society, and Culture*. This year marked the termination of external knowledge assessment, an issue for which YEF motioned a petition with 26,000 signatures in its first year of implementation. Moreover, YEF monitored and provided comments and recommendations on primary and secondary education reforms, participated in drafting the new Law on Higher Education and the Comprehensive Education Strategy 2018–2025, and organized meetings with several institutions to present them with its recommendations on youth and education policies.

In 2017, Radio YEF had more than 1,000,000 visitors and journalists created more than 4,000 articles. Moreover, Radio YEF aired 19 shows, with more than 3,000 listeners. Its studio hosted the first series of video concerts titled “Kicks and Gigs”, featuring performances by domestic musicians from the alternative scene. Radio YEF’s team worked on news reports, live streams and intensive coverage of protests and guerilla actions, clean air initiatives, reforms and problems in education, youth policies, attacks and pressures on civil society, and other major developments in the country, as illustrated by published top lists: Top 10 Youth Events in 2017, Top 10 Videos on Radio YEF and Top 10 Shows Aired on Radio YEF in 2017.

RIGHTS-BASED HEALTH POLICIES

In the field of rights-based health policies, FOSM’s goal is to advance health policies and practices for marginalized communities (LGBTI, Roma, persons using drugs, sex workers and people living with HIV), by means of: 1) health budget monitoring and analysis and holding the government accountable for allocation of maximum available funds for progressive and non-discriminatory enforcement of health rights; 2) advocacy for health policy reforms to accommodate community needs; and 3) ensuring involvement and participation of affected communities in planning, monitoring and evaluation of health policy implementation.

For that purpose, FOSM awarded grants to: Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women – ESE, HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje, and Coalition “Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities”.

• Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women – ESE •

The Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women – ESE continuously monitors and analyses budgeting processes and advocates for health and social protection. Based on its findings from monitoring budgets of preventive health programs, in early 2017 ESE published 4 analyses related to implementation of the Program for Active Health Protection of Mothers and Children, Program for Systemic Check-Ups for Pupils and Students, Program for Early Detection of Malignant Diseases, and Program for Rare Diseases. In addition, it developed policy papers with recommendations for competent institutions aimed

to promote planning and implementation of these preventive health programs. Underway are activities to identify new priority problems in the areas of health, health protection, and social health determinants, that will be subject to further monitoring and analysis based on data collected during the field research conducted among vulnerable households in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari.

In 2017, ESE continued work on monitoring and analysis of infant, perinatal and maternal mortality indicators, by submitting 13 information requests to 17 public health institutions for in-patient care that include maternity wards, in order to obtain data for these indicators. ESE established cooperation with the Institute of Public Health on monitoring and analysis of reasons contributing to increased mortality rates in the last seven years.

On recommendation from ESE, the government tasked responsible officers at the Ministry of Health to pilot social accountability methodologies. Technical support was provided to the Ministry of Health, resulting in identification of the Program for Active Health Protection of Mothers and Children that will serve as pilot program for implementation of the social audit methodology. On request from the ministry, ESE drafted proposed goals for methodology piloting, proposed subject matter of monitoring, and proposed municipalities where this methodology could be piloted. In the forthcoming period, activities will be taken on capacity building for staff members at the Ministry of Health to apply the social audit methodology.

Based on analysis of health budget processes, ESE developed draft document with findings from analysis of domestic and international regulations and standards, various documents developed in the course of the budget process, as well as reports and documents developed and published by international institutions and organizations that focus on impact of microeconomic policies, bilateral relations, foreign aid and public-private partnership on access to health care. These findings concern the period from 2011 to 2017. Moreover, they address links and interrelations between budget's revenue and expenditure sides, and how they affect the health budget. Final analysis and accompanying policy paper will be officially promoted in the second quarter of 2018.

As part of gender-based monitoring and analysis of health and social protection budgets, ESE initiated national research aimed to analyze unpaid household work on care for seriously ill people. In 2017, field survey activities targeted 1,450 households and resulted in compilation of three databases (database for imputing questionnaires from households with people in need of such care, database for imputing questionnaires from households without people in need of such care, and database for imputing data on time spent providing such care).

Based on analysis of two grants for implementation of the National Strategy on Fight against Domestic Violence, ESE drafted policy paper with data on frequency of domestic violence, its achievements in this field, development of the UN Joint Program on Domestic Violence, comparison of the UN Joint Program and the National Strategy in terms of program contents and finances, and conclusions.

Final version of the brief report was developed to inform the public about the project on promoting health status of mothers and children, implemented by the Ministry of Health and financed by ORIO program. This report is based on data obtained from Kingdom of the Netherlands and information collected in 2016 pursuant to the instrument for free access to public information. In addition, this report addresses aspects such as: project goal, identified problems that should be addressed by the project, financial implementation of the project, portfolio of project activities aimed to address identified problems, transparency of public institutions in sharing information and data related to project planning and implementation.

Active participation in the working group on efficient public finance management–fiscal transparency [under the Open Government Partnership (OGP)] resulted in raising the issue about the manner in which ORIO grant was utilized, and need to inform the public about implementation of this grant and results thereof. In cooperation with the Ministry of Finance, activities were taken to review and approve information which the Ministry of Health and the Secretariat of European Affairs should publish on their websites in relation to ORIO grant's program and budget implementation. These sets of information should be published by relevant institutions in early 2018.

ESE developed and promoted shadow report on implementation of priority no.3 (access to information) and priority no.5 (efficient public finance management – fiscal transparency) under the Open Government Partnership Action Plan 2016-2018.

As a result of active participation in this working group and exercise of continuous pressures, the Ministry of Finance published the document on citizens' budget for the 2017 Budget of the Republic of Macedonia and its adjustments.

As regards promotion of transparency and accountability of the government and government institutions in relation to enforcement of health rights, in 2017 ESE addressed 65 public health institutions with 635 requests pursuant to the instrument for free access to public information, in order to collect data needed to analyze program and budget implementation of preventive health programs. Requested information include copies of invoices and reports submitted or received by entities implementing program activities, copies from treasury balance sheets that record payment and receipt of funds per institution involved in implementation of preventive health programs, copies of summary financial reports, information on implementation of individual budget items per program, etc. In order to verify accuracy and consistency of information presented in documents of the Ministry of Health and for comparison purposes, same type of information was requested from individual implementing entities.

2016 Report on Reactive Transparency was developed and provides overview on compliance with obligations arising from the Law on Free Access to Public Information for 54 public institutions. This report is used by public institutions, civil society organizations and national media as relevant source of information about state-of-affairs and progress achieved in terms of practices applied by public institutions when acting pursuant to the Law on Free Access to Public Information;

initiation and implementation of public system reforms; and undertaking steps to improve practices of public institutions when acting in procedures initiated for free access to public information. In 2017, the Ministry of Justice initiated development of amendments to the Law on Free Access to Public Information. In order to ensure continuous progress on the part of public institutions in implementation of the Law on Free Access to Public Information, in 2017 ESE initiated a total of 1,345 procedures on free access to public information before 68 public institutions and lodged a total 120 appeals.

2016 Report on Proactive Transparency analyzed availability of 16 key budget documents on the websites of 25 public institutions and is used by public institutions, civil society organizations and national media as relevant source of information about state-of-affairs and progress achieved in terms of proactive publication of program and budget documents; initiation and implementation of public system reforms; and undertaking steps to increase number of documents and information that are made publicly available. In 2017, the government adopted the list of documents and information which public institutions should publish on their websites. In order to ensure continuous progress on the part of public institutions in terms of publishing information and documents related to program and budget operations on their websites, monitoring activities in 2017 targeted availability of 16 key budget documents on the websites of 25 public institutions.

Based on monitoring findings for reactive and proactive transparency of public institutions, recommendations were submitted to more than 70 institutions.

On recommendation from ESE, the government tasked the Ministry of Health to finalize and publish reports on program and budget implementation of all preventive and curative health programs financed under the ministry's budget, and to organize campaign for their promotion. Hence, in direct consultations with ESE, the Ministry of Health developed templates for semiannual and annual program and budget reports for all 22 preventive and curative health programs implemented under its budget. In January 2018, the ministry is expected to publish these reports on its website for the first time. As partial response to continuous efforts and pressures to increase the number of program and budget documents made publicly available on the websites of public institutions, in October 2017 the government adopted the list of documents which all line ministries are obliged to publish on their websites. This list anticipates publication of a total of 21 documents and datasets on program and budget operations by all ministries.

On the occasion celebrating International Right to Know Day, ESE published three individual stories of citizens related to obstacles they have faced when exercising the right to free access to public information, followed by promotion of documentary film on practical experiences related to enforcement of the Law on Free Access to Public Information and respect for the right to access to public information (featuring experiences of three civil society organizations, those being: ESE, CEA and BIRN), and organized press conference and accompanying public debate on documentary film and findings from reports on reactive and proactive transparency.

The report “Public Procurements: Grey Zone in the Public Health Sector” identified key shortcomings in implementation of 7,054 public procurement procedures organized by 62 public health institutions in the period 2011-2015, as well as recommendations for competent institutions aimed to address these shortcomings. In addition and for the purpose of demonstrating progress/backslide in this domain, monitoring activities continued in the course of 2017 and targeted public procurement procedures organized by the same public health institutions in 2016 and 2017. Findings and recommendations arising from this analysis were presented to 62 monitored institutions, including the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, the Ministry of Finance and the Bureau of Public Procurements. In 2017, the Bureau of Public Procurements introduced possibility for publication of public procurement contracts awarded, thereby allowing public insight therein.

As a result of accumulated experiences from enforcement of the Law on Free Access to Public Information and in the capacity of active participant in OGP’s working group on access to information, ESE presented the Ministry of Justice with proposed amendments to the Law on Free Access to Public Information.

In continuity, ESE works on raising awareness of the broader public about the importance of fiscal transparency and the need to increase current level of transparency demonstrated by public institutions, by providing information and educational materials and by producing videos as part of its campaign on the social media *Fiscal Transparency Macedonia* and thematic website www.fiskalntransparentnost.org.mk. Activities taken as part of this campaign include publication of 312 communications and videos that were viewed 1,200,000 times, while contents published on thematic website were visited by 1,671 persons.

The campaign on promotion of ESE’s work and results, financially supported by FOSM, included development and publication of 312 communications and videos that were viewed 1,276,000 times.

In cooperation with the Commission for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, planning activities were initiated for public awareness campaign on the right to access to public information.

In 2017, continuous technical support was provided to three Roma CSOs implementing social accountability and legal empowerment activities (development of community scorecards, local strategic advocacy plans and training on analysis of data collected through budget monitoring of local public health institutions). Two workshops were held with two CSOs from Romania to plan their work on social accountability for promotion of health and access to health care for Roma women from communities based in vicinity of Bucharest and Cluj.

In 2017, ESE organized 6 three-day training courses on budget monitoring and analysis and budget advocacy, attended by more than 200 participants, civil society representatives from Lithuania, Georgia, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Hercegovina, and Macedonia. Manual on Budget Monitoring and Advocacy was developed and is intended for organizations working on drug-related harm reduction. Mentorship for application of budget monitoring and advocacy was provided to five domestic CSOs,

National Platform on HIV Prevention, Euro-Asian Network of Harm Reduction CSOs and Southeast European Network on Drugs and Policies.

After the political context was changed and institutions were open to cooperation with civil society organizations, ESE started activities on targeting line ministers with information based on previous findings and recommendations, as part of advocacy efforts in its areas of operation. Moreover, meetings were held with the Minister of Labor and Social Policy and the Minister of Health. For the purpose of presenting its work and demands under the budget monitoring and analysis program, information and requests for meeting were addressed to the Minister of Finance and the Prime Minister of the Republic of Macedonia.

In addition, ESE representatives were involved in several inclusive processes, as follows: drafting amendments to the Law on Health Protection initiated by the Ministry of Health, and development of *CSO Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms* organized by FOSM and core group of CSOs.

▪ HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje ▪

In 2017, HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje worked on provision of assistance and improving status of underage persons using psychotropic substances, persons using drugs, and sex workers. Approval issued by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (MLSP) for work with juveniles at the public institution for children and youth with educational and social problems paved the road for organization of workshops on strengthening children's resistance to challenges related to drug use. In the period June-September, 4 workshops were organized with total of 37 children. In particular, by means of engaging children in games, workshop goals were attained, such as improved mutual relations and acceptance among children and encouragement of children to improve positive self-images on long run, as well improved daily functioning and behavior. Moreover, MLSP provided support for field-based activities with underage children using drugs. This support was intended for the Day Centre for Rehabilitation and Resocialization of Drug Users and Their Families, i.e. funds were secured for additional shift of field-based work with children using drugs and their families. In this period, field workers realized a total of 161 visits. In the period June-August, field activities were organized twice a week, and from September onwards their frequency was increased to three times a week, on locations in the Municipality of Centar (Park of Women, Orthodox Temple, GTC, Green Market, City Park, Railway Station and near the Clinical Hospital) and in the Municipalities of Kisela Voda and Shuto Orizari. Total of 316 social services were provided in the form of information and consultations, referrals and accompanying clients to relevant institutions. All children contacted in the field were informed about harmful consequences of glue inhalation and parallel use of different drugs (marihuana, tablets).

In 2017, a total of 979 services were provided to children and their families and implied information about social allowance and protection, obtaining personal documents, addiction treatment, and material assistance in the form of food,

clothing and hygiene supplies. Contacts were established with 27 different children using drugs, of which 4 children were contacted for the first time.

In addition to above enlisted activities and due to the specific nature of their interventions, HOPS organized regular individual and group meetings to strengthen capacity of team members engaged in field-based work with children using drugs. Two expert workers at HOPS (one of which is field-based social worker specialized in work with underage children) attended the regional meeting organized as part of the Regional Project “At-Risk Youth Social Empowerment”, financed by the EU. This meeting was held in Herceg Novi, Montenegro.

As part of advocacy efforts aimed to ensure adequate conditions for treatment of children using drugs, activities taken in the past period included raising the issue about the need for establishment of rehabilitation and treatment centers for underage drug users. Radio YEF developed and aired news report on child using drugs, which featured conversation with the mother whose child started treatment and statement issued by HOPS field worker. In September, the national coordination body for children using drugs was established within the Regional Project “At-Risk Youth Social Empowerment”, aimed to improve insights and monitor situation at national level, and to ensure platform for comprehensive, sustainable and cost-efficient solutions through meaningful cooperation among all competent institutions and stakeholders. This coordination body is comprised of representatives from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Interior, Administration on Execution of Sanctions, Ombudsman Office, UNICEF, Red Cross of the Republic of Macedonia and HOPS. Due reconsideration is made for future expansion of this body to include representatives from other stakeholders and institutions.

As regards activities taken by sex workers engaged as paralegals, in addition to training provided as part of the shared framework on legal empowerment, other workshops were organized on different topics that are useful in their day-to-day field-based work (distinguishing between private and professional communications, activism among sex workers, discrimination and mechanisms for protection against discrimination, asylum and safety when travelling abroad, and exchange of field experiences: problems faced by engaged paralegals). Three supervisory meetings were held to discuss work of engaged paralegals in Skopje, Strumica, Gostivar and Ohrid, on topics such as: cooperation between engaged paralegals and local CSOs; need to maintain regular and professional communications between paralegals in all towns and professional staff at local CSOs; checklists for completeness of records kept by engaged paralegals; and presentation of specific case studies.

On request from expert workers involved in provision of direct assistance to sex workers and aimed to provide support for prevention of burnouts, 14 meetings were organized with psychologist. After attending regular sessions for prevention of burnouts, field workers demonstrated better performance, increased motivation and improved relations with colleagues. In particular, these sessions were intended to address problems and challenges in their professional and private lives.

As regards activities and services of social workers intended for persons using drugs, in 2017 contacts were established with a total of 498 different persons

using drugs (of which 89 are new clients) and they were provided a total of 5,621 services. Social services concern information about health insurance, social allowance and protection, obtaining personal documents, treatment of drug use, accompanying clients to and facilitating contacts with institutions, material assistance, etc.

In cooperation with social workers and other team members, HOPS continued its activities on motivating clients to report cases in which they are accused of drug-related criminal offences, in order to secure them defense representation, ensure better treatment of persons using drugs charged with drug possession, and change practices whereby these persons are criminalized instead of being provided treatment, rehabilitation and resocialization services. Free legal aid is provided at drop-in centers for drug users and, when necessary, in the field. In 2017, 848 services were provided to 115 different drug users. Cases were reported of discrimination at health institutions due to drug use, including cases of job dismissal after employers have learned that employees used drugs in the past; however, none of them wanted to initiate any form of proceedings.

As regards provision of continuous legal aid to members of target groups, the procedure on establishing discrimination in the case related to job dismissal due to drug use was completed in 2017. In that, domestic courts failed to establish discrimination and therefore activities are taken to draft and submit application before the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The procedure initiated in 2015 for protection against discrimination on the grounds of health and marginalized status was completed, but implied negative outcome for the client. This court verdict was received in the second half of May and indicated that the court has rejected the lawsuit claim as unfounded. Appeal was lodged within the relevant deadline and this case is pending resolution at the Appeal Court in Skopje. In the period April-May, judge on execution of sanctions took decision on temporary suspension of imprisonment (in duration of three months) for the client with seriously deteriorated health. After having served 12 years of his sentence, the person is released for treatment in his community, but lacks personal identification documents, which additionally hinders his access to health services. While serving his imprisonment sentence, the person was enlisted for methadone substitute therapy. After being released from prison and due to lack of adequate documents, his therapy was postponed for three weeks. To protect his rights, complaint was lodged before the Ombudsman Office and the judge on execution of sanctions, in order to create conditions for continuation of his therapy and provision of quality services to improve his general health status that constituted the reason for temporary suspension of his imprisonment sentence. The client signed power of attorney for representation in court proceedings initiated for protection of his rights, but after the suspension period expired he was returned to prison to serve his imprisonment sentence. In the forthcoming period, HOPS plans prison visits intended to strategize next legal actions for protection of his rights. As regards the request for investigation into violation of rights of sex workers motioned before the Committee on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the submission letter was completed with addition of evidence. It addresses failure of the state to protect rights of sex workers during police raid in November 2008, as

well as on other occasions prior and after this event. The request for investigation was submitted before CEDAW and confirmation of receipt was received.

After the political context changed and new authorities were open to cooperation with civil society organizations, meetings were held with the Prime Minister and Ministers of Health and Labor and Social Policy to raise issues of interest for HOPS.

▪ Coalition “Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities” ▪

In 2017, the Coalition “Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities” (Coalition) continued its cooperation with several state institutions on capacity building for civil servants to work with members of these communities. In partnership with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the Coalition continued its cooperation with the Bureau of Social Affairs on implementation of MODULE 19, which concerns work with marginalized communities as part of the comprehensive licensing system for expert workers in the social protection system of the Republic of Macedonia. Two training events covered 50 social workers from inter-municipal social work centers in several towns. Agreement was reached for module contents (covering persons using drugs, sex workers and people living with HIV) to be complemented in 2018 with topics on LGBTI community.

Advocacy activities were taken to remove discriminatory contents from textbooks, including submission of complaints before the State Education Inspectorate, the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD) and the Ombudsman Office for total of 8 textbooks. Contested contents were removed from 3 textbooks, while revision of secondary and primary education textbooks was announced and should result in additional removal of discriminatory contents from other textbooks. Based on recommendations issued by the Ombudsman (addition of anti-discriminatory clauses to rulebooks adopted by the University “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” and the University “St. Clement of Ohrid”), requests for meeting were addressed to university rectors, including requests to remove said contents, but they were denied. Memorandum of cooperation was signed with the Ministry of Education for participation in working group tasked with revision of textbooks.

The media campaign #AcademicPearls – TOWARDS EDUCATION FREE OF DISCRIMINATION was organized in December 2017 and aimed to publicly present discriminatory contents in textbooks for higher education used at state universities in the Republic of Macedonia and advocate before competent state institutions to review contents of these textbooks. Campaign activities included organization of the conference titled “Towards Education Free of Discrimination: Efforts to Overcome Discrimination in Higher Education Textbooks”, which facilitated discussion on possible solutions to address textbook contents that incite harassment and discrimination, encourage prejudices and stigmatization of marginalized communities in the Republic of Macedonia, and possible involvement of civil society organizations in creation of textbook contexts and curricula for state universities.

Moreover, training was delivered to professional school services (pedagogues and psychologists) on work with the Ministry of Health and dealing with bullying at

five pilot secondary schools in Skopje, identified according to previous cases of bullying reported to the Coalition. Three schools were selected and training was delivered to students and teachers for development of projects/campaigns against gender-based bullying at schools.

In order to create referent network of medical doctors (with focus on general practitioners) sensitized to work with transgender people, cooperation was initiated with the Association of Private Medical Doctors and training was delivered to 25 registered general practitioners.

As regards documenting cases of sexual and health rights violations by the Ministry of Health and provision of free legal aid, in 2017 the Coalition secured legal representation for two persons who in 2013 initiated procedures before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) for violation of the right to privacy on the grounds of illegal DNA-sampling by the Ministry of Interior (MoI). In response to findings presented by the state, relevant submissions were drafted and presented to ECtHR, which is expected to make its judgement in the forthcoming period. Court representation was provided for transgender person who submitted application before ECtHR in 2016 on the grounds of violation of the right to privacy due to rejected request for change of gender designation in general records and included drafting submissions before ECtHR and responses to findings presented by the state upon application claims. Moreover, an attempt was made for amicable dispute resolution, but the state declined this initiative. National advocacy continued in 4 cases related to legal recognition of gender, resulting in positive outcomes for two clients in September 2017 by means of decisions taken by the Administrative Court of the Republic of Macedonia to approve change of gender designation and single identification number in general records. These decisions were enforced and two trans-women obtained personal identification documents that reflect their gender identity. Proceedings in other cases are underway, although one of them implies parallel proceedings led before ECtHR. In the meantime, two new procedures for change of gender designation in personal documents were initiated on behalf of transgender persons. Three transgender persons were provided free legal aid to have their names changed as part of their transition process. The Coalition continued provision of court representation for one trans-woman who is victim of hate violence. These criminal proceedings were completed with a court verdict declaring the perpetrator guilty, confirmed by the Appeal Court this year, whereby the overall procedure is considered complete and the trans-woman was awarded indemnity for pecuniary damages suffered as a result of the physical attack, while indemnity for non-pecuniary damages should be sought by initiation of civil proceedings. Underway is execution procedure for collection of indemnity awarded. In 2017, activities continued under two procedures motioned for establishment of violation of the rights enjoyed by one LGBTI person who was publicly exposed to libel and defamation. In particular, two media outlets publicly revealed his sexual orientation, qualifying this person as mentally ill and exposing him to public humiliation. Lawsuits were motioned against the two media outlets to establish civic liability for libel and defamation. Two transsexual sex workers had their right to privacy violated during show program aired on *TV Kanal 5*, notably by having their photographs, telephone

numbers, health status and other personal information revealed in public. In that, lawsuit was motioned against editor-in-chief and television channel for establishment of violation of the right to privacy. Several court hearings were held in the course of 2017, but due to change of presiding judge, court proceedings will start anew. The Coalition provides court representation for person using drugs that was battered by four policemen in July 2017. This case was documented and reported to the Ombudsman Office and MoI's Sector on Internal Control and Professional Standards, followed by information notice to the public prosecution office. The public prosecution initiated proceedings against policemen, while in the course of pre-investigation proceedings the client is represented as damaged party. In 2017, the Coalition identified ten cases of hate speech promoted by the media and targeting LGBTI people. In all cases, relevant procedures were initiated before the Council of Media Ethics (CME) and the Commission for Protection against Discrimination (CPD). Complaints lodged before CME were successful; however, CPD established discrimination in one case and other cases are pending decision or were completed without establishment of discrimination. Two cases of hate speech were identified with Members of Parliament, followed by complaints lodged before CPD, one of which was completed without establishment of discrimination, while the second is pending decision.

In the period June 22nd to 25th, in partnership with LGBTI Support Center at the Helsinki Committee and LGBTI United from Tetovo, the Coalition organized the Fifth Pride Week under the motto *Trans-Formations*, with events taking place on several locations in Skopje. By means of different public events, such as: queer storytelling, exhibition of queer photographs, artistic installations, theoretical lectures, drag cabaret and workshop, the public was informed about issues related to societal and cultural norms on sexuality and gender, criticism of binary gender system, nationalistic homophobia, as well as issues related to class, ethnicity, race and health status. On the occasion of the international day to end violence against sex workers, the Coalition - in partnership with STAR-STAR – organized a series of events (including lecture titled “Sex on the Margins” by human rights activist for sex workers Laura Agustin, public artistic performance “Skopje Red Light District” and March of Red Umbrellas) aimed to raise public awareness about the need to promote human rights and freedoms of sex workers.

Research on media coverage of LGBTI topics was conducted, followed by development of relevant report whose promotion is anticipated in early 2018.

An agreement was reached with *TV21* for development of four research stories/news reports on the rights of marginalized communities.

Capacity building training on strategic communications was organized for staff members of the Coalition and representatives from member organizations. In late 2017, activities started to rebrand the Coalition into “Coalition Margins”.

|| 2017 CONCEPTS ||

Progress made against 2017 milestones

|| GRASSROOTS MOBILIZATION AND COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

The concept *Grassroots Mobilization and Community Activism* aims to mobilize communities for informed and effective civic engagement to advance local democracies in seven municipalities that operate as regional centers.

Under the concept's first objective, **capacity building to strengthen local civic actors for engaging citizens in policy promotion and participation in decision-making process in their communities**, the call for proposals was announced in early 2017 to award grants to civil society organizations, informal groups, coalitions and local activist hubs. In that, 41 applications were submitted to this call and 11 grants for institutional support were awarded (in total amount of 240,338 USD) to CSOs holding relevant experience and credibility at local level and motivated to strengthen their role in the community, increase their constituencies and develop their organizational capacity and management practices. Through their work, these CSOs contribute to promotion of local democracy and social cohesion. They operate in seven strategically selected regional centers (Prilep, Tetovo, Struga, Strumica, Skopje, Kumanovo and Shtip).

In 2017, FOSM closely monitored work of grantees and provided tailor-made training, consultations and mentorship to accommodate their needs. In November and December, three training events were organized for representatives of 11 CSOs benefiting from institutional support in 2017. The first training event, *Financial and Material Resource Management*, was attended by 23 civil society representatives. They had the opportunity to acquire knowledge on challenges in day-to-day work, including donor and state requirements on financial management and useful financial management strategies and techniques. The second training event, *Organizational Management*, allowed participants to acquire knowledge and skills on management activities and duties at their respective organizations. Training participants were most interested in human resource management, project planning and development of logical framework, as well as strategic planning processes. At the third training event, *Mobilizing Community Support*, 17 civil society representatives had the opportunity to acquire knowledge that would help them in mobilizing support from local communities. Topics related to identification of external factors that affect work of CSOs, key stakeholders and beneficiaries, community engagement for attainment of organizations' goals, prioritizing needs and action planning, triggered great interest among participants in this training.

In cooperation with the Balkan Investigation Reporting Network Macedonia, FOSM organized two workshops intended for representatives from local media. The first workshop, held in November, was focused on the topic "Investigative Journalism" and was attended by 13 representatives from local media across Macedonia. They had the opportunity to increase their knowledge on investigative journalism, how to choose investigative stories and how to persuade editors that investigative journalism is important. Moreover, they learned how to structure their

stories and verify their sources, as well as how to deal with entrapments when developing such stories. Workshop participants were introduced to tools for creation of investigative stories, with special overview of the Law on Free Access to Public Information and disclosing corruption in public procurements. The second workshop organized on the topic “Media as Public Good”, held in December, was attended by around 20 media owners and editors-in-chief from local and regional media outlets, all of whom made significant contributions to discussions on responsible and professional journalism for the benefit of public interest. Special attention was paid to analysis of current problems and challenges for creation of independent media sphere, as well as identification of good practices and experiences from the past concerning the role of media in promotion of topics of public interest. Workshop discussions also included reconsideration of untapped possibilities for development and implementation of sustainable strategies that will contribute to protection of professional standards on one side, and protection of the public good, on the other side. Representatives from the Council of the Agency for Electronic Media in Croatia shared their experience, lessons learned and challenges related to local media support, public interest and self-regulation.

In November 2017, the call for proposals was announced for development and publication of investigative stories that focus on violations of existing policies and practices, suggest improvements and adoption of new, more transparent and more inclusive policies, and motivate increased and joint engagement of citizens, civil society and local authorities in addressing unfavorable state-of-affairs. FOSM supported 6 proposals by journalists who were awarded grants to develop and publish investigative stories addressing issues of interest for local communities, in total amount of 7,970 USD. These stories should be developed and published by the end of March 2018. Moreover, FOSM will secure mentorship assistance from experienced journalists for development of supported investigative reports.

As anticipated under FOSM’s 2017 strategy and aimed **to support local synergies for more effective influence on local policy-making and constituency building**, the call for proposals was announced to support ad-hoc initiatives of civil society organizations, informal groups, coalitions and local activist hubs. Total of 197 applications were submitted to three cycles on grant awards. FOSM decided to support implementation of 25 grassroots initiatives aimed to enhance civil society voice on matters of interest for citizens at local, regional and national level.

In July 2017, FOSM and core group of CSOs¹ that participated in development of the document [“Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms”](#) (published in July 2016, known in public as the Blueprint) organized the forum “CSO Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms”. This forum was attended by 146 persons, representatives of 73 civil society organizations, experts and scholars, all of whom, having in mind the changed circumstances, revised and upgraded the initial document and developed new [“Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms”](#).

¹ Citizens’ Association MOST; Institute for Democracy *Societas Civilis*; European Policy Institute; Institute for Communication Studies; Eurothink – Centre for European Strategies; Foundation Open Society – Macedonia; Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia; Centre for Economic Analyses; CIVIL – Center for Freedom; Dragan Gocevski

Policy areas covered under this document included: *Public Finances and Economy; Justice System; Fight Against Corruption; Elections and Electoral System; Public Administration; Oversight on the Police and the Agencies for Security and (Counter)Intelligence; Parliament; Civil Society; Social Protection, Welfare and Sustainability; Education and Youth Policies; Environment; Energy; Culture; and Health Care*. This document serves as roadmap on most important issues that should be delivered in the next 12 months to restore democratic standards and values, achieve progress in certain policy areas, and rebuild citizens' trust in key state institutions. Blueprint was presented in public at the press conference held in July 2017, together with the proposal for civil society involvement in consultations with state authorities, by establishing a consultation council at the Government of the Republic of Macedonia with civil society members, appointing contract persons at line ministries, and integrating civil society organization in working bodies at the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia.

The Citizens for European Macedonia Club (CEM Club) continued to serve as platform for expression of critical public opinion and open space available to all civil society organizations and informal groups. It hosted a total of 152 events (105 work meetings and workshops, 25 presentations and press conferences; 8 book promotions, 12 public debates, one comic book exhibition and book fair) on issues related to human rights, youth, marginalized groups, gender equality, institutional reforms and EU accession. These events, organized by FOSM and 55 CSOs, informal groups and individuals, were attended by 3,721 visitors.

In 2017, support was provided for publication of several books, as follows: "On the Political" by Chantal Mouffe; "On Populist Reason" by Ernesto Laclau; "Security, Territory, Population" by Michael Foucault; and "Subculture: The Meaning of Style" by Dick Hebdige. Moreover, FOSM provided partial support for publication of the book "Life in Box" by Tomislav Kezharovski. Support in the amount of 15,000 USD was awarded to web-portal www.okno.mk, which serves as focal point and hub for new critical and creative generations, primarily in the fields of culture and activism, and creates new, reliable, creative and quality media contents. FOSM secured support for two female representatives from Macedonia to attend the Film Festival Motown where they presented civil society role and various forms of civil action and engagement at times of deep political crisis in Macedonia and had the opportunity to exchange views with activists from other countries in the region.

FOSM signed cooperation agreement with the Institute for Social Analyses from Skopje to conduct the research survey titled *Political Culture and Identities*, whose results and findings will be presented in the first half of 2018.

In early 2017, FOSM develop the final report on implementation of **USAID Civil Society Project (2012-2016)** and conducted the final evaluation for this project.

In February, FOSM organized the closing conference for the **Western Balkans Regional Research Promotion Program (RRPP)** titled *Challenges and Possibilities to Financing Scientific Research in the Republic of Macedonia*, which included promotion of the namesake publication, i.e. presentation of the proposed

model for financing scientific research activity in the Republic of Macedonia. At the same time, this conference included presentation of Slovenian and Finish experiences in this regard. It was attended by more than 100 participants, scholars from public and private higher education and scientific institutions, representatives from university administrations, think-tank organizations and individuals, as well as Members of Parliament, Ministry of Education and Science and the media. RRPP was officially closed on March 31st 2017.

USAID Civic Engagement Project (CEP) is a five-year project (2016-2021) in the amount of 9.4 million USD, aimed to strengthen capacity of civil society organizations and youth groups on policy advancement, improving public services, promotion of good governance and better living standards in Macedonia. USAID Civic Engagement Project is implemented by the East West Management Institute, in partnership with four local organizations: Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, Association for Democratic Initiatives, Foundation Open Society – Macedonia, and National Youth Council of Macedonia.

This project is comprised of four components: 1) strengthening CSO alliances/networks; 2) strengthening CSOs; 3) strengthening youth engagement; and 4) strengthening youth activism.

FOSM's role concerns coordination of capacity building activities for grantees supported under all four project components.

For that purpose, in 2017 FOSM's team received training from international experts on application of two tools: Net-Map Analysis for CSO networks, and Organizational and Advocacy Capacity Assessment (OACA) for CSOs and CSO networks. Throughout this period, international experts provided mentorship and support to FOSM's team.

In the first implementation year and under its first and second component, USAID Civic Engagement Project supported six CSOs and two CSO networks implementing projects in duration of two to three years. Using OACA, FOSM's project office assessed capacity of all six CSOs. Capacity assessment for CSO networks relied on both tools, i.e. OACA and Net-Map Analysis. After the initial needs assessment, individual tailor-made workshops on strategic planning were organized for all grantees. These activities, which included a total of 106 participants, resulted in development of strategic plans, annual plans and capacity building plans for CSOs and CSO networks. FOSM's team provides support in the form of training and mentorship for implementation of these strategic documents. In late 2017, mentors were identified who will work with CSOs and CSO networks in the forthcoming period on strengthening their capacity in specific areas.

In 2017, FOSM's project office delivered three advanced training on topics such as: *Process Mapping*, *Organizational Systems for Monitoring and Evaluation*, and *Human Resource Management*, attended by representatives of CSOs and CSO networks. Two youth training events were organized on *Project Management and Networking*, with participation of CEP grantees under youth engagement and youth activism components. These training events were attended by total of 61 participants.

Additionally, activities were implemented for networking, peer learning and establishing dialogue with institutions (public policy forums). More precisely, four Learning Circles were organized on the topic “Internet and Communication Technologies as Development Tools”, attended by 53 CEP grantees. In November, networking meeting was held with local CSOs, aimed to address needs of local communities in Krushevo and attended by 41 representatives from local CSOs and CEP grantees and partner organizations. Two best practice and innovation events were organized on following topics: “Management of Dynamic CSO Networks” and “Cyber Security of Civil Society Organizations and Networks”, with participation of more than 80 civil society representatives from Macedonia. Both public policy forums involved more than 170 representatives from civil society organizations, local and central authorities, business sector, academia, informal groups, experts and other stakeholders. The first forum focused on the Draft National Strategy on Culture Development 2018-2022, while the second was organized on the topic “Integrated Approach to Air Quality Protection”.

The first CSO Week was held in September 2017 and featured 21 events organized by 17 CSOs in 12 settlements, with involvement of 1,350 participants. The first CSO Bus Tour was organized across the Pelagonija Region and included 16 representatives from CEP grantees and partner organizations, who met citizens from Zhitoshe, Krushevo and Krivogashtani to discuss gender-based violence, youth information, local budgeting, and methods of civic participation to address local problems in these locations, aimed to encourage civic engagement for local development.

Attacks on 22 civil society organizations and orchestrated intrusion on the part of law enforcement bodies following orders issued by the Basic Public Prosecution, coupled with financial controls initiated by the Public Revenue Office, which started in December 2016 and lasted until May 2017, did not only threaten work of civil society organizations and their 2017 plans, but also affected their reputation and credibility, with irreparable consequences for their public image. In response to these attacks, FOSM supported joint initiative “Protect the Civil Society!” endorsed by 127 civil society organizations, initiatives, communities, groups and trade unions, which stood in defense and protection of civil society and civic voice that were threatened and targeted with orchestrated persecution on the part of state institutions and government-controlled media. In February 2017, FOSM organized two-day meetings with representatives of CSOs targeted with financial controls to discuss the need for protection of the civil society and possible communication and public relations strategies to improve their image in the public. In that, organizations held several press conferences to inform the public about procedures led against them and excessive several-month pressures they were exposed to. At these press conferences, civil society representatives presented their demands for authorities to discontinue pressures, check justifiability of said controls and investigate abuses of public office and duty for political pressure and discrimination, as well as revoke fines issued and minutes compiled for procedures led.

FOSM secured additional funds from the **Open Society Initiative for Europe's Reserve Fund** to protect and to sustain operation of these civil society organizations, and to encourage their efforts on validating the vital role they play in the society. 20 grants were awarded for legal assistance and representation, financial and communication consulting and community-based activities, in the amount of 236,300 USD. Based on needs assessment, organizations benefited from capacity building on topics such as: financial operations, volunteering, data visualization and public relations.

The organization KADAR – Team for Investigative Journalism, Documentary Production and Education was supported to produce documentary film titled “Witch Hunt”, dealing with orchestrated attacks by several state institutions in the period December 2016 – May 2017 against 22 civil society organizations.

In the amount of 21,960 USD, Communication Office of the Open Society Foundations in New York supported the Foundation NGO Info-Centre to analyze media contents² on continuous attacks against civil society organizations, FOSM, George Soros, etc., and dynamics of such media reports. NGO Info-Centre developed weekly reports wherein it analyzed media response to orchestrated attacks against the civil society and published the [Media Monitoring Report for the period March-November 2017](#), whose key findings confirmed tendencies to discredit work of civil society organizations and FOSM.

|| CIVIC ACTION FOR URGENT REFORM PRIORITIES

The concept *Civic Action for Urgent Reform Priorities* aims to strengthen civil society's role in oversight and advocacy for implementation of Urgent Reform Priorities (URP). FOSM's strategic partner in implementing this concept is Eurothink – Center for European Strategies.

This concept's first objective concerns support to civil society alliances to influence implementation of Urgent Reform Priorities. In that regard, it identified already networked civil society organizations working in the areas of judiciary, media and anti-corruption.

(1) In the area of *judiciary*, project grant was awarded to the Institute for Human Rights, implemented together with Macedonian Young Lawyers Association and European Policy Institute. This project aimed to strengthen transparency, accountability and professionalism of judicial bodies. Project objectives included: (1) strengthening structured oversight on UPR implementation in the area of judiciary; and (2) promoting public debate on UPR implementation, by means of civil society advocacy. Activities included development and promotion of the first report titled “Judicial Reforms: From Priebe 1 to Priebe 2 and Beyond”,³ which covers the period July 2015 - September 2017.

² Current affairs programmes aired by national TV channels: *TV 24, TV Telma, MRT 1, TV Alsat-M, TV Kanal 5, TV Alfa* and *TV 21*; daily newspapers: *Sloboden pecat, Vecer* and *Dnevnik* (their websites/electronic editions) and news portals: *A1on, Plusinfo, Republika, Kurir* and *NovaTV*.

³ <https://www.ihr.org.mk/p.php?pid=274>

(2) In the area of *media*, project grant was awarded to Metamorphosis Foundation for Internet and Society, implemented in partnership with Agora – Centre for Promotion of Civic Values and PINA – Platform for Investigative Journalism and Analyses. The project *Media Reform Observatory* aimed to inform citizens about delivery of Urgent Reform Priorities in the area of media and freedom of expression. Project objectives included: (1) creation of CSO and media coalition for oversight and advocacy for UPR implementation in the area of media; (2) strengthening public awareness on URP and challenges in the area of media; and (3) creating possibilities for informed public debate among decision holders, CSOs and media. Thirteenth edition of the e-Society Conference titled “Freedom and Privacy” included promotion of the first interim monitoring report on implementation of reform priorities in the area of media. As part of the same project, in the period July-December 2017, official website of the new agency Meta⁴ published 60 journalist reports/stories focusing on media reforms and freedom of expression, while three analyses were posted on the project’s newly designed portal “Media Reform Observatory”.⁵

(3) In the area of *anti-corruption*, project grant was awarded to Transparency Macedonia, aimed to promote strategic priorities of the Platform for Fight against Corruption. This project’s primary goal was to encourage changes and strengthen democracy in the society. Project objectives included: (1) better positioning for operation of the Platform for Fight against Corruption; and (2) increasing the platform’s visibility. On the occasion of December 9th, International Day on Fight Against Corruption, this platform organized the conference titled “Capture State: Political, Social and Economic Interests”.

As part of this objective, Eurothink developed evidence-based analysis with recommendations for policy improvements related to independent and regulatory bodies, focusing on energy. In the next advocacy stage, recommendations will be presented before relevant state bodies for their integration in the state energy policy.

The analysis report “Challenges in Managing the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance”⁶ was developed and promoted. This document analyzed utilization of EU funds made available to the Republic of Macedonia under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (2007-2013). In that, the focus was put on funds managed under the so-called decentralized implementation system. Main goal behind this effort was to enable use of knowledge from this analysis to improve utilization of EU funds, especially those made available under the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance in the period 2014-2020 (IPA2).

⁴ www.meta.mk

⁵ <http://mediaobservatorium.mk/>

⁶ <http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/Publication?newsID=10436&catID=10&pageIndex=1>

With a view to improve draft policy on public administration reform, policy brief with comments on the Draft Strategy on Public Administration Reform was drafted and published in June 2017.⁷

FOSM representatives actively participated in civil society working groups tasked to update the document “CSO Blueprint for Urgent Democratic Reforms”,⁸ wherein they presented their own views on priorities and measures that should guide government’s work program in the next 12 months and thereby contribute to delivery of Urgent Reform Priorities.

This concept’s second objective aimed to facilitate dialogue among civil society, Parliament and media that would contribute to informed public debate on progress made under EU accession agenda.

FOSM and the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) signed cooperation agreement⁹ on provision of support to MISA in its process on drafting the Strategy on Public Administration Reform (2018-2022). For that purpose, FOSM contracted two external experts to collaborate, provide expert comments and facilitate discussions within working groups established at the ministry and tasked with strategy developed, with active contributions to the strategy’s final text by taking into consideration comments and remarks submitted during the public consultations process. Moreover, FOSM’s support included development of indicators on measuring strategy implementation, i.e. design of indicators that will allow adequate measurement of results and changes arising from planned reforms.

Three briefing meetings were organized with journalists to increase communication and raise awareness on maintaining the EU accession agenda, with focus on delivery of Urgent Reform Priorities in the areas of public administration, judiciary and media.

FOSM representative actively participated in working group comprised of donors active in the country, tasked with development of the “Roadmap for Civil Society Development 2018-2022”, which will contribute to improved role of civil society organizations. This document covers areas such as policy and institutional framework for CSOs; state funding for CSOs; legal and fiscal enabling environment for sustainability of CSOs, role of CSOs in cooperation with institutions, citizens, business sector and among them; good governance and increased trust in CSOs.

FOSM representatives attended meetings organized by working bodies at the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia and actively contributed in policy debates and policy shaping on adoption of the EU acquis.

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<http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/NewsAndActivity?newsID=9384&catID=7&pageIndex=8&month=0&year=0&additionalID=0>

8

<http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/NewsAndActivity?newsID=9388&catID=7&pageIndex=8&month=0&year=0&additionalID=0>

9

<http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/NewsAndActivity?newsID=10431&catID=7&pageIndex=4&month=0&year=0&additionalID=0>

Under this concept, partner organization Eurothink organized four Eurotalks, i.e. educational and debate sessions following the Chatham House Rule, around topics such as: Europe of Two Speeds, EU-Russian Relations and Their Impact on EU's Position as Global Player, and Delivery of Urgent Reform Priorities as Precondition for Macedonia's Integration in the EU.

Implementation of the project **Civic Alliance for Transparency: CSO Watchdog over Public Administration Reform** started in January 2017 and is supported with grant from EU IPA Civil Society Facility and Media Program 2015. It is implemented by FOSM and Eurothink – Centre for European Strategies. This project aims to strengthen civil society's impact in policy shaping. Project activities are expected to contribute to strengthened capacity of civil society organizations to engage in evidence-based oversight of public administration reform and to ensure space for cooperation among civil society organizations in advocacy efforts aimed at policy improvements related to public administration reform.

Project activities also included organization of the first re-granting scheme in the amount of 50,000 EUR. In that, grants were awarded to six CSOs which implemented research projects and developed publications, as follows: (1) Citizens Association for Support to Interethnic Dialogue and Community Development *Common Values* researched enforcement of the Law on Languages (2008) at selected state administration bodies; (2) Rural Coalition – Kumanovo analyzed possibility and experiences from participatory policy-making at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy; (3) Youth Educational Forum targeted performance track record of the Agency for Youth and Sports; (4) Association for Local Democracy - Community Centre of the Municipality of Strumica focused on performance track record of the Commission for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information; (5) Association for Sustainable Development GENERA – Skopje analyzed policy-making process for construction works; (6) Association for Local Democracy – Community Centre of the Municipality of Centar analyzed the public consultations process organized for adoption of the Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018-2022. Moreover, this re-granting scheme included needs assessment at grantee organizations, tailor-made capacity building training to accommodate needs identified, and continuous mentorship for implementation of activities. Ten coordination and synergy building meetings were organized between grantee organizations, as well as with other stakeholders (media, institutions), and contributed towards their informal networking.

This project included survey research to establish knowledge and experiences of civil society organizations with public administration reform,¹⁰ accompanied with adequate data visualization presented at the inception event intended for project promotion and attended by EU Ambassador in Macedonia, Samuel Zbogar.¹¹ Four CSOs participating in the project developed policy brief¹²

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<http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/NewsAndActivity?newsID=9378&catID=7&pageIndex=9&month=0&year=0&additionalID=0>

¹¹

<http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/NewsAndActivity?newsID=7301&catID=7&pageIndex=17&month=0&year=0&additionalID=0>

which provides systematized outline of their comments to the Draft Strategy on Public Administration Reform. Activities started for development of second policy brief that will address size of public administration in Macedonia. Eurothink conducted its annual public opinion survey Eurometer, focusing on issues related to public administration and EU integration, whose results were presented at the event attended by representatives from MISA, Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Ombudsman Office, Administration of General Records, and CSOs.

Representatives from FOSM, Eurothink and number of grantee organizations actively participated in working groups established at MISA and tasked to develop the Strategy on Public Administration Reform 2018-2022, thereby directly contributing to definition of goals and measures under planned reforms.

|| INCLUSIVE AND TRANSPARENT EDUCATION POLICIES

The concept *Inclusive and Transparent Education Policies* aimed to strengthen civil society's role and impact as serious actor in development of quality, inclusive and accountable education policies. Plan of activities for 2017 included several steps, as follows: (1) mapping civil society organizations active in the area of education and targeting them with organizational capacity building; (2) small grants to support advancement of their program portfolios; (3) strengthening individuals (at mapped organizations and, more broadly, at different actors in education), by means of training on different aspects of education policies.

FOSM identified 11 organizations/associations and, according to their expressed interest for cooperation, performed organizational assessment for six of them. Based on assessment findings, plan was developed for training on organizational strengthening, followed by four organizational capacity building training sessions delivered in the period July-December for mapped associations, on topics such as: *Project Cycle Management; Management, Financial and Administrative Operations; Strategic Planning; and Donor Work and Fundraising*. In parallel with training on organizational capacity building, FOSM supported five CSOs with small grants (up to 6,000 USD) for initiatives that will be implemented by the end of March 2018.

Due to the new context and the possibility to influence development of new education policies together with partner organizations, the component for training of individuals on education policies was replaced by series of activities arising from the memorandum of cooperation signed with MES, as elaborated below.

In order to provide expert assistance in development of proposed models for external knowledge assessment of pupils in the Republic of Macedonia, FOSM invited experts from Slovenia who held two meetings with Ministry of Education and Science (MES). At the first meeting, they presented models of external knowledge assessments for pupils used throughout Europe and provided detailed

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<http://www.fosm.mk/mk/Home/NewsAndActivity?newsID=10432&catID=7&pageIndex=1&month=0&year=0&additionalID=118>

overview of the national model for external assessment of pupils in the Republic of Slovenia. At the second meeting, experts proposed a possible model for the Republic of Macedonia that would be integrated within broader systemic reforms to ensure quality by means of school self-evaluation, professional and career development of teachers. Next year, MES will establish working group to further develop this model, with assistance provided by Slovenian experts.

In late November, activities started on two research studies whose results will be publicly promoted and shared with competent institutions by the end of March 2018. The research study *Training of Primary Education Teachers in the Republic of Macedonia: Situation and Perspectives* was conducted by a team comprised of 5 professors at teacher training faculties and aimed to analyze legislative framework on initial education and practice of primary education teachers, establish similarities and differences among study programs, competences and vocational profiles of graduates at teacher training faculties, alignment with EU directives, professional competences of teachers under the national framework of qualifications, analysis of relevant legislation governing professional and career advancement, and analysis of laws regulating teacher profession (Academy for Teachers, Law on Teachers in Primary and Secondary Education) that are still in effect. The research study *Costing of Student Consumer Basket* is implemented by the Association of Young Researchers and Analysts and the Youth Educational Forum, and aims to secure information on the amount of actual costs incurred by students at state universities in Macedonia and their living standards. This research covered around 600 regular undergraduate students at state universities in Skopje, Ohrid, Shtip and Bitola, grouped under following categories: students living and studying in their native towns; students studying and living outside their native towns; students traveling from their place of residence to faculties located in other towns. Data and research report will be shared with relevant institutions and could be used for adoption of new legal solutions on student standards.

Three-day workshop was organized in late September for working groups tasked with drafting amendments to the Laws on Primary and Secondary Education. These working groups included around 70 teachers, school principals, and representatives from the Bureau for Development of Education, MES, State Education Inspectorate, education trade union and several non-governmental organizations. Proposed amendments were submitted to MES's legal sector responsible for drafting law amendments.

With FOSM's support, the Youth Educational Forum organized consultations with students from four university centers inquiring about their preferred model of student organization. At the round table held on November 30th 2017, students presented the draft document requesting MES to transform the Student Parliament into official university body authorized to control financial operations, instead of operating as non-governmental organization, as was the case thus far. They also requested change in organization of student elections, as well as expanded participation of students in all important bodies at university departments. The Minister of Education promised that all proposals would be reconsidered and that

proposed solutions will be integrated in the new Law on Higher Education, whose drafting is underway.

In late 2017, activities started for piloting the component on promotion and stimulation of interethnic integration and inclusion in education, which were initially planned for 2018. 53 CSOs applied on the call for proposals to award small grants for initiatives on inclusive education. In the first round, 6 projects were selected, while the second round of selection will take place by the end of January 2018.

Aimed to turn the public's attention to state-of-affairs in education, the campaign "In Class" was implemented in cooperation with the Youth Educational Forum. Radio YEF created 38 media contents, as follows: 27 authored analyses and articles, 3 columns, 1 video, 2 interviews and 10 live shows, viewed by around 125,000 visitors. The regularly scheduled radio show "In Class", which is the first education program broadcasted in Macedonia, was comprised of 10 shows and featured 28 guest speakers discussing teaching methodologies and didactics, university and high-school student organization, integrated and inclusive education, textbooks, mobility and practice. The first campaign video dedicated to pupils' rock band at the school "Brothers Ramiz and Hamid" was viewed 22,000 times. As regards text contents, most views were recorded for authored analyses on school bullying, student dormitories, sex education, higher education institutions accreditation, education reforms, and education strategy.

|| SHARED FRAMEWORK: LEGAL EMPOWERMENT

In 2017, FOSM continued implementation of the *shared framework on legal empowerment*, whose main goal is development of legal empowerment framework by 2020, through partnership established among representatives from relevant state institutions, local authorities, civil society organizations and providers of legal and paralegal assistance, and joint work on institutionalization of legal empowerment and advanced funding for different forms of access to justice services for marginalized communities at local and national level (Roma, sex workers, persons using drugs, women textile workers, etc.).

2017 milestones that would lead to attainment of the general goal were:

- 1) National and local advocacy based on findings from different research studies conducted and influencing local authorities to assume obligations for integration of community-based legal services through cooperation with relevant stakeholders:

Due to the political situation and non-functionality of institutions in 2017, it was impossible to implement advocacy activities targeting specific institutions in their entirety. FOSM used the possibility for active participation in drafting the new Law on Free Legal Aid (LFLA), developed two policy briefs underlying identified shortcomings and proposing recommendations to address them. By the year's end and after election of new local authorities, first steps were taken in terms of planning cooperation with local government in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari for institutionalization of legal empowerment under municipal policies in 2018. As

regards advocacy at national level, discussions were initiated with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy about possibilities for cross-sectoral integration of legal empowerment in programs implemented by this ministry. Given the unfavorable political climate, this period was used to design and conduct research activities aimed to secure findings and arguments for advocacy activities after change of the context. In addition to research studies conducted in the previous year, 2017 activities included survey research on legal needs of Roma, analysis of attorneys' pro-bono services, i.e. free legal aid provided by attorneys in the Republic of Macedonia aimed to instigate broader debate among the expert public about the need and possibilities for pro-bono legal services; assessment of implementation, efficiency and effectiveness of existing law mechanisms for alternative resolution of disputes related to legal problems, and facilitating access to justice for the most vulnerable groups in Macedonia (people living in extreme poverty, women, children, Roma, victims of domestic violence, persons using drugs, LGBTI population, and sex workers); cost-benefit analysis for three existing modalities of legal assistance and services (preliminary legal aid provided by authorized associations within LFLA system; free legal aid provided by organizations outside LFLA system, and paralegal assistance); research survey on citizens' satisfaction with free legal aid received; initial analysis and planning process for transposition of SDG 16.3: promote the rule of law at national and international level and ensure equal access to justice for all at national level. In order to ensure broader promotion and public introduction of legal empowerment concept, this period was used to develop communications strategy on legal empowerment, which will be implemented in 2018.

2) Building synergies and strengthening capacity of individual members in the informal network of CSOs providing community-based legal aid/paralegal assistance:

From the legal empowerment initiative's onset, FOSM initiated establishment of informal network comprised of 19 CSOs providing preliminary legal aid within LFLA system, free legal aid outside LFLA system, and community-based legal/paralegal assistance. In order to achieve greater cohesion among CSOs and unified understanding of goals and objectives under the shared framework on legal empowerment, 2017 activities included development of the Strategy on Legal Empowerment 2017-2019. In addition to strategy development activities, CSOs were actively involved in several capacity building training events and webinars on utilization of IT tools and social networks for legal empowerment, aimed to acquire skills for promotion of access to justice mechanisms and services, increase coverage of target groups and establish cooperation with other stakeholders; training on innovative fundraising, delivered in two modules, whereby the first module focused on introduction to concepts of innovative fundraising that have proved to be successful in Balkan and European countries and can be used to raise funds for delivery of legal services, and the second module that will be delivered in 2018 and implies development of innovative fundraising strategies by participating CSOs, whose implementation will be financially supported by FOSM; webinars on IT strategies for legal empowerment; cooperation with donors/fundraising models for legal empowerment; and lessons learned from institutionalization of paralegal profession. Two training sessions were delivered on capacity building and

development of skills for 39 paralegals from six CSOs on topics such as: labor relations; Criminal Code and criminal proceedings; family and family law; introduction to judicial system and police proceedings; domestic violence, health protection, health insurance, and patients' rights.

3) Promotion of community-based justice services by scaling up services for target groups (poor, Roma, sex workers, and women textile workers, persons using drugs and other marginalized communities) and by merging different modalities for provision of legal/paralegal services:

More than 1,200 people from 8 Roma communities were provided legal and paralegal assistance on issues related to: patients' rights; discrimination; illegal charges for health services; health and social insurance; obtaining personal documents; social allowance; allowance for third party care; reproductive health, etc.; 4 strategic litigation cases were initiated for establishment of medical malpractice. By means of direct visits to 1,200 households, 12 trained paralegals from 3 Roma CSOs located in 3 municipalities provided systemic information on rights and possibilities for paralegal assistance, identified legal problems and ensured continuous monitoring of individual human rights violations. 20 education workshops were organized for around 500 Roma on topic such as: immunization; patients' rights; health and social insurance; health protection and free health checks; preventive health programs; women health; services provided by outreach departments, etc. Activities taken under the integrated approach on social accountability and legal empowerment and aimed to promote access to health services for Roma included development of draft local advocacy strategies (Shuto Orizari, Delchevo, Pehchevo and Vinica) and national advocacy strategy. Individual forms for mobilization of Roma communities to participate in legal empowerment, i.e. Roma Civil Parliament and Initiative of Roma Women from Shuto Orizari, continued their activities in 2017.

Legal empowerment work was accompanied with media activities such as regular thematic shows aired on local radio and TV channels, and promotion activities on the social media.

Five CSOs registered for provision of free legal aid were addressed by 1,023 citizens, mainly seeking assistance in the areas of social protection, family relations, property tenure issues, children protection, and protection of victims of domestic violence. 50 citizens submitted applications for free legal aid to the Ministry of Justice, requesting appointment of attorney for court representation. 15 legal empowerment sessions were held to introduce citizens with their rights and obligations in the areas of social protection, labor relations, execution procedure, gender-based violence, etc.

320 legal services were provided to 41 sex workers, while access to and legal services were ensured for 89 sex workers on the closed scene. Court representation was provided in cases related to: discrimination of persons using drugs; children of sex workers; victims of domestic violence and racial discrimination; hatred towards transgender persons who are sex workers; 6 court cases were initiated for legal recognition of gender (one of which implied motion of application before the European Court of Human Rights). 85 persons using drugs were provided 551 legal

services, including persons released from serving imprisonment sentences that do not possess personal identification documents, health insurance and were denied treatment after prison release. Irregularities were identified at textile industry employers concerned: non-payment of salaries and salary contributions, established for 201 persons; non-payment of salary benefits for work during weekends, holidays and non-working days, established for 1,052 persons; non-payment of annual holiday allowance, cash salary payment, illegal termination of employment, non-regulated employment status, overtime work beyond the law-stipulated minimum and mobbing, established for 321 persons; work under inadequate health and sanitary conditions, failure to ensure adequate health and safety measures at work, violation of the right to annual vacation, work on state holidays, established for 471 persons; 2 lawsuits and 16 administrative procedures were initiated on the grounds of violation of rights enjoyed by women workers; 2,262 men and women textile workers from a total of 56 clothing manufacturers reported violation of their labor rights; the Basic Court in Kriva Palanka adopted decision on admission of lawsuit claim motioned by 105 men and women textile workers.

21 grants were awarded, of which 9 grants were awarded to CSOs providing legal or paralegal assistance to relevant target groups and 5 grants to associations authorized for provision of free legal aid according to LFLA. Remaining grants were awarded for implementation of other activities initiated under the shared framework on legal empowerment.