

Foundation Open Society - Macedonia



**ANNUAL  
REPORT  
2021**

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## INTRODUCTION

In 2021, Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM) worked towards achieving both strategic goals part of the 2021-2024 strategy: **1) to shape the policy debate on reducing inequalities faced by marginalized communities** – by securing evidence on root causes and effects of social determinants on injustice and by empowering marginalized groups to participate and articulate their needs in order to have a clearer focus on structural deficiencies in the field of education, health and environmental protection; increased understanding and willingness of policy makers to address inequalities in a systemic manner; shifted dominant public narrative about the fact that responsibility for policy design and implementation lies only with the authorities; and improved representation, participation and contribution of socially marginalized groups in policies and processes that affect their wellbeing; and **2) to strengthen civil society for scaling up its engagement and input by mainstreaming inter-sectoral approach in policy shaping** - by applying structured oversight by thematic civil society networks to better understand the intersections between corruption, deficiencies in the rule of law and social (in)justice; increased inter-sectoral knowledge, coordination and cooperation between thematic civil society networks; and increased advocacy power of civil society for transformation of policies based on social justice principles.

In 2021, the activities planned for achieving both strategic goals were implemented within the four concepts: **Civic Engagement for Social Justice, Green Leap – Partnership for Climate Action, Education of Small Ethnic Communities and Health in All Policies**. In addition, activities were implemented for the **Census 2021; the regional economic cooperation and common regional market of Western Balkans;** and for **support to the evacuated Afghan activists in North Macedonia**.

Also, on 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021, FOSM organized an event to mark the **30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the presence and the work of the Open Society Foundations (OSF) in the Balkans**, which specifically addressed the presence and activities of OSF in North Macedonia, and was also part of the events taking place within the virtual tour throughout the Balkans on the occasion of this jubilee. The event included a screening of the short documentary titled “30 years DEDICATED” covering the past work of FOSM with many intertwined stories told by people who witnessed and participated in key events in the country since the establishment of FOSM up to date. The documentary was a journey through all the challenges, crises, solutions, and successes, but also personal destinies that formed the Foundation as an agent of change for the better. The debate “Post-COVID-19 Reality: Is There a Way to a More Just Society?” gave a glimpse into the future as part of the event. Established young leaders shared their views on the future of North Macedonia and offered different perspectives on possible sustainable strategies for qualitative transformation towards a better and more just society.

## ACTIVITIES IMPLEMENTED IN 2021

### CENSUS 2021

Bearing in mind the significance of the Population Census in the country, as well as the fact that it was important for the citizens to have access to unbiased, good-quality and truthful information concerning the entire process of implementation of this statistical operation, FOSM supported two projects, those being:

- the project “Census 2021 – With Well-informed Citizens to a Successful Census” implemented by the **NGO Infocenter**. An online educational and informative campaign was implemented about the importance of the Census for creating and executing developmental strategies and policies in various areas of society (economy, healthcare, social policy, regional development, education, agriculture, energy infrastructure etc.). As part of this campaign, six informative video spots (three in Macedonian language and three in Albanian language), 14 visuals for social media and 14 infographics were published. An additional 110 informative and educational contents and six analytical journalistic stories that went deeper into the essence of the Census and the data derived therein for developing strategies and for policymaking in the areas listed above were also developed and published. The contents produced was published on a specialized Internet site *Census Finally* (<http://popis.mk/>) and promoted on social and traditional media; and
- the project “Informing and Training Citizens for Better Understanding the Census in 2021” implemented by the **Company for Production and Services Good Mood Ltd Skopje** for the purpose of responding to fake news and influencing citizens to participate in the Census 2021. “Vcherashni Novosti” (Yesterday’s News) developed messages on the benefits of the Census that were comprehensive for different age groups of people. Scenarios were also developed by using humor and satire. On the basis of these messages, 14 video clips were produced and disseminated through TV Channel 5 within a 14-day period, including the social media.

### COMMON REGIONAL MARKET

The project “Economic integration of Western Balkans – Mini Schengen, Regional Economic Cooperation and Common Regional Market” was implemented by the **Association for Policy Research Analytica, Skopje**. The objective of the project was to create complete picture of the current situation and map the progress made by North Macedonia towards economic integration of the Western Balkans, with a comprehensive mapping exercise of the key actors and their positions, the state of affairs and to identify topics for the next phase of the research plan. The progress of North Macedonia regarding the four freedoms (goods, services, persons, and capital)

was mapped and policy briefs reviewing the main benefits from the economic integration of North Macedonia were developed. In addition, research was conducted (qualitative and quantitative) with export-oriented companies or those trading with the countries in the region (representative sample) and a policy brief interpreting the results was developed.

## SUPPORT FOR THE EVACUATED ACTIVISTS FROM AFGHANISTAN

### FROM THE RESERVE FUND OF OPEN SOCIETY FOUNDATIONS – NEW YORK & THE FOUNDATION TURQUOISE MOUNTAIN

FOSM, in accordance with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia and on behalf of the Open Society Foundations Network (OSF), was involved in the global humanitarian action for providing support to evacuate citizens from Afghanistan. On three occasions, a total of 343 persons from Afghanistan were evacuated – collaborators of the international initiative Open Government Partnership, OSF Network, Foundation *Turquoise Mountain*, fellows of the OSF Network, activists for the protection of human rights, representatives of progressive civic organizations and their families. For their support, FOSM secured 1,340,000 Dollars from the OSF Network and 35,215 Dollars from the Foundation *Turquoise Mountain* established by Prince Charles.

FOSM and the Red Cross of the City of Skopje setup the framework, access, and system for providing full daily required assistance and support for evacuated persons and the Red Cross of the City of Skopje took over the responsibility to coordinate respective support.

FOSM's support consisted of fulfilling the essential needs upon arrival (hygienic and cosmetic packs and necessary clothing) including basic living conditions of evacuated persons (accommodation, food, medical and social/educational requirements, and other needs). The locations with evacuated persons have an equipped children's corner used as a playground, classroom for various educational activities for children and adults, computer space for communication and other educational needs (IT courses). In addition, access to sport gyms with fitness and sport equipment was also secured.

The medical service pack consisted of initial medical check-ups for determining health condition, and ongoing assistance from the medical teams of the Red Cross of the City of Skopje. A large number of medical interventions in the public health institutions as well as in the private clinics and specialist centers were also undertaken. Teams of the Ministry of Health, apart from the regular vaccinations of children (MRP, Polio), delivered general health checkups and PCR tests upon arrival including Covid-19 vaccination for all.

The Red Cross of the City of Skopje – within its work methodology – engaged a total of 23 volunteers (medical staff, paramedics, coordinators, and assistants). Members of the volunteering teams of the Red Cross of the City of Skopje were also persons with temporal residence who were teachers/professors, hairdressers, cooks, and

translators who not only translated documents and communications, but also participated in adapting the available services in accordance with the cultural differences and need. These volunteers were part of the implementation of many other activities (such as nonformal education, sessions devoted to learning Dari<sup>1</sup>, Macedonian and English language, Mathematics, drawing, calligraphy, reading Quran, IT courses etc.).

Organized by FOSM, and with the support of the teams of the Red Cross of the City of Skopje, the National Security Agency and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, organized visits of shopping centers and cultural and historical attractions in the Republic of North Macedonia.

For several months, NGO Infocenter monitored the manner and quality of reporting on the acceptance of governmental policies related to this issue, including the key messages /rhetoric and sources of the respective messages to the public, the positions of various political factors, (anti)campaign, misinformation, fake news etc.

Since October 2021, the Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers, supported by FOSM, has been cooperating with evacuated families of OSF Network fellows to document their dossiers for applying for Canadian and US visas and providing respective legal consultations.

Already 162 people departed to their final destination. In the upcoming period the rest are expected to follow suit.

## **CONCEPT: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE**

In 2021, through the concept of Civic Engagement for Social Justice, FOSM worked to encourage and support direct participation of civil society in sectoral policy design and oversight to limit corruption effects on attainment of social justice and to improve human rights protection. Specific goals of this concept included: 1) better understanding of policy interrelations between corruption, deficiencies in rule of law and social (in)justice and; 2) supporting civic organizations' thematic networks to take part in innovative inter-sectoral cooperation and advocate public policy changes in line with the sectoral approach; and 3) conducting evidence-based monitoring of social justice policies such as health, education and environmental protection, which are exposed to higher corruption risk and pose significant threat to the rights of marginalized communities.

2021 was a year marked with consequences of the global Covid-19 pandemic, therefore FOSM continued to support vulnerable groups, low-income employees, workers who were part of the informal economy and temporal staff through the regional **project responding to the socio-economic effects of Covid-19 by supporting grassroots and think-tank organizations**. The project aimed at better understanding the implications of the governmental Covid-19 policies affecting

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<sup>1</sup> Dialect of the Persian language spoken in Afghanistan.

vulnerable groups, advocating long-term measures to mitigate negative social-economic consequences on vulnerable groups such as low-income employees, workers in the informal economy and temporal staff; and developing a regional network of civic organizations to exchange knowledge and encourage cooperation. The findings of the research were promoted by FOSM through an educational public campaign focusing on the impact of Covid-19 [on informal and temporal employees](#); [on low-income workers, unpaid family staff, paid home workers and employees with atypical working engagements](#); [impact on textile workers](#) ; and [women in agriculture](#).

FOSM continued to support the EU accession reform agenda in the fields of judiciary, fight against corruption and protection from discrimination, thus contributing to Europeanisation of society. Recognizing the challenges faced by civil society, FOSM continued its cooperation and support to three thematic non-formal networks of civic organizations those being: Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform, Platform of Civic Organizations for Fight Against Corruption and the Network for Prevention and Protection of Discrimination. Thanks to the support they were able to take part in the inter-sectoral cooperation, thus contributing to inclusive policy dialog for better understanding the intersections between social justice, corruption and deficiencies in the rule of law. Consequently, FOSM contributed to strengthening these three thematic networks, including the effective advocacy of civil society in the sectoral dialog with the policy makers.

The **Blueprint Group for Judicial Reform** worked on promoting the impact of civic organizations in the judicial reform process as a precondition for human rights protection and provision of social justice. In the judicial sectoral policy, the Blueprint group regularly monitored the implementation of 2017-2022 Judicial Reform Strategy and published [2020 Annual Report](#) and [January-June 2021 Semi-Annual Report](#). As a contribution to the judicial reform and EU accession, the Blueprint group developed a public policy paper which refers to the [monitoring of the screening process of Chapter 23 on Judiciary and Fundamental Rights, commenting on the negotiation framework for the Republic of North Macedonia with a draft monitoring methodology focusing on the judiciary](#), and an [opinion on the 2021 European Commission Report on Republic of North Macedonia regarding the judiciary](#).

Concerning the challenges encountered by the judiciary due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Blueprint group developed an analysis of the [legal implications on the judicial processes in an emergency situation](#). Two public events were organized. On the first event the speakers discussed [how the Covid-19 virus pandemic affected the implementation of 2017-2022 Judicial Reform Strategy](#), whereas on the second event the participants anticipated future challenges in the process of developing the new judiciary reform strategy focusing on the protection of the right to health in pandemic conditions. As a contribution to the public debate and aiming to make sure that EU accession reforms serve public interest and meet citizens expectations, the Blueprint group responded to the situation in the judiciary and advocated for the [withdrawal of draft Law on Reviewing Facts and Evidence Used in Court Procedure](#), then indicated the [practice of determining punishment below the legally prescribed bracket for the](#)

[crime "severe acts against safety of people and property in traffic" thereby not achieving the goals of the punishment and negatively affecting citizens' trust in the judiciary](#), as well a response calling upon the [executive power and the political parties to refrain from statements and acts that question the independence of judicial power](#). The Blueprint group participated in the working group on drafting the Criminal Code and among other thing submitted a recommendation for regulating the legal definition of "official person", as part of the criminal reform.

**The Network for Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination** continued to promote equality and social justice of marginalized communities to contribute to the enhancement of policies and practices for prevention and protection against discrimination and access to social justice. The following analyses were developed: ["Human Rights of Marginalized Communities in Covid-19 Conditions"](#), ["Daily and Emotional Life of Injustice: discrimination, health and relations"](#) and ["Report on the monitoring of the Health Protection Law"](#) as well as two public policy papers: ["Salary as Agreed: Reducing the gender gap through transparency of salaries"](#) and ["State Labor Inspectorate as a protector of workers against discrimination"](#).

With advocacy activities and in cooperation with the Network for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and LAG Agro-Lider from Krivogashtani, through public policy makers, FOSM started an initiative on amending the Labor Law and the Health Insurance Law aiming at registered women-farmers to acquire the right to paid maternity leave. According to current legislation, this benefit is not available to them, i.e., they are not entitled to salary compensation in case of absence from work due to pregnancy, childbirth, or motherhood. Correcting this injustice for registered women-farmers in reproductive age will achieve gender equality, strengthen the position and status of women in society, enable equal access to resources and equal participation in decision making in all spheres of social life.

FOSM supported **Youth Educational Forum** in the implementation of "Student's Perception of Discrimination" project. The main goal of this project was to make visible and reduce discrimination in higher education by developing a [research on discrimination perception by students at three universities](#), and by carrying out a [campaign on putting on the agenda the phenomenon of discrimination in higher education](#), as well as developing educational module on combatting discrimination and raising the level of student rights targeting Student Ombudsmans at faculties and universities, and, finally, the most important, developing or amending policy proposals for promoting equality and reducing discrimination at faculties and universities.

FOSM supported **CSO Platform for Fight against Corruption** in the implementation of the project "Monitoring risk areas of corruption: health and environment". Three analyses were drafted by the project those being: ["Government activities during emergency state in view of corruption risks in public procurement, donations and state aid"](#), ["Analysis of the equality of delivered health services in](#)



[different Covid-19 centers](#)” and [“Mapping the risks of corruption in the environment”](#), as well as four anticorruption reviews of the legislation: [“Anticorruption review of the Environmental Law”](#), [“Anticorruption review of legislation – Report on the Energy Law”](#), [“Anticorruption review of legislation – Report on the Expropriation Law”](#), [“Anticorruption review of legislation – Report on the Law on taking over administrative staff through the K-5 program in the Ministry of political system and inter-community relations”](#). Through the Platform, FOSM participated in the group working on the amendments of the Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interests.

**The project “Strengthened Systems of Integrity to Combat Corruption at the Municipal Level”** was implemented by FOSM within the USAID civic participation project of the East West Management Institute funded by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) on the promotion of good governance on local level by enhancing the local government’s resistance to corruption with the introduction of integrity systems in 10 municipalities. Therefore, Memoranda of Cooperation were signed with the municipalities: Zhelino, Karposh, Dojran, Prilep and Ohrid, as well as with the State Anticorruption Commission.

FOSM provided expert support for the partner municipalities; five risk assessments of corruption and conflict of interests and five individualized integrity plans were developed, six capacity-building workshops for the administrative staff were organized, secondary legislation regulating corruption and conflict of interest reporting in local self-government were developed. The councils of the municipalities [Karposh](#), [Zhelino](#) and [Ohrid](#) adopted 2021-2025 integrity plans. FOSM carried out a [public survey on corruption and conflict of interests in these five municipalities](#), while the Coalition All for Fair Trials drafted a [corruption risk assessment in the field of local urban planning](#). For the purpose of participating in the development of the integrity policies, FOSM was part of the working group on local level integrity established by the State Anticorruption Commission.

In addition, through the support and cooperation with five civic organizations - Multikultura (Tetovo), Izbor (Strumica), EHO (Shtip), LET Station (Prilep) and Coalition All for Fair Trials (Skopje) - 188 citizens received free legal aid in corruption and conflict of interest cases in 2021. The supported civic organizations organized 21 events, those being: four public discussions, eight info sessions and training workshops (visited by 154 citizens). Numerous educational materials were developed and published, including four videos. Aiming to improve the quality of legal aid provided, supported organizations submitted a consultation request to the Ministry of Justice on the implementation of the Law on Free Legal Aid in corruption and conflict of interest-related cases.

FOSM carried out a media campaign, implementing the newly acquired knowledge on anti-corruption narratives. The scope of the television campaign was 113,710 citizens and 215,742 impressions, while Facebook and Instagram social networks campaign coverage was 257,386 with 690,815 impressions, 11,411 interactions and 3,758

clicks, including the YouTube campaign with 122,207 impressions and 43,698 video views. A [video](#) and special media announcements and visualizations were developed as part of the campaign: [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), [6](#), [Dojran](#), [Prilep](#), [Ohrid](#), [Karposh](#), [Zhelino](#).

The second phase started towards the end of the year. It will entail the establishment of cooperation with five new municipalities where an integrity system will be developed, and the continuation of the current cooperation with the three municipalities from the first cycle for the purpose of implementing the adopted integrity plans.

In the period 2019-2021, from the **OSF Reserve Anti-corruption Fund**, FOSM, OSF Latin America Program and Open Society - USA worked towards building the capacities for more efficient public communication in the fight against corruption with various actors in North Macedonia, USA and Brazil. For that purpose, an international research organization, supported by local researchers from the Anthropology and Ethnography Department and Tetovo University in North Macedonia conducted approximately 120 ethnographic interviews throughout the eight regions, in Macedonian or Albanian language. The goal of the research was to map cultural and cognitive factors influencing the understanding of corruption and identifying the narratives which citizens communicate when corruption is concerned, but also to map approaches that create optimism, constructiveness and mobilize citizens around anticorruption struggle. FOSM and Topos Partnership cooperated in a form of advisory body, and as beneficiaries of technical support opportunity, with the Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women – ESE, Institute for Democracy Societas Civilis, Youth Educational Forum, Multicultura and Coalition All for Fair Trials.

As a result of the aforementioned activities, a report was developed detailing [North Macedonia findings](#), as well as [comparative analysis of the findings from North Macedonia, Brazil and USA](#). Also, two articles were published, the first one explaining [OSF/FOSM search for approach for anti-corruption communication based on reflection and learning](#), and the second focused on research findings i.e., how to accomplish more optimism for the reform on the fight against corruption [through stories on successful “protective fences”](#).

As part of the **project “Financial Transparency of Political Parties in North Macedonia”**, FOSM, with financial support of the International Republican Institute, worked on raising public pressure so that the political parties would adhere to the financial transparency rules. FOSM developed three public policy papers related to financial transparency norms and practices of political parties, the application of the Law on Access to Public Information to political parties - as public information holders - and the index of political parties’ active transparency.

Within the framework of the support received from FOSM in 2021, and for the purpose of mapping EU funds in the green agenda and sustainable connectivity cluster, especially in Chapter 27 – Environment and Climate Change – including EC funds from the Economic Investment Plan as part of the Enlargement Strategy for

bringing EU Green Deal closer to the Western Balkans Green Agenda, **Prespa Institute** from Skopje implemented research efforts with the following titles: [“Image and reality – Research report of the real situation and image of North Macedonia regarding the political criterion and Chapter 23”](#), and [“Double transformation of North Macedonia – Research report on the green framework and mapping funds for supporting double transformation and monitoring methodology of green transformation of the Republic of North Macedonia”](#), as well as four briefs those being: [“Environment and Climate Change – Chapter 27”](#), [“Western Balkans Economic and Investment Plan”](#), [“Double Green Framework – EU Green Deal and Western Balkans Green Framework”](#) and [“Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance \(IPA 3\) 2021 – 2027”](#).

In 2021, FOSM continued **to enhance the environment in which civil society operated and developed**. As a result, the fifth [National Action Plan on Open Government Partnership \(2021-2023\)](#), included the commitment to enable free access to information for civic organizations thereby enhancing civic organizations’ transparency, improving quality and access to public information – free of charge – creating an opportunity for analytical use of data, but also creating an opportunity for more inclusive policymaking and/or monitoring through thematic, geographical or other types of targeted civic organizations. Hence, information on the address of the main office, organizational form, competent registry, legal status, size, main activity/main revenue code in NCA, association’s goals, status of the annual statement, average number of employees, total revenue, total expenditure will now be public and free of charge for the 15,580 registered citizens associations and foundations. These commitments are complementary with the measures envisaged in the new National Strategy for Cooperation with the Civic Sector. FOSM participated in the working group and actively contributed to this development.

FOSM’s long-term efforts to enhance financial support for associations and foundations from the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia and **promote state funding models** continued through the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society by FOSM’s participation in the [working group for reform of the state funding system](#). Furthermore, in order to strengthen the self-regulation system and contribute to greater professionalism and accountability of civic organizations, FOSM accepted the [Civil Society Code](#) that represents a joint initiative of more than 50 civic organizations.

Applying the interdisciplinary approach towards reforms in the country, the thematic networks supported by FOSM: Blueprint group for judicial reform, Network for protection against discrimination and Platform of civic organizations for fight against corruption along with other organizations, submitted to the Parliament an initiative on amending the 2022 Budget Proposal, in terms of the budget allocated for civic organizations.

Through the **project Dialogue with CSOs – Platform for Structural Participation in EU Integration**, implemented by FOSM in cooperation with the

partner-organizations Center for Civic Communication, Reactor – Research in Action and Eurothink – Center for European Strategies, the establishment of structural dialogue between civic organizations and the Government was advocated. The project was supported by the European Union - IPA financial instrument for civil society and media program 2016-2017 - and co-financed by FOSM. The established web platform [www.dijalogkoneu.mk](http://www.dijalogkoneu.mk) represented a focal point for sharing information for enhanced structural dialogue between the civic organizations and the institutions. More than 1000 pieces of information have been disseminated. Information on the 12 Sectoral Working Groups (SWG) occupy the central place of the platform. [24 SWG reports for 2019 and 2020](#) are available. The 12 reports published in 2021 pointed out that SWGs did not have same approach in the selection of representatives of civic organizations; and that their status was not uniform. Further, SWGs fulfil a very small part of their term i.e., limit themselves to IPA programming. Small number of SWG-meetings contributed to its inefficiency. In addition, not enough materials relevant for the civic organizations and the public are published, and [www.dijalogkoneu.mk](http://www.dijalogkoneu.mk) represented a rare opportunity for accessing information related to Sectoral Working Groups. In order to overcome formal deficiencies for essential participation of civic organizations in SWGs, FOSM and the Secretariat for European Affairs (SEA) revised the SWG Rulebooks and the Model for selection and participation of civic organizations in the course of 2021.

The website [www.dijalogkoneu.mk](http://www.dijalogkoneu.mk) contains a database of more than 300 active civic organizations, organized in sectors of their activity. They regularly receive information that serve as an incentive for their engagement and involvement in consultation processes. 37 representatives of civic organizations participated on the online sectoral consultations organized for the Fundamentals of EU Accession cluster, and the recommendations were sent to the SEA in view of the revision of the document "Agenda: Europe at Home". The knowledge of civic organizations of the mechanisms for sectoral cooperation mildly increased. In 2021, an increase of 6% was noted i.e., 54% became familiar with the sectoral working groups compared to 2020 when 47,8% of the respondents - civic organizations - were familiar with the SWGs. In 2021, a high 84% had heard and were familiar with the work of the Council for Cooperation and Development of Civil Society, representing a 6% increase compared to 2020.

In 2021, the research findings on civic participation and pandemic impact on civic organizations showed a 40% increase in interactions of civic organizations with institutions compared to 2020. Hence, 60% of organizations communicated with institutions in the policymaking process in 2021.

The platform further serves as a resource and educational center for civic participation. [The Guide - Institutional mechanisms for civic organizations' participation in policymaking](#) was published on the platform in 2021, including ten [Tutorials](#) as well as ten [public policy papers](#) and thirty [visualizations](#) on EU integration related topics. 13 authors were selected on the [call](#) for developing policy papers and their personal contributions on topics important for IPA 3 will be published in the course of 2022. In 2021, [training](#) took place for representatives of civic organizations titled "Advocacy by applying institutional consultative mechanisms and sectoral approach".

[Six reports on national and local level](#) were published in 2021 in the fields of health, education, and socio-economic policy, focusing on transparency and adequacy of policies adopted to deal with the COVID 19 pandemic.

FOSM representative was selected through the [www.dojalogoneu.mk](http://www.dojalogoneu.mk) platform to represent civic organizations in the working group for development of the new Law on Organization of National Administrative Bodies.

In 2021, with the support of the Secretariat of the international initiative Open Government Partnership, and in partnership with the Center for Civic Communications and the Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women, including the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, FOSM continued the activities started through the **project "Co-creation Support for the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 2021-2023"**

Based on previously drafted documents<sup>2</sup>, 12 workshops and numerous individual meetings for identifying problems and proposing solutions with applicants and institutions responsible for the implementation of the commitments therein, FOSM - with the partner organizations MISA and the OGP Civil Society Network co-facilitators - continued to work in Covid-19 pandemic environment and had online consultations and working meetings in five priority areas<sup>3</sup> to develop the Fifth National Action Plan for Open Government Partnership (NAP for OGP) in 2021. With expert support from FOSM, indicators for measuring the success in the implementation of [NAP for OGP 2021-2023](#) commitments were developed for the very first time. With consultancy support, two workshops took place - Management based on citizens' interests and needs and Transparency and accountability in the public sector - aiming to provide an overview of the contents of the commitments and motivate further involvement and participation of all stakeholders in the NAP for the final OGP processes. Furthermore, two case studies were developed: [Open Treasury, i.e. insight into government spending](#) and [Municipality fitting the needs of the citizens: Innovative approach for transparent, accountable and inclusive municipalities](#).

The [Council for Coordination and Monitoring of the OGP Process](#) (OGP Council) was established as part of this civil society cooperation coordinated by FOSM,

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<sup>2</sup> The following documents were developed in 2021: Timeframe and manner of implementation of the process of supporting and monitoring the NAP for OGP 2021 – 2023; Procedure for conducting consultations with stakeholders for creating new priorities and commitments within the OGP process; Public call for applying for participation in the process of supporting and monitoring the NAP for OGP 2021-2023 and Guidelines for implementation of the Questionnaire for assessment of the implementation of NAP for OGP 2018 – 2020 and the need for them to be included in the NAP for OGP 2021-2023; OGP educational material; Criteria for assessing relevance and connectivity of commitments in the process of supporting and monitoring the NAP for OGP with OGP principles and Scoring for criteria assessment (all documents are available at <https://ovp.gov.mk/dokumenti/>).

<sup>3</sup> Transparency, accountability, proactivity and inclusivity; Prevention of corruption and promotion of good governance; Public service delivery; Access to justice and Environment and climate change.

representing a new model of partnership and equality in decision-making in our country.

In 2021, online meetings with other member-states of the OGP initiative were ongoing to exchange knowledge, experience and networking, as well as to present the RNM as an example of establishing clear, structured and permanent mechanisms for continuous dialogue between the authorities and civil society, [the OGP Civil Society Network \(OGP Network\)](#) and [the Council for Coordination and Monitoring the OGP process and the National Action Plan \(NAP\) for OGP 2018 – 2020 \(OGP Council\)](#).

## **CONCEPT: GREEN LEAP – PARTNERSHIP FOR CLIMATE ACTION**

The Green Leap – Partnership for Climate Action concept aims to encourage civic actors and socially and economically marginalized citizens to assume and maintain a leadership role in shaping the debate on sustainable development policy in relation to the environment.

In order to enable civic actors to carry out credible monitoring of environmental policies and advocate for policies that will adequately and promptly meet their needs and rights to prosperous life, grants were awarded to organizations in Bitola, Tetovo and Shtip at the beginning of 2021. Grants were awarded to the following projects:

- “Impact assessment of climate change and possibilities for adjusting the agricultural sector in Bitola”, implemented by the **Union of Associations for Rural Development LAGs’ Network** in cooperation with the Agricultural Development and Support Agency – Bitola – Advisory Center for Agriculture and Rural Development Bitola – Pelagonija Planning Region Center. The objective of the project was embedding climate change adjustments into the work programs of the local government and the institutions in Bitola. Farmers from various settlements in the municipality increased their knowledge on climate change, local climate risks and possible strategies to apply climate change adaptation measures. Project partners provided significant information to individual farmers in the field of strategic regional planning (focus groups), educational material, flyers, direct on-the-spot consultations, social networks, and promotional video. Individual farmers participated in these consultations resulting with a recommendation package, which became part of the political parties’ manifestos in Bitola for the 2021 local elections. Furthermore, “Local Risk and Vulnerability Assessment Report” was developed, pointing out the risks of events with major impact of heat, heavy rainfalls, and drought for the municipality in 2021. The findings of the document were presented on meetings with the Mayor, the Environmental Department, the Agricultural Development, and the Support Agency aiming to jointly develop a Program for Climate Change Adjustment of the Agricultural Sector for the Municipal Council of Bitola.
- “We Can Do it to Bairo Too!” was a project implemented by the **Regional Geographic Society GEOSPHERE Bitola**. The main goal was to increase environmental awareness of the population and to create a healthy, ecological



environment, in particular for the youngest inhabitants in the part of Bitola populated by the Roma. With eco-actions and a donation of 120-liter rubbish bins, and in cooperation with the local population, the dumping site near the football playground was cleaned up. These activities resulted with waste removal, better living conditions in the settlement and contributed to reducing air pollution. Households agreed to dispose solid waste at a location selected in cooperation with the utility company "PE Komunalec Bitola". A park for children with seedlings and playground equipment was created. In addition, a manual was developed on the reuse of recycled materials that was also used in the educational workshops organized for mothers and children in the settlement. These activities were organized to stress the possibilities for creative reuse of recycled materials for making various useful items, and to increase the awareness about the need for environmental protection. Apart from the manual shared with project participants, a short video was developed for the general public to influence and change the perception and marginalization of the Roma population. Project contents were continuously presented to the public through social networks and local media.

- The project "3R - Reduce, Reuse, Recycle – Business Models for Use of Textile Waste" researched and promoted sustainable models of textile waste use as a possibility to develop businesses for socially vulnerable groups. The project was implemented by **Local Community Development Foundation, Shtip (LCDF)**. In absence of relevant data on how industrial waste and national textile waste is processed, LCDF carried out research focused on collecting, processing and the opportunities for reusing textile waste in Municipality Shtip. Activities focused on raising citizens' awareness on textile waste recycling and reuse by creating value-added products. Educational activities were organized for the local population, in particular for women/girls, youth and people from socially vulnerable categories. This approach is expected to enhance capacities of vulnerable groups of citizens for their better positioning on the labor market on short-term basis. However, it has a potential to encourage social entrepreneurship development in the long run, especially among vulnerable categories of citizens.
- The **Association Multikultura, Tetovo** implemented the project "Positive change for communal waste management in the Municipality Tetovo" for the purpose of raising awareness of the local population/government about the necessity of sustainable strategies dealing with the solid waste in the municipality. Through urban actions young activist stressed waste management problems and suggested solutions for improving local policies and practices (Eco exhibition, Young municipal services monitoring officer, Tetovo map with "underground containers", Painting basketball hoops on waste bins, painting murals, Creative action at Tetovo women's market, Tetovo with green spaces, "Tetovo – ecological town" billboard, as well as the BintheButtTetovo campaign). An analysis was developed through meetings and focus groups with stakeholders, identifying deficiencies and challenges in the implementation of current environmental laws, as well as current waste management problems and challenges. Recommendations for improving the state of affairs with waste management in the municipality were drafted.

- “The law in defending the negative impact of small hydropower plants in Macedonia” was a project implemented by the **Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, Skopje** in cooperation with the Center for Environmental Research and Information Eco-svest, Skopje. The main objective of this initiative was to influence and change policies/practices that stimulate the construction and operation of small hydropower plants (SHPP). The need to prevent and reduce the negative impact from the construction and operation of SHPP is urgent and thus contributing to the reduction of SHPP negative ramifications on nature and people. Deficiencies in the operation of SHPP regulations were identified and a set of evidence-based recommendations were issued for enhancing regulations and practices in this field. Also, the level of quality of the information communicated by activists and local civic organizations on the SHPP issue was increased along with the ways to impact policies in the field.
- “MEF 2021: Western Balkans Path towards Energy Transition” was a project implemented by **Citizens’ Association ZIP Institute for Policies and Good Governance, Skopje** in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia. The fourth energy forum in North Macedonia titled “Mapping the Energy Future” took place and enabled diverse, inclusive, and immediate exchange of expertise, practices and plans for the European, Western Balkans and Macedonian energy sector and their progress towards a just energy transition thus fulfilling the Sustainable Development Goal 7 (SDG 7) of the 2030 UN Agenda. Participants from different sectors, regions and experience in the energy field discussed the challenges of Western Balkan countries in achieving a just energy transition and accessing available, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. The topics on the forum were various: energy transition in general, and regional challenges to reach such a European trend; potential municipal cooperation between the Mayors of Neighboring Towns Pact, Western Balkans roadmap towards a just energy transition; climate change resistance projects; implementation of EU Green Deal and SDG 7. The forum contributed to improved inter-sectoral and regional cooperation in the energy policy field and enhanced the quality of dialogue between the government and civil society.

In March 2021, FOSM published a call for awarding grants to creative actions and campaigns of civic organizations and activist hubs actively involved in and/or were interested in promoting environmental protection; thus wanting to contribute to raising public awareness about the need to change negative behavior of persons, communities, businesses, responsible and accountable performance of local authorities, central government and public institutions dealing with the issue of climate change. The following 10 civic organization projects were supported:

- “Clean Vodno” was a project of **Vladimir Sikavica** from the **Activist Volunteer Initiative “Smetlana”** focused on raising personal awareness on the fact that waste should not be disposed in places where not allowed. Weekend actions to clean Vodno were organized, rubbish bins and infoboards were placed in cooperation with the Municipality Karposh and PE Parkovi i zelenilo (Parks and Greens). Advocacy activities focused on enhancing inspection and maintenance of



Vodno. The campaign consisted of videos, short motivational messages and facts on the importance of a healthy and clean environment.

- With the project “Birthplace cannot be loved with garbage”, **Nderim Polozhani** focused on raising awareness of the citizens in the Municipality Struga to act and reduce the quantities of irregularly disposed waste. Dumping sites in the Municipality Struga were detected, and citizens were encouraged to take action through local communities and clean up the public space in the form of three volunteer activities. Ten testimonies were given by volunteers about their experience in dealing with environmental problems and a video of all project activities was produced. Monitoring the implementation of the Environmental Protection Program of the Municipality Struga for 2020 showed the lack of reporting on spent funds of the Program.
- **LOESJE, Bitola** implemented the project “Clean More, Pollute Less!” aiming to raise the awareness of high-school students in Bitola on the importance and investments made in clean environment. In addition to cleaning different parts of the town, youth participating in the initiative organized creative writing and poster development workshops. They also monitored citizens’ habits of disposing waste and using waste bins.
- **Association for Legal Education and Transparency STATION, Prilep (LET Station)** created maps marking dumping sites in Roma settlements in Prilep and Krivogashtani as part of the project “Climate Justice for Marginalized Citizens”. The mapping and the solutions were presented on meetings with local elections candidates for mayor and Council members. With two creative actions in the municipalities Prilep and Krivogashtani, LET station stressed the need of marking dumping sites as to reduce the dangers stemming from their use. Through meetings with citizens and institutions in both municipalities, as part of the five-day caravan titled “Protect the Environment”, the organization emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy environment and the need of urgent activities to regulate dumping sites.
- Developing environmental public awareness in North Macedonia by organizing a creative campaign on environmental topics was the main goal of the “Creative comic campaign MACEDONIA, YOU WILL BE GREEN ONCE AGAIN!” a project implemented by the **Comic Center of Macedonia, Veles**. By using the comic, young people from several towns in the country were motivated to think creatively and express their views on the reasons and consequences of environmental problems. An edition with selected student comic books and purposeful comics of two authors on environmental issues of communities, gender and people with special needs was developed. The comic edition was disseminated through the daily newspaper Nova Makedonija.
- With the project “Keep your environment clean”, the **Association for Protection and Education of Children and Youth Roma Progress, Skopje** provided theoretical educational sessions and practical action. 30 young people gained knowledge in the field of ecology, clean environment and healthy practices and

habits which impact environmental protection. Cleaning and decorating actions were organized in the Municipality Shuto Orizari in order to raise public awareness of young people about the importance of reducing pollution and environmental protection. That included planting 150 seedlings in "Sain Jusuf" high-school yard.

- The goal of the project "Climate Action for Climate Change in Agriculture", implemented by **Rural Coalition, Kumanovo** was to raise farmers' awareness of climate change impact on agricultural production and environment, as well as the need to get actively involved in policymaking and implementation on local and national level. Training was provided for associations that were members of the Rural Coalition in order to enhance their capacities to advocate and involve farmers in policymaking on local and national level on issues related to climate change. Local level public policy papers were also developed focusing on mitigation of climate change effects by promoting adaptation measures. The public campaign on climate change adaptation consisted of an educational video, short manual with practical advice and adaptation measures and other promotional items (infographics, leaflets, posters).
- "ECO TOUR Macedonia – No to waste, yes to action!" was a project by **Petar Stevanovic** from the **non-formal group "For Cleaner Macedonia"** that aimed to inspire a wish and motivate young people to eco-activism through experiencing and facing local problems caused by municipal waste pollution. The project focused on raising citizens' awareness for more conscientious action related to municipal waste. Young people from local communities took part in the four cleaning eco-actions that were carried out in the city of Skopje and in the ECO tour of six towns in North Macedonia (Kicevo, Ohrid, Prilep, Kavadarci, Strumica, and Shtip). These actions were accompanied with social networks and website campaign containing videos, photographs, public information and calls upon local population to join the cleaning activities. The young people documented their work on video, and that served as a reminder that many people were ready to become active for the changes they wanted to see.
- **First Scout Unit of Skopje** implemented the project "The Fifth Element" aiming to create a positive learning environment on environmental protection through informal outdoor training of children and youth. The manual "Environmental Program – Activities and Facts" was developed. An environmental youth camp titled "The Fifth Element" was organized for 20 young leaders. The camp program was divided into 5 parts, according to the basic 4 elements (water, earth, air, fire) and the fifth element – scouts' movement which unites all of them thus they believe it could contribute to a better World. Five creative workshops were also organized from youth to youth in Skopje, Shtip, Kavadarci and Prilep in order to raise awareness of the need for more frequent formal environmental training. The video campaign carried out contained messages dedicated to environmental protection.
- With a series of creative solutions, the project "Utopia? Green East, Clear Waters" implemented by **Citizens' Association Media Plus, Shtip**, aimed to alert the public of the need for greater care for River Bregalnica by encouraging institutions

and inspectorates to perform their competences and responsibilities, and citizens to improve their relation towards nature. The quality of water and sediment content in the riverbed were regularly measured, and findings were presented on regular mutual stakeholder consultations. Apart from short information video, the campaign included regularly broadcasting articles on Radio Channel 77 and [www.mms.mk](http://www.mms.mk) Internet page. At the beginning of 2022, following the consultation process where measurement findings will be aligned with the recommendations, they will be shared with the public.

In the course of 2021, as part of the cooperation established with the **Association for Sustainable Development Mileukontakt Macedonia** (Mileukontakt) and aiming to enhance municipal capacities of Bitola, Tetovo and Shtip, a series of trainings were organized for the respective public administration, civic organizations, and the business-sector. The training offered additional information and advanced participants' knowledge on climate change including the implementation of local level measures and policies. The following was presented in the course of the training: international legal regulation related to climate change (UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and Paris Agreement), national legal regulation (current provisions and articles in the Environmental Law referring to climate change, and dealing with desolation and mitigation of drought effects, i.e. planning documents to be developed by the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, manner of implementation and reporting, as well as strategic documents - Environmental and Climate Change Strategy 2014-2020 with Action Plan for achieving Environmental Protection and Climate Change goals). Information was also shared on the development of the first framework Law on Climate Action, and the draft version of the long-term Strategy on Climate Change 2020-2050. The impact of climate change on water, environment, food, and human health were briefly presented.

Furthermore, Mileukontakt developed analyses of the current environmental legal and strategic framework on climate change in each of the three municipalities, providing detailed overview of documents developed and adopted by the three municipalities in the field of environment and climate change, local economic and sustainable development, utilities and urban planning, and an overview of the implementation of procedures in the field of environment and public participation in those processes. Annexed to the analysis, the report presented a Questionnaire on the implementation of legal regulation on local level in the environmental field (also covering relevant aspects in the fields of local and economic sustainable development, utilities, and urban planning), intended for the local administration and was one of the main instruments in understanding the actual situation with the implementation of environmental legal regulation on local level. Collected data and information will serve as basis for defining recommendations for improving the current situation and the follow-up activities.

Currently, an educational campaign is being developed for the upcoming period. Also, the process of assessment of civic organizations' capacities has started and will be used for developing a program dedicated to their enhancement.

In 2021, the cooperation with the **Institute for Individual and Organizational Development SIMBIOTIKA, Skopje** continued to enhance the capacities of local civic organizations and activist hubs in Tetovo, Bitola and Shtip, and 15 hub members were able to attend a personal development and leadership program which lasted several months. Special attention was dedicated to the leadership that created leaders, including advanced communication skills as coaching basis. Aspects of emotional intelligence topic were especially covered as foundation for relationship building based on trust, as well as topics on styles, ways of conflict transformation and dealing with specific conflict situations. FOSM team, Macedonian Creative Activist Team and representatives from the Contemporary Art Center - Skopje were involved in the preparation and implementation of each module.

**The non-formal activist group "Shtip Art Activism"** carried out two creative actions in 2021. In a satirical way, the "Zebra-thief" action pointed out to the local authorities and public enterprises the need for a long-term solution for quality road signalization that will secure safer roads for citizens and save the municipal budget funds. Cardboard panels with zebras stealing color from the pedestrian crossings were placed on the crossroads in Shtip, symbolizing the fast disappearance of pedestrian crossing in the town. An additional action titled "Children Deserve More" was intended for the youngest citizens of Shtip. Objects of seals and crocodiles were presented with brief descriptions of their features in Braille alphabet. The action aimed to point out the need for a special approach for disabled children to become part of the daily social activities in town without any obstacles. This action complemented the previous installation from 2020 which consisted of four animals made of cement in a mold and painted in original colors on the exact same location.

"Creative Bitola" was a project implemented by **Bitola Activist Hub**. It ended with the action titled "The Wounds of Bitola". Town maps were erected on several locations and the citizens of Bitola were motivated to map the wounds of the town – black spots remaining unresolved for years – and express their opinion on other problems that affected them in the boxes placed next to the maps.

**Macedonian Creative Activism Team** in cooperation with four Roma organizations: Romano Chachipe, IDIC - Initiative for Development and Inclusion of Communities from Shuto Orizari, National Roma Centrum, Kumanovo and LET STATION, Prilep (FOSM's partners in the concept Health in All Policies) continued the work initiated in October 2020. In 2021, a creative activism training cycle was organized aiming to check and experience what was learnt at the beginning of 2021. The process ended with the implementation of two more creative actions:

- "First Global Prize for the Worst Polyclinic Awarded in Skopje" was an action implemented by associations with daily outreach activities in Shuto Orizari. Their appeals were related to the alarming situation in the municipality where 1,200 children and 4,000 adults were left without basic healthcare, while the institutions ignored this public problem in continuity. Shuto Orizari Polyclinic was awarded first global prize for the worst polyclinic. In addition to the award, a large panel was placed in front of the entrance. A goldfish installation fulfilling wishes was

also put in front of the Polyclinic's entrance transmitting the hope that the goldfish would fulfill citizens' wish for basic medical services and access to quality healthcare if not the institutions.

- "Be Informed, Apply and Get Vaccinated!" was the action carried out in Prilep for the purpose of informing the broader public and raising awareness about vaccination as protection from Covid-19. A creatively developed coronavirus and large size syringe symbol were presented at the performance. With the event, information was disseminated along with small symbolic vaccine bottles made of cardboard, thus appealing to the citizens not to avoid nor delay vaccination for their protection from Covid-19. In addition, a stand was opened, and citizens could receive additional information and register for vaccination at the [vaksinacija.mk](http://vaksinacija.mk) online system.

In cooperation with the **Helsinki Committee of Human Rights** (MHC), hate speech trends, various forms of peer-bullying in the Internet space and through electronic communication, as well as hate speech among sport fan groups in all three towns were continuously monitored for several years. The findings of this ongoing monitoring showed that young people were still the most numerous instigators, but also the target in most of the cases of similar attacks. Hate speech based on sexual orientation and gender identity was mostly present in Tetovo, Bitola and Shtip, but hate speech based on ethnicity was also obvious. In its annual report, the MHC recommended inclusion of topics such as recognition and protection from peer-bullying when using social networks and Internet, in the educational and upbringing processes by means of comprehensive educational preventive mechanism within the civil education programs, as well as introduction of thematic awareness raising programs for parents, teachers and all actors in the educational system. The following was recommended: support and implementation of public campaigns, based on tolerance and respect so that the public would be more sensitive to accept differences, self-regulation mechanisms would be used by public and private bodies, including training on digital rights and responsibilities, Internet abuse and cyber violence. Considering the high presence of hate speech towards people with different sexual orientation, MHC recommended amendments to the Criminal Code thereby introducing violence-based actions related to sexual orientation and gender identity as basis for prosecution. The need for establishing clear legal framework for effective sanctioning hate speech and hate acts was straight-forward, as was the establishment of mechanism to register and report hate speech cases on sports events. The establishment of an Alert System and SOS lines for reporting and urgent psychological support in all hate speech cases proved important as well.

As part of the institutional support from FOSM, **Contemporary Art Center, Skopje** (CAC) carried out a series of urban art actions. Theme-wise, the actions were mainly responding to acute community problems or aimed to reveal issues which society or political elites want to keep far from the public.

[Climate Balance](#) was an action that placed a seesaw with an iceberg on the one side and planet Earth model on the other. The action was an appeal for taking urgent

measures against rapid deterioration of climate and reduction of danger to the Earth and its inhabitants. The action titled [If this ice takes 6 hours to melt, how long it will take for glaciers to melt?](#) was dedicated to the battles against global warming and climate change. The short video "Camel Trophy" (Aerodrom 2021) was presented to the public through social networks immediately before the 2021 local elections. The authors of the video - in a satirical way - appealed for basic infrastructure in parts of the Municipality Aerodrom to become part of the agenda of newly elected authorities. [Happy New Year Skopje](#) was a creative artistic urban action before New Year targeting the citizens of Skopje, reminding and reprimanding the public that a large number of children were on the street as a vulnerable category. They, as other children, needed and had the right to feel the New Year's spirit and magic. The team organized surprises on several locations in Skopje, bringing presents and joy to several groups of children on the street. In addition to these actions, in its annual strategy CAC prepared and supported local initiatives on various topics (culture, local development, presentation of local values, opportunities or problems, etc.) in several local communities in North Macedonia, those being:

- Stratigraphy was a local initiative in Chashka carried out as an artistic intervention (mural) on a tunnel at the entrance of Chashka, with the aim of introducing a colorful display and art in one of the most neglected regions in North Macedonia and presenting the opportunity for creating artwork in public space accessible and understandable to the community.
- Architectonic intervention in public space in the village Pirava within the Municipality Valandovo was implemented in cooperation with Neighborhood Pirava, the NGO Alpha Mathematics from Pirava and the Municipality Valandovo. A decorative windmill made from grapevine was erected at the square in Pirava. Decorative grapevine was also planted for the locals to care for it.
- [Partisan monument of Vanco Prke, Vinica](#), in cooperation with the Scouts Squad Armonija from Vinica and the local Youth Bicycle Club from Vinica, the space around the monument and the access to it was arranged. This very important part of the history of the region was dysfunctional and forgotten by the competent institutions for a long time.
- [Mala Posta No. 1310 \(Little Post Office\) Kumanovo](#) was an initiative through which Mala Posta No.: 1310 as the favorite post office of the citizens in Pero Chicho settlement in Kumanovo was refurbished and decorated with murals on all four walls with contemporary and historical motifs.
- [A Heart for Eternity, Star Dojran](#) in cooperation with the Municipality Dojran, erected and promoted a memorial sculpture of a heart to honor and respect the humanity displayed by the Dinevs family. They were the first in North Macedonia who decided to donate the heart and other organs of the diseased Emilija Dineva for transplantation purposes.



- [Raspeani Dojrancani \(Singing people from Dojran\)](#) was an initiative to restore the local musical ensemble composed of a choir and orchestra. It resulted with music, scene, and choreography of fifteen songs. In cooperation with the Municipality Dojran and the Pensioners' Association from Dojran, new costumes and instruments were purchased for the ensemble.
- The documentary video ["Oldest plantations of Valandovo and marking the oldest plantations"](#) was an attempt to save from oblivion the memories of the beginnings of growing Mediterranean fruits from former Yugoslavia and North Macedonia, which started in Valandovo.
- [Arranging the space around the old hospital in Rostushe](#) was an initiative aiming to transform a dumping site into a good quality public space. In cooperation with the Association Triton from Rostushe, National Park Mavrovo and the Municipality Mavrovo-Rostushe, the area of the old hospital was cleaned up and arranged as to become accessible to visitors to reclaim this public space.
- Sculpture installation Pomegranate was erected in the center of Valandovo, in cooperation with the Municipality Valandovo. Growing pomegranates is the mark of this area. As the pride of the local population, the pomegranate was perceived as a symbol of fertility, abundance and upkeep.

CAC organized the following capacity building workshops for local communities: workshop in Vinica dedicated to arranging public spaces and their protection and operation for common community interests; workshop in Rostushe with representatives from several local civic organizations and the local youth council to encourage the regional community to perceive local natural and cultural heritage as a potential for cultural and economic development; workshop in Dojran titled "What can we do and how can we organize ourselves – knowledge and skills of senior citizens as basis for the creation of cultural contents and community arrangement" together with pensioners from the local Pensioners' Association that shared its opinion and recommended how their knowledge and skills for community development can be used and transferred to the younger generations; online workshop titled "Creating and developing ideas for local initiatives and local self-organization of the population to create cultural and developmental contents on local level" with participants from various parts of North Macedonia (Tetovo region, Mavrovo, Rostushe, Chashka, Veles, Valandovo, Dojran, Vinica, Kumanovo, Kriva Palanka and Kochani); and four online workshops with a group of artists and activists from Kumanovo dedicated to urban activism, its impact and possible approaches to resolving local problems.

Three grants were awarded with the support of OSF Culture and Art Program to civic organizations for promotion of creative activism methods in their work. **Citizens' Association Contemporary Art Center** received support for the project "Artivator – Art and Creativity for Active Citizens and Communities" directed towards breaking citizens' melancholy and lethargy, enhancing public power, and developing new skills and methodologies for active and creative problem-solving approach on

issues that affect them (environment, climate change, anticorruption and social justice). **Citizens' Association Youth Educational Forum** was supported for the project titled "Creative Environmental Youth Action" promoting the current youth activism program through training and education and enhancing internal capacities thus encouraging the application of sustainable activist practices and creating dialogue among different actors for joint action in resolving local community problems in the field of environment. **Cultural and Social Space Centar – JADRO Skopje** was a public cultural institution supported through the project titled "Generosity Spaces – Transformative Stations (socially engaged artistic practices as social change tools)" whereby artists from different artistic disciplines were motivated to increase their knowledge and skills in the area of socially engaged art and encouraged to create participatory projects that would influence the community and act to raise the awareness about environmental, anticorruption, human rights and social justice issues.

## **REGIONAL CREATIVE HUBS: TAPPING INTO THE POWER OF ARTS AND CULTURE TO EMBOLDEN CIVIC ACTION AGAINST CORRUPTION**

The general goal of the initiative Regional Creative Hubs: Tapping into the Power of Arts and Culture to Embolden Civic Action Against Corruption was to enhance artists, advocates, and journalists to be more effective in their commitment to influence civic involvement in corruption-related issues. Regional Creative Hubs are virtual platforms where participants strive to learn why and how to be more effectively engaged in anticorruption issues to change public perception and influence public policies. Four foundations from Western Balkans are included in the initiative (foundations from North Macedonia, Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina and Serbia) and the Regional Foundation from West Africa (OSIWA). Foundations from both regions, in cooperation with OSF New York, planned and coordinated activities and communication to provide efficient implementation of numerous activities in this initiative and promote mutual communication and cooperation, including learning opportunities and new knowledge beneficial for internal cooperation of Open Society Foundations.

In 2021, the initiative was implemented in several, often parallel, phases: grant implementation for national projects with continuous mentor assistance; opportunities for peer-learning through training and experience sharing events; grant implementation for cooperation between regions with continuous mentor support; and the development of a book and a documentary video.

At the end of 2020, a call for applications for both geographical regions were published and two grants were awarded in North Macedonia:

- Artist **Dragana Gunin** for the project "Corruption at the Workplace based on gender (with emphasis on women)". The objective of the project was to attract



greater attention of various target groups, dominantly youth, in order to raise awareness to solve the problem of corruption at the workplace most often faced by women (during job interview, at the workplace, including sexual harassment). Approximately 500 women shared their experience through online research (survey and interviews) carried out in March and April 2021. The project was dedicated to all brave women who - by sharing their testimonies - encouraged others and created space to support everyone who was facing any type of violence (audio stories are available on [YouTube](#)).

- Artist **Igor Ilievski** for the project "Artivism for Changes". The objective of the project was to select, train and assist a group of dedicated activists with a creative approach to build skills for sustainable creative strategies for a more effective fight against corruption on local level. A mini network of new creative activists with different profiles, different spheres of action, from different regions in North Macedonia was established. They performed four creative actions: „[The Journey of a Waste Bag](#)“, focused on corruption problem with the regional landfill "Rusino"; "Clean-up Corruption", focused on the waste disposed in nature in Vinica where the participants, by reporting corruption to the State Anticorruption Commission, suggested symbolic cleaning up of corruption; "[Virtual Classroom](#)" focused on the lack of access to education for all children during the pandemic, i.e. an improvised classroom was setup in the center of Skopje to enable interaction with citizens for them to express their opinion about the problem at hand; and "Stop to COVID-profiteering" which was a call by a group of activists in Skopje for healthcare services available to all and prevention of pandemic profiteering.

By the end of May 2021, continuous online mentorship was provided to the grant beneficiaries. The support program was implemented through regular online meetings, consultations, and direct individual/group assistance by using methodology for successful implementation of activities.

An archive of materials on creative activism methodology was created in order to be available to the participants in the process of designing their training programs. At the same time, an archive of materials on anticorruption practices and examples from Western Balkans and West Africa was established. Furthermore, participants in the initiative were able to take part in especially designed training on various topics based on their needs. These events were organized by the initiative team and implemented by the Center for Artistic Activism from New York, mentors from the Western Balkans and West Africa and external advisors and experts to the initiative, who offered their specific experience on certain topics. Online meetings for all participants were organized in cooperation with the Center for Artistic Activism where they could discuss and share experience about the challenges they faced, and the success achieved. The Center for Artistic Activism from New York and the local mentors from both regions held weekly meetings to plan and develop the program for online training of trainers and the mentoring process. The following online workshops were organized for all participants: "Corruption and Environment" with Mirko Popovic from RERI, Serbia and Denis Zisko from the Center for Ecology and Energy from Bosnia and Hercegovina, distinguished environmental protection fighters

in their respective countries; and “Video Production and Editing” with Elton Baxhaku from Albania, where participants had opportunity to learn videorecording and editing techniques. On 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021, Global online forum titled “New Perspectives for Promotion of Impact on Civil Society: Creative Actions for Fighting Public Perception of Corruption in West Africa and Western Balkans” took place. The program of the forum focused on the reflection of the initiatives’ change theory, structured to express its essence, to present what was done, acknowledge the work achieved so far, but also to share lessons and views on future activities and how to increase and enhance civil society impact regarding anticorruption efforts in both regions. The beginning of third opportunity for implementing cooperation grants for cross-border interventions in Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Hercegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia) and West Africa (Ghana, Guinea and Senegal) was announced on the forum. As previously the case, mentorship and support during the implementation of these grants was provided.

Artists, activists and journalists who successfully implemented grants in the previous phase and participated on the online training program and exchange of experience and knowledge were eligible to apply for the targeted call for implementation of grants for cooperation among and between regions. They were expected to design ideas developed in cooperation with colleagues from one or more countries and working with participants from different regions was encouraged for applying the knowledge and skills gained in the previous phases of implementation of the initiative. Project ideas were expected to focus thematically on various anticorruption aspects and offer creative and relevant approach based on regional context. FOSM supported the following ideas:

- “Don’t Waste the Waste” project implemented by **Vanja Lazic** from Bosnia and Hercegovina through the Association “D-r Stefan Bolkaj Center” and **Nana Akusua Hanson** from Ghana aimed to detect important corruption aspects in their environment and encourage people to communicate, compare and suggest their own waste management ideas.
- “Be ART - Active against Corruption in Your Society” was a project implemented by **Edisa Demic** from Bosnia and Hercegovina through the Association for Education and Development “Dignity” from Mostar and **Dragana Gunin** from North Macedonia in cooperation with Umar Sal from Senegal. The intervention aimed to reduce and prevent the corruption phenomenon by calling for action, awareness-raising and education in all three countries. From a long-term viewpoint, the project goal was to change citizens’ behavior to distance themselves from bribery, both as public servants and citizens, as well as raising awareness and education on corruption and action in all three countries.
- “[AR] - TITUDE: Use of Augmented Reality in the Fight Against Data Corruption in Serbia and Ghana” was a project implemented by **Ana Akjimov** from Serbia through the Youth Association from Becej in cooperation with **Prince Andrew Ardafyo and Evura Adams Karim** from Ghana. The project focused on government corruption issue in use of public data and violation of citizens’ privacy.

Activities included development and use of augmented reality tool package (Google PlayGround, Spark AR & AR) as educational media for real-time anticorruption, online exhibition and forum where participants discuss issues such as corruption, privacy and data abuse.

- “With Art Against Corruption” was a project implemented by **Igor Ilievski** from North Macedonia, **Ana Akjimov** from Serbia through the Youth Association from Becej in cooperation with **Umu Regina Sambu** from Senegal. The project took into consideration three different cultural contexts (Serbia, North Macedonia and Senegal), combining similarities with differences and developing behavioural change campaign related to corruption by carrying out nine actions (three cycles of same/similar actions in all three countries adjusted to the local context) by involving the public in their creation, implementation and conveying the message.
- “Corruption-Free City” was a project implemented by **Jeta Pera** in Albania through the Bloom organization from Tirana, **Anila Bala** in Albania through the Bloom organization from Tirana and **Dragana Gunin** in North Macedonia. The goal of the project was to promote the fight against corruption through cooperation with activists and artists from Albania and North Macedonia. The idea included direct contact and dialogue with citizens and encouragement to create utopian city – corruption-free city. Possible solutions for overcoming corruption were defined as a result of the process and local actions were carried out hoping that such experience will motivate people to continue meeting, discussing community problems and suggesting acceptable and sustainable solutions.

Regular mentor assistance was available to each project by teams of two mentors, one from Western Balkans and one from West Africa. Self-evaluation sessions were regularly organized by mentors and representatives of the Center for Artistic Activism from New York and served for learning purposes, providing reflection and peer review. Two workshops were organized with Stefan Palitov from North Macedonia on the topic of “Augmented Reality” where participants had an opportunity, in addition to theoretical basis on this subject, to be practically introduced with the topic through exercises. The online event was organized on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2021 and enabled discussion on how creative activism methodology can help in the fight against apathy and exchange of experience with other creative activists. The project ending was marked with an event that took place on 20<sup>th</sup> December 2021 where grantees had an opportunity to present the outcomes and exchange experience from project implementation.

In order to complete the entire initiative and enable its public promotion, a book and a video recording with selected case studies were developed showing what was done within the initiative, at the same time serving as motivation tools for future references.

During the initiative, the Organizational Development Support organization from Brussels carried out monitoring and evaluation, continuously suggesting improvements. In December 2021, the organization produced its final evaluation report with findings and recommendations.

## CONCEPT: EDUCATION OF SMALL ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

In 2021, FOSM finalized the concept Education of Small Ethnic Communities with interventions focused on achieving the strategic objective of support for teaching and learning languages of small ethnic communities.

As a response to the April 2021 initiative of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES), communicated to UNICEF, USAID and FOSM, a Memorandum of Cooperation was signed between MES and FOSM to support the process of improvement of education in the country, including the timely and quality development and distribution of textbooks/materials for first grade. FOSM financially supported the printing of the textbooks/materials for first grade in the languages of the small ethnic communities developed by the Bureau for Development of Education, in line with the curriculum from the new Primary Education Concept. FOSM also supported the translation of new COVID-protocols for schools in Turkish, Serbian, and Bosnian languages, necessary for the students, teachers and parents prior to the beginning of the new 2021/22 school year.

FOSM continued to work on the improvement of teaching in schools where languages of instruction were those of small ethnic communities. Aiming to improve their knowledge and digital competences, FOSM implemented a two-day online training for grading online teaching, intended for 16 teachers from three primary schools with Turkish language of instruction. The goal of FOSM's training was to enhance teachers' language competences for developing reading, writing, listening, and speaking Bosnian language skills of students, specifically for teachers teaching the subject "Bosnian language and culture" as an elective subject in two project schools. This online training was a combination of teaching and practical work and was implemented in cooperation with professor Bernisa Puris, Associate Professor at the Department of Bosnian Language and Culture, Faculty of Philosophy in Sarajevo and Sandra Zlotrg, Director of Association of Language and Culture Lingvisti in Sarajevo. The teaching focused on providing answers to theoretical questions related to spelling, grammar, literary norm of Bosnian language, as well as emphasizing the importance of developing the expression culture among children. The exercises were practically analysis and adaptation of teaching texts from the Bosnian language curriculum, including popular culture. Participants received a set of materials used on the training in order to use them in their daily work with students.

As part of the partnership with the **Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives "Step by Step"**, 30 online mentoring meetings were implemented, each in one of the 10 project schools with more than 85 participating teachers-members of learning communities. They discussed current teaching in schools and homework, current situation in schools and challenges, prevention of violence in schools, student support during pandemic, and positive messages for students' wellbeing. The library-on-wheels made 10 visits with more than 500 students from first to fifth grade and a large number of participating school-teachers in the project. These visits represented a positive experience for the youngest pupils because they promoted reading and encouraged teachers to implement new creative activities with their students. Theatre of Shadows visited four project schools, using "Our First Library" picture book edition of "Step by Step" Foundation. The performances were attended

by 158 students. 14 videos were developed and published with distance teaching methodological guidelines. Video materials were also recorded and published by the project schools, by their teachers and students.

The seventh traditional event of Speech4Teach on the topic of mental health took place ahead of the occasion of the International Children's Day and the International Education Week. The goal of this online event was to attract attention on the importance of mental health, to emphasize the need for prevention from the earliest age and the significance of including all actors (state institutions, school management, teachers, professional service, and parents) as a precondition for creating a safe environment for students and available programs for developing socio-emotional skills, as well as timely support available to all who needed it. "We Speak about Mental Health" was an educational video shared on the event where experts and practitioners gave their views on the necessity of mental health for the human, physical and social capital in the community.

The strategic partnership with the Foundation for Education and Cultural Initiatives "Step by Step" will continue with special focus on producing digital and other resource for teaching and learning languages of small ethnic communities (audio, video and written materials), thus helping the implementation of the new Primary Education Concept in schools with such languages of instruction.

For 2021/22 school year and as part of our strategic partnership with the **Foundation for Internet and Society Metamorphosis**, eight online trainings were implemented on the following topics: Digital Security and Safety; Safe and Private Online Teaching; Privacy in Online Teaching; Creation and Sharing of Open Educational Resources; Digital Skills for Successful Online Teaching; Privacy and How to Protect your Privacy Online; Formative Grading in Distance Teaching Conditions; and Digital Security and Safety in Distance Teaching intended for teaching staff, professional services, school management and parents/guardians of students following online teaching. More than 1000 participants from the teaching staff, school management, professional services, but also parents and guardians of children-students following online teaching participated in these trainings. Recorded online trainings have over 50,000 views. Resources developed were licensed under open Creative Commons license, meaning everyone can use, adjust, and share the materials just by citing the original source.

In 2021, **Youth Educational Forum** (YEF), as a partner in the implementation of the Education for Small Ethnic Communities Concept, implemented the project titled "Quality Educational Policies and Opportunities for Youth". A rare research - if not the only one - was carried out by the project, analyzing the needs and opportunities of youth in North Macedonia according to the number of inhabitants in their native place and planning regions in the country, providing specific data for the authorities to consider in policymaking. The research titled "[Youth \(un\)equal opportunities and needs – Research on youth's challenges and needs according to the size of their place of living](#)" presented young people's perceptions of challenges and problems in the country related to the living standard, education, culture, entertainment and sports, youth participation and other issues of interest for young people. Research findings pointed out that young people from small/rural areas did not feel that they were influencing democratic processes in the country. Many saw

their future abroad unable to express their potential in the country and will probably leave in the next year or so. This could be related to their perceptions and views on fewer employment and income generating opportunities, access to healthcare service, financial dependence from parents, and absence from local and other youth policies. Small dose of pessimism and disbelief in the system was evident again - young people believed it was more difficult to find job if he/she or his/her family did not have connections, and that it was much easier to find a job if they came from a wealthy family. They believed that it was easier to find a job abroad, and a small percentage believed that the best jobs in the country were in the public sector.

The research was presented at a conference discussion with representatives from state institutions that work with young people 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2021. Furthermore, the findings were part of the activism training program of the workshop on the development of digital posters that took place in December. 23 young people participated on the workshop where they were introduced to digital tools for creating art. This knowledge was put into practice later to create digital art based on research findings. The works were presented on a traveling exhibition organized in Kavadarci, Vinica and Skopje.

In 2021, as part of YEF support, the Debate Program organized an online National Debate Competition, choosing the best debaters and speakers. The best five speakers of the competition had an opportunity to represent the country at the *World Schools* - world debate competition in Macau, China - organized online. The team won the award of the best new team – new nation of students in the past two years.

Approximately 7,000 young people informed themselves about their rights and the way to exercise and protect those rights on the [www.servismladi.mk](http://www.servismladi.mk) platform. Apart from the questions and answers published on the site, the project team regularly informed youth through its website, Facebook, and Instagram social media users on issues of interest to young people through columns. In 2021, Radio YEF published 12 episodes of Insta(nt) news show – first youth news on Instagram. Each episode referred to youth issues, education, activism, culture and included instant reporter from a different town in the country. In addition, seven episodes of the program “In Class” were broadcasted, some recorded in the studio and some organized on the ZOOM platform.

In the upcoming period, YEF will provide follow-up support to the “Youth (un)equal Opportunities and Needs” research which was performed in 2021 to instigate a dialogue platform for young people and institutions on local level. The purpose of the platform was to improve conditions and opportunities of youth living in rural areas by advocating, networking of youth organizations, informal groups, schools, youth organizations and young people involved in the project “Youth Policies for Better Living Standard of Young People in Smaller Communities”. By creating a network of local youth organizations, young people and high-school students will get involved in the process of mapping youth’s needs in selected municipalities, and in creating and proposing policies and solutions on how to improve youth’s standard in these municipalities and advance their socio-economic situation, formal education conditions and opportunities for informal education and cultural development.



“Academic Scholarships for Civil Society” was a project financially supported by the thematic OSF Scholarship Program and implemented by YEF. The project goal was strengthening research capacities of YEF with new young researchers by utilizing the alumni student potential, and former program beneficiaries. Alumni students trained ten young researchers interested in research work and research methods. With their support, three best ideas/small research projects were implemented and three research papers were produced: “Analysis of the New Model of Student Organization: Experience of Student Representatives from the “Ss. Cyril and Methodius” University Skopje, “The Role of Education in the Ideological Views of Young People in the Republic of North Macedonia” and “Youth Entrepreneurship: limitations and barriers for starting and managing own business (startup) by young people”.

**“Stay@School: Action for Roma Inclusion in Primary Education” project** was funded by the European Union and implemented in the period October 2019 - October 2022. The project was implemented by FOSM in partnership with the Association Education Support Center “Dendo Vas” and the Foundation for Education and Cultural initiatives “Step by Step” in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science. The goal of the project was to increase the number of Roma students from first to third grade in primary education and reduce the number of drop outs and contribute to regular class attendance and successful transition into the next grade by reducing the financial burden of education for the children of the most vulnerable Roma families.

For school year 2020/2021, 638 scholarships were awarded to Roma students from first to third grade primary school: 320 for first grade, 315 students for second grade and 3 female students for third grade. Scholarship beneficiaries were from 73 schools in 32 municipalities (7 in Skopje). 50% of scholarship beneficiaries were girls and 50% boys. 611 students (or 96%), successfully completed the school year and went to the next grade. In 2021/2022 school year, 606 students renewed their scholarships. Scholarships amount to 400 EUR per year and are intended to cover school-related costs for Roma families on welfare. Keeping and renewing the scholarship depends on student’s regular attendance at school and successfully passing to the next grade.

60 assistants for supporting the Roma community were trained and engaged to contribute to identifying children in the community who were outside the education system, encourage families to enroll children at school and to regularly attend classes and pass to the next grade. Therefore, the assistants regularly communicated and cooperated with the Roma families and schools.

In the period May-June 2021, the project organized six round table discussions in cooperation with local authorities and schools in Kichevo, Debar, Tetovo, Delchevo, Kochani and Shtip, with 283 participants, out of who 220 Roma parents/guardians, and representatives from municipalities, primary schools and nongovernmental organizations, educational and health mediators were present. The goal of these public events was to motivate parents to enroll their children in school and regularly attend classes even in pandemic conditions, as well as to increase cooperation among schools, local authorities, and parents.

The project awarded grants of 2,500 EUR to 47 primary schools for implementing small projects to stimulate interaction and exchange knowledge among students thereby integrating Roma students through games and mutual participation in extra-curricular activities. In the second half of 2020/2021 school year, 19 schools started implementing the activities and another 28 schools received support for initiatives implemented in the first half of 2020/2021. The grants included didactical materials, school supplies, sports equipment, school furniture, library material, equipment, school yard props, as well as small items for adaptation and creation of pleasant and creative school spaces for learning and spending time with children, parents, and teachers. With a series of activities schools promoted equal opportunities for all pupils, creating positive school climate and classroom and transforming school space into an inclusive and stimulating learning environment where each child feels accepted, motivated and has an opportunity to develop his/her potential.

90 teachers and representatives of professional services from 28 schools participated on the four-day training on social justice and recognizing and dealing with discrimination.

Upon invitation by the European Schoolnet - coordinator of the *Better Internet for Kids Platform* - on behalf of the European Commission, FOSM organized consultative sessions for collecting the opinion of various actors on their priorities for promotion, protection, respect and exercising children's rights in the digital world. The goal of these consultations was to ask children and youth about possibilities, challenges, and potential risks online, but also to give EU policymakers better understanding on the steps undertaken to secure a Digital Decade that will suit all children and young people in Europe. 41 students (primary students, high-school students, Roma students and children with special educational needs, and eight parents) took part on three online and consultative sessions with physical presence. Participants' contribution was included into the report ["How to Make Digital Europe Decade Suitable for Children and Youth?"](#)

Before the end of 2021, FOSM awarded a grant to the **Association for Research and Analysis ZMAI** for carrying out the analysis "Level of Preparation of Primary Schools to Implement the New Primary Education Concept in the RNM and the Effects Therein". The project was a follow-on of previous FOSM efforts and current commitments to support the new Primary Education Concept within the Concept of Education of Small Ethnic Communities, focusing on the analysis of ten municipalities and 48 schools where languages of instruction were those of small ethnic communities. This support was expected to help create preliminary assessment of short-term results from the implementation of the new concept in subject municipalities, to provide recommendations for long-term use and results from the implementation of the new concept in respective municipalities in I and IV grade, as well as to develop methodology for sustainable adjustment of the digitalization of learning with the conditions in the schools in the respective municipalities.

FOSM administered scholarships for young Roma students studying medical and other study program by mid-2021, as part of the Scholarship Program for Roma Students (RMUSP) and Medical Scholarship for Roma Students (RHSP) funded by the Roma Education Fund (REF).



FOSM took part in the development of a new draft Strategy for Roma Inclusion with comments and suggestions and has representatives in the Open Government Partnership/ Improving Public Service Delivery in the field of education working groups and is a member in the Committee for selecting external collaborators for first grade and learning materials for fourth grade at the Bureau for Development of Education.

## CONCEPT: HEALTH IN ALL POLICIES

To keep health as a high priority on the political agenda after the crisis, FOSM continued to support the intersectoral approach to address social determinants that cause inequality and disparity in health outcomes and support stakeholders' quest for just and fair distribution of resources for healthcare and fair access to healthcare services. FOSM's support was also directed towards monitoring and impact assessment of policies on health and healthcare equality within and beyond the healthcare sector, securing evidence for advocating responsible and coherent policies related to the health needs of the citizens, including the support for intersectoral cooperation and involvement of various stakeholders (such as policy experts, civic organizations and community members) to make sure that health-related dimensions are integrated in policymaking within sectors and areas.

In order to get the citizens involved in the process of planning, implementing, and assessing the legal regulation, budgets, and services in the area of social and economic rights, the **Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Gender Equality ESE** (ESE) continued to build the capacities of civic organizations in North Macedonia and in the region for implementing the concepts of social accountability and legal empowerment of civic organization's activities in the course of 2021. Therefore, two training sessions were organized for Roma civic organizations from North Macedonia. The first training on advancing mental health of the community was delivered in partnership with a team from Sevilla University, Spain, and was attended by 22 members from six Roma civic organizations. The training resulted with the development of six draft Action Plans for advancing Roma mental health through a non-medical approach in Roma environments. The second training was on the application of social accountability methodologies developed and delivered by ESE team.

To strengthen the capacities of civic organizations from the region for applying social accountability methodologies and legal empowerment, ESE undertook a series of activities and established the regional network COPASAH for Europe<sup>4</sup> aiming at joint strategic planning and advocacy of 16 civic organizations from North Macedonia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary and Albania in the fields of women's health, access to healthcare of marginalized communities, social accountability and legal empowerment as well as strengthening and inclusion of communities.

To advance transparency and participation in the labor sector and improve the quality and accessibility of employment services for the citizens, with special focus on

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<sup>4</sup><https://copasaheurope.org/about-copasah-europe/>

vulnerable groups, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in cooperation with the Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia (EMRNM) and four local partner-organizations, a total of 2,829 citizens were acquainted with their employment rights. In addition, an e-platform for publishing and improving data visibility on planned and realized scope of persons for each separate active employment measure was developed for citizens to be able to monitor the implementation of the national active employment policies, thereby advancing transparency and accountability of EARNM.<sup>5</sup>

Two studies were developed for the purpose of improving health and access to healthcare services for women, mothers, and children from the Roma community. The first study<sup>6</sup> was an analysis of the negative effect from inconsistent implementation of cervical cancer screening on women and on the State, including the consequences from untimely detection of cervical cancer on the life of women, mortality and the additional costs imposed on women and the State. The second study<sup>7</sup> looked at the barriers and problems encountered by Roma women in their access to reproduction healthcare, including the services of a family gynecologist and the services from the cervical cancer screening program and breast cancer, preventive and antenatal protection, home-visiting nurses, deliveries, as well as healthcare of newly-borns and breast-feeding babies.

For the same purpose, a series of advocacy activities were undertaken on national and international level. A request for increasing the number of Roma women included in the cervical cancer screening program was sent to the Minister of Health. On the International Day on Combating Cancer a press release was sent to the media stressing the key problems in the implementation of the screening programs on cervical and breast cancer stressing the need to adopt the recommendations for advancing national health preventive policies. In addition, an online meeting was organized with the President of the Safe Motherhood Committee demanding the inclusion of the recommendations and proposals stemming from the work of ESE in the Perinatal Masterplan of the Ministry of Health. By participating in IPA III sectoral working group on health, a request was sent for increasing healthcare coverage with women's reproductive health, including the health of mothers and children within the framework of EU Action for Improved Health and Social Protection and Gender Equality. On International Women's Day, ESE developed nine recommendations and disseminated them on the social networks aiming at advancing access to healthcare for women, mothers, and children, while on international level ESE was actively involved in the 88<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on Children's Rights<sup>8</sup>, and entrusted with the task to inform the Macedonian public on the event.

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<sup>5</sup><https://av.demo-ns.com/>

<sup>6</sup><http://esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacii/2021/1/Analiza%20na%20trosoci%20za%20rak%20na%20grlo%20na%20matka.pdf>

<sup>7</sup><http://esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacii/2021/1/Reproduktivno%20zdravje%20Romi%20Majki%20i%20deca.pdf>

<sup>8</sup>[https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCRC%2fNGO%2fMKD%2f43796&Lang=en](https://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/15/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCRC%2fNGO%2fMKD%2f43796&Lang=en)

To secure equal access to justice in the areas of social and economic rights, ESE proceeded building the capacities of civic organizations for efficient legal alternatives for providing assistance to overcome the barriers encountered by the Roma in accessing justice through four e-training modules<sup>9</sup> for paralegals active in Roma communities. Seventeen (17) young lawyers and final-year law students participated on the training in order to increase the knowledge and skills for monitoring, analyzing, and resolving legal issues faced by women who suffered family violence.

Through ESE's Legal Aid Center<sup>10</sup> and the platform Ask for Advice<sup>11</sup> support for the women who had suffered family violence was secured by engaging lawyers and psychologists and maintaining a virtual legal aid system enabling access to justice for a total of 184 persons.

Regarding the problems and needs assessment encountered by women who have suffered violence, a study was developed on the right of exemption<sup>12</sup> of court fees and the manner in securing alimony for the children after divorce/separation. In addition, a study on the right to alimony<sup>13</sup> was developed indicating that women, their children, and the family-members they live with after the divorce/ separation do not have enough income, including social welfare, to cover the overall monthly costs of living. For the purpose of improving access to justice and rule of law, a summary four-year study<sup>14</sup> on the level of access to justice and determining the benefits from various types of legal aid secured, including specialized legal aid for vulnerable groups of citizens was developed. In 2021, ESE signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with Edinburg International Justice Initiative<sup>15</sup> (EIJ) as part of the University of Edinburg, Scotland, to monitor the implementation of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women (Istanbul Convention). Up to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, the latest, the data from the undertaken research will be included in ESE's alternative report and along with EIJI it will be submitted to GREVIO<sup>16</sup> of the Council of Europe.

To improve fiscal transparency of the institutions dealing with social and economic rights, the fiscal transparency of a total of 95 public institutions were monitored

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<sup>9</sup> 1) Notion and meaning of legal empowerment; 2) Notion and manner of resolving family violence; 3) Basic module on the setup and operation of the criminal-legal system; 4) Sources of law, Family Law and civic procedure uploaded on the online course platform TALENT MLS

<sup>10</sup> <http://esem.org.mk/index.php/voved/10-voved/103-centar-za-pravna-pomosh.html>

<sup>11</sup> <https://pobarajsovet.mk/>

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<http://esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacij/2021/1/Osloboduvanje%20od%20sudski%20trosoci%202021.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> <http://esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacij/2021/1/Izdrska%20za%20decata%2011.2021.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacij/2020/Summary%20Cost-Benefit%20Analysis%20for%20three%20legal%20aid%20modalities%20for%20the%20period%202017-2020.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://internationaljusticeinitiative.com>

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/grevio>

assessing the level of their proactivity<sup>17</sup> and reactivity<sup>18</sup>. Also, through the traditional and social media, 424 different educational and informative contents for the citizens were developed related to the promotion of the need to raise the level of fiscal transparency by the public institutions.

**Foundation IDEA Southeast Europe** (Foundation IDEA) was supported to create different formats of informative contents for better public informing during the health crisis and awareness raising about the danger lingering from fake news. A total of 92 media items, out of which 23 devoted to health problems and challenges in pandemic conditions, 9 videos for reducing negative narratives of the Roma and the problems they face, 15 items on the rights of the marginalized communities and disabled persons for the purpose of preventing stigmatization of such groups, 10 videos witnessed the violation of employment rights, 3 videos were related to education-related topics, 16 videos pinpointed the existence of fake news and misinformation in various areas and 16 videos were dealing with the culture and issues of cultural workers. Foundation IDEA signed a Memorandum of Cooperation with nine local media<sup>19</sup> through which the documentary films and videos were presented to the local television audience. The success of the team Vidi Vaka (See Now) of the Foundation IDEA was verified with the reception of numerous awards for investigative journalism, innovative media products and solutions, journalistic articles on inclusive reporting as well as reporting on environmental issues.

**Association for Supporting Marginalized Workers Star-STAR** (Star-Star) implemented activities directed towards helping the sex-worker community in dealing with the health, social and economic consequences from the Covid-19 crisis. Fund-raising humanitarian activities were organized to help sex-workers and their families, including single mothers who survive exclusively from the income generated from sex-work. The 2,000 USD funds raised were used to buy and distribute a total of 75 foodstuffs, 52 vouchers for hygienic and personal protection and 35 sets for the children and families of sex-workers in Skopje, Strumica and Gostivar<sup>20</sup>. By creating and promoting a video, the campaign "Donate, Do Not Discriminate!"<sup>21</sup> was organized raising additional funds used for purchasing seven vouchers for the families of sex-

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<sup>17</sup><http://www.esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacii/2021/1/ProaktivnaTransparentnost%20022021.pdf>

<sup>18</sup><http://www.esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikacii/2021/1/ReaktivnaTransparentnost%20022021.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> TVM Ohrid, Kiss Menada – Tetovo and Gostivar, TV Edo – Skopje, TV Koha – Gostivar and Tetovo, TV Kocani LD, Kanal 8 – Kocani, TV Protep Probishtip, TV Kaltrina Struga and M Net HD – Shtip.

<sup>20</sup><https://starsexwork.org/%d0%ba%d0%be%d0%b2%d0%b8%d0%b4-19-%d1%81%d0%be%d0%bb%d0%b8%d0%b4%d0%b0%d1%80%d0%bd%d0%be%d1%81%d1%82-%d1%81%d0%b5%d0%b3%d0%b0/>

<sup>21</sup><https://starsexwork.org/%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%80%d0%b0%d1%98%d0%bd%d0%b5%d0%b4%d0%b8%d1%81%d0%ba%d1%80%d0%b8%d0%bc%d0%b8%d0%bd%d0%b8%d1%80%d0%b0%d1%98-%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%b1%d1%80%d0%be%d1%82%d0%b2%d0%be%d1%80%d0%bd/>

workers at greatest risk. A humanitarian online auction "Action for Reaction"<sup>22</sup> was also realized, raising additional 34,600 denars which were distributed in the form of 25 vouchers and 16 humanitarian sets with foodstuffs and hygiene products.

For the purpose of advancing and protecting the rights of sex-workers, two regional centers were established led by the sex-workers active in Gostivar and Strumica. These centers provided 241 paralegal services and 13 cases of human rights violations of this community were documented and completed. Legal support and assistance for these cases was secured by the legal teams of the civic organizations Coalition Margins and HOPS. Aiming at decriminalizing sex-work in North Macedonia, a creative public performance titled "POP-UP Dinner" was organized with sex-workers and representatives from public institutions presenting the problems encountered on daily basis by the members of this community, along with their demands and the potential solutions that could contribute to the improvement of the social and economic status of sex-workers.

In accordance with the protection protocols, under the moto "Decriminalization, When?" and supported by approximately 100 persons, the Red Umbrella March was organized for the fourteenth time to mark the International Day Combating Violence against Sex-workers on 17<sup>th</sup> December delivering ten messages on the need for decriminalization of sex-work in North Macedonia. 12 monthly e-editions of the magazine "S-Work"<sup>23</sup> with 7,151 visits of the wider public were prepared. May 2021, on the occasion of 10<sup>th</sup> jubilee of the establishment of Star-Star, the publication "Decade for Intensity, Transparency and Accountability of Sex-workers 2010 – 2020"<sup>24</sup> was presented.

**Coalition Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities MARGINS, Skopje** (Margins) worked on the protection and respect for basic human rights of marginalized communities, with a focus of LGBTI, drug-users, sex-workers, people living with HIV and marginalized women.

Connected with combatting sexual violence on the Internet, Margins was active in the Western Balkans regional initiative support by 137 civic organizations that resulted with a joint statement of women-activists for human rights<sup>25</sup>. Related to the case "Public Room", Margins were involved in the organization of a public protest thereby delivering two demands to the Basic Public Prosecution and the Ministry of Internal Affairs for urgent action in the cases, while the expert teams of Margins secured legal and psycho-social assistance and support to the victims of sexual violence.

Monitoring media reporting, demeaning contents was identified for the marginalized communities. The legal team of Margins in partnership with the Macedonian Association of Young Lawyers initiated a procedure in front of the Commission for

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<sup>22</sup><https://starsexwork.org/tag/%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0-%D0%B7%D0%B0-%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B0%D0%BA%D1%86%D0%B8%D1%98%D0%B0/>

<sup>23</sup><https://starsexwork.org/category/swork-magazine/>

<sup>24</sup>[https://starsexwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/report\\_WEB-2.pdf](https://starsexwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/report_WEB-2.pdf)

<sup>25</sup><http://coalition.org.mk/archives/11767?lang=en>

Prevention and Protection of Discrimination (CPPD) related to the original text (column) "Sorry, gay friends, it's not about hormones, it's about logic!" published on the portals [www.misli.mk](http://www.misli.mk), [www.temite.mk](http://www.temite.mk) and [www.tribuna.mk](http://www.tribuna.mk) that incited explicit hate speech for marginalized communities. After receiving the positive opinion from CPPD confirming that the published texts were humiliating in terms of sexual orientation and gender identity, the media contents were retracted from the portals. In addition, an appeal was submitted to CPPD for published contents on the portal [www.dokaz.mk](http://www.dokaz.mk) that excited sexual harassment. In partnership with Vidi Vaka (See Now), a video article was developed titled "Tireless Struggle for Personal Identity"<sup>26</sup>, with the support of Production 360 Degrees with a title "When Institutions Promote Tolerance, but only for Hate Speech"<sup>27</sup> on the inaction of public institutions in cases connected to hate speech, acts of hatred and violence of marginalized communities. Margin's expert teams developed the study "Sexual Minorities, Gender and Media"<sup>28</sup> and presented it during the meeting with the staff of the Agency on Audio and Audio-visual Media Services. In the printed and electronic media, three different articles were devoted to the health issues of the trans-community, transphobia, and homophobia in higher education as well as the occurrence of anti-gender for trans-person movements.

Success was achieved in strategic litigation in violations of human rights of representatives of marginalized communities in front of national and international judicial institutions. In 2021, two of the cases finalized with a positive judgement from the European Court of Human Rights and for one case, a procedure was successfully launched. In front of the national courts two trans-sex workers were represented in civil proceedings for the protection of their private life, ten for legal recognition of their gender, two were victims of gender-based violence, one person from Police violence, a group of four Romas from Prilep were discriminated against from the proprietor of a catering business as well as a group of Roma women discriminated against during the provision of gynecological services. Margin's legal team documented a total of 165 cases of violated human rights of members belonging to marginalized communities out of which most important were: 45 cases as victims of gender and family-based violence, 41 cases of violation of the rights of LGBTI persons, 11 violations of the rights of children and three cases of disability infringements.

In order to publicly promote the respect for sexual and health rights of marginalized communities, the ninth weekend Skopje Pride Weekend<sup>29</sup> was organized under the title "Decadently Common: Policies of Friendship, Love and Affect"<sup>30</sup> and in many locations in Skopje the festival Queer-Culture, Arts and Queer-Theory took place.

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<sup>26</sup>[https://vidivaka.mk/neumorna-borba-za-priznaen-lichen-identitet-2/?fbclid=IwAR3FnBMQFSQ-eLeIYalc4QS79xLJ6-1Y8nAVLlrLr2IVdfKEdEzVW\\_ax8eU](https://vidivaka.mk/neumorna-borba-za-priznaen-lichen-identitet-2/?fbclid=IwAR3FnBMQFSQ-eLeIYalc4QS79xLJ6-1Y8nAVLlrLr2IVdfKEdEzVW_ax8eU)

<sup>27</sup>[https://360stepeni.mk/video-koga-institutsiite-promoviraat-tolerantsija-no-na-govorot-na-omraza/?fbclid=IwAR03igJKSQnrtCkJvyG-xS7e8Qz5LIpCbl4-1IVbyXTMVrzDpD3F2FaY4\\_k](https://360stepeni.mk/video-koga-institutsiite-promoviraat-tolerantsija-no-na-govorot-na-omraza/?fbclid=IwAR03igJKSQnrtCkJvyG-xS7e8Qz5LIpCbl4-1IVbyXTMVrzDpD3F2FaY4_k)

<sup>28</sup><http://coalition.org.mk/archives/11818>

<sup>29</sup><https://skopjepride.mk>

<sup>30</sup>[http://coalition.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Skopje-Pride-Weekend-2021\\_programa\\_final\\_web.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Y5sWDbv-WEft0SFLI4XvSbpTvAFWVZ36n1-zMvE7v-rkZeH6P6cbnMzg](http://coalition.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Skopje-Pride-Weekend-2021_programa_final_web.pdf?fbclid=IwAR1Y5sWDbv-WEft0SFLI4XvSbpTvAFWVZ36n1-zMvE7v-rkZeH6P6cbnMzg)



To promote the rights of transgender persons, Trans Remembrance Day was organized in partnership with the non-formal group TransForm and Star-Star along with the research titled "Assessment of Compatibility of Current Preventive Healthcare Services with the Needs of the Transgender Persons in the RNM"<sup>31</sup>. Foodstuffs and hygiene packs were distributed to socially deprived members of the transgender community hit by the health crisis. A brochure<sup>32</sup> providing answers to frequently asked questions regarding the transformation process that transgender persons go through was also developed.

To accomplish a systemic solution of the problem with discriminatory contents in the textbooks for primary and secondary school and to improve education in terms of equality, non-discrimination, and inclusion, cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Bureau for Development of Education on the basis of a respective Memoranda of Cooperation was concluded in 2021. The legal team drafted 17 amendments actively advocating for the development of the draft-law on textbooks and other teaching and didactical material in primary and secondary education, including the two amendments drafted for the changes made to the Law on the Bureau for Development of Education aiming at eliminating discriminatory contents in textbooks. Margins was the leader of the coordinated action mobilizing 44 civic organizations for the support of the new draft-law on textbooks promoting the creation of discrimination-free teaching contents and knowledge thereby advocating inclusiveness and equality<sup>33</sup>. An appeal was submitted to the CPPD related to multiple gender harassment, sexual orientation, gender identity and social origin of marginalized communities in the third-year sociology textbook for reformed gymnasium education.

In order to adopt a comprehensive legal framework for legal gender recognition and adopting a Law on Legal Gender Recognition, Margins was the coordinator of the working group advocating for the adoption of the Law on Gender Equality and submitted draft amendments and solutions for improving the draft-law. An open letter<sup>34</sup> was sent to political parties to initiate the issue of gender balance of members of councilors of local elections 2021. In partnership with the LGBTI Support Center, working meetings were successfully organized for the adoption of the Action Plan 2021-2023 of the Inter-party Parliamentary Group for Improving LGBTI Rights within the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.

**Association HOPS – Healthy Options Project Skopje** (HOPS) continued to work on improving health rights of marginalized communities, with special focus on drug-users, minors using psychotropic substances and sex-workers. In 2021, after

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<sup>31</sup>[https://starsexwork.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/brifing\\_mk.pdf?fbclid=IwAR28R8EAZ0SyKjcFGT0ioFc6yNxC-scpXHNly6a7oKw6GBrFoyHKEWgQ3tI](https://starsexwork.org/wpcontent/uploads/2021/10/brifing_mk.pdf?fbclid=IwAR28R8EAZ0SyKjcFGT0ioFc6yNxC-scpXHNly6a7oKw6GBrFoyHKEWgQ3tI)

<sup>32</sup>[https://starsexwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/broshura\\_MK.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3EwGztuDOS\\_ymcHamvP-XWsqzU-ibs0D4etJfk-Y7xESWqC2cbOL4a2g](https://starsexwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/broshura_MK.pdf?fbclid=IwAR3EwGztuDOS_ymcHamvP-XWsqzU-ibs0D4etJfk-Y7xESWqC2cbOL4a2g)

<sup>33</sup><http://coalition.org.mk/archives/11792>

<sup>34</sup>[http://coalition.org.mk/archives/11873?fbclid=IwAR1UIINaVvr5exisRJq93S\\_fDBZwHpZDFr cf-E4kr3rRw1upivEC-PIivfy](http://coalition.org.mk/archives/11873?fbclid=IwAR1UIINaVvr5exisRJq93S_fDBZwHpZDFr cf-E4kr3rRw1upivEC-PIivfy)

years-long advocacy work, HOPS in partnership with several civic organizations through the Ministry of Health managed to secure increased budgetary resources for the implementation of the HIV Prevention Program from 87,7 to 125 million denars out of which at least 10% should be used for activities of civic organizations aiming at decreasing the harm inflicted from drug-use, with special focus on prevention of sex-workers. In addition, HOPS managed to advocate for amendments in the Law on Health Protection thereby securing institutionalization and ongoing funding of the HIV Prevention Program by the Ministry of Health. Recommendations were submitted for the attention of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy for the development of Guidelines on Standards for Receiving License for Implementing the Program for Supporting Sex-workers and their families as well as the Program for Rehabilitation and Reintegration of Persons Facing Drug-addictions.

HOPS in partnership with Margins and STAR-STAR submitted an Initiative for decriminalization of sex-work. Participating in a mixed working group, HOPS proposed amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of North Macedonia for the purpose of decriminalization of sex-work. A creative performance was organized by the sex-worker community and a press-conference took place marking the International Day of Sex-workers

Upon the invitation of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, HOPS representatives participated in the working group for drafting the amendments and supplements of the legislation on decriminalization, legalization, and utilization of medical, social, and economic benefits of the use of cannabis. HOPS expert teams were involved in the development of the National Drugs Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia 2021-2025 and the Action Plan 2021-2023 for its implementation thereby securing the possibility for developing quality programs for treating drug-addictions in accordance with the gender, age, type of drug and the actual needs of the drug-users. The monography titled "Hemp in Macedonia" was published thereby providing scientific, historic and cultural facts on the hemp i.e., the cannabis plant, which was significant for many people and communities, including those who lived or are still living on the territory of North Macedonia.

After several years of advocacy work, partial financial sustainability was secured for the harm reduction programs by establishing a separate fund from the profit generated by the companies that produce and trade cannabis as stipulated in the new Law on Control of Narcotic Drugs<sup>35</sup>. HOPS continued to monitor the spending of planned budgets for harm reduction and advocate for allocation of some of the revenue from excise and other public charges of the production and sales of tobacco and alcohol to be directed for the support of harm reduction programs and activities. Prior to the local elections 2021, a round-table discussion was organized with the candidates for mayor of the City of Skopje where HOPS advocated for financial support from the municipal budgets for activities of the civic organizations related to social and health services for marginalized communities.

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<sup>35</sup> The Law on Narcotic Drugs has not been adopted yet by the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia.



In health crisis conditions, the legal support activities and the legal empowerment of sex-workers and drug-users was enabled by telephone, on-the-spot-visits, and physical meetings with clients in exceptional cases and enabled double the number of services compared to 2020. Through HOPS harm reduction program, in both drop-in centers in the municipalities Kisela Voda and Shuto Orizari, 1,544 services for a total of 114 clients were provided.

Legal empowerment of communities took place in the daily center for support of sex-workers and their families, and a total of 741 services were rendered to 66 different clients. Most services provided were from the area of criminal law, administrative law, and family law. Ten (10) cases of human rights violations of sex-workers were documented and in six cases gender identity discrimination was evident whereas in the additional four cases the sex-workers were victims of family violence. HOPS paralegal team active in Skopje identified 86 new drug-users and enabled a total of 685 paralegal services out of which 383 for drug-users and 302 for sex-workers. Most significant problems and violated rights were in the area of gender-based violence and family violence, access to health services and social protection.

Albeit the working restrictions, on-the-spot and institutional work with children drug-users, street children or social risk children continued. During on-the-spot work, 35 drug-using children with the need for medical treatment not available in our country due to the non-existent of harm reduction program for minors were registered. Through HOPS's harm reduction program, 1,054 different clients were provided with psyche-social support and legal advice.

In 2021, HOPS legal team continued with strategic litigation of 12 cases – five of them were completed or terminated, six are still active in the national courts and one case is in front of the European Court of Human Rights.

To advance the health, social and economic status of the Roma, FOSM supported nine organizations<sup>36</sup> active in 14 municipalities<sup>37</sup> with large Roma communities that delivered approximately 7,402 legal and paralegal services in the course of 2021. Compared with 2020, when 5,598 legal and paralegal services were provided, more than 30% increase could be observed for citizens of these communities. Most often, the Roma, single parents, low-income workers, persons with no income, employees in the non-formal economy, women, social transfer receivers and low-benefit pensioners were those who requested assistance. Most frequent violations were identified in the following areas: health insurance rights, healthcare and patient rights, social and children's protection, economic empowerment, employment and self-employment, support to Roma families within the education system, access to the Government's anti-crisis financial measures, acquiring personal documentation and registration in the Birth Register, social and Misdemeanor Law, property rights

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<sup>36</sup> NGO KHAM - Delcevo, IRIZ – Initiative for Development and Inclusion of Communities, Romano Cacipe, Station LET – Prilep, Sonce Tetovo, HERA, Initiative for the Rights of Women from Shuto Orizari, LIL Skopje, NRC – Kumanovo.

<sup>37</sup> Skopje, Delchevo, Pehcevo, Vinica, Shuto Orizari, Prilep, Dolneni, Krivogashtani, Karposh, Gjorche Petrov, Saraj, Tetovo, Gostivar, Kumanovo.

and communal services. At the same time, humanitarian packs were distributed to 213 poor families.

FOSM secured constant support and coordination of a 12-organization group to proceed with their outreach activities and help vulnerable citizens of the Roma community. During 2021, a total of 28 online coordination meetings took place sharing current events and responding to common requests and reactions to competent institutions. On the basis of received information, a total of eight requests were sent aiming to improve access to healthcare and the right to health of the citizens of Shuto Orizari. Most significant were the following demands: opening gynecological clinic in the Municipality Shuto Orizari, hiring two family doctors and two pediatricians within the Unit for Preventive Healthcare for Pre-school Children in Shuto Orizari Polyclinic, employing Roma health professionals, on-call services in Polyclinic Shuto Orizari, First Aid Unit and services for consulting specialists and diagnostic healthcare in the municipal Polyclinic. A press-conference was also organized stressing the lack of family doctors in the Polyclinic Shuto Orizari. As a result, from advocacy and with the financial support of the Municipality Shuto Orizari, within the period of six months, the gynecological clinic became operational in Shuto Orizari. Towards the end of 2021, a private healthcare institution was established enabling access to family doctor for the citizens of Shuto Orizari.

22 videos were developed and published out of which [18 were personal testimonies](#) of receivers of guaranteed minimum assistance whose accounts were illegally blocked by bailiffs, and other videos related to [benefits for assistance and care of another person](#), [stimulating the community to vaccinate against Covid-19](#), [problems encountered by the women in Shuto Orizari](#) and [lack of gynecological clinic and family doctors](#). An [interactive video](#) was also developed with an imaginary discussion with the Minister of Health addressing the health problems of Roma women.

The [Community Assessment Map for 2021](#) was published with access to reproductive health related services for Roma women in Shuto Orizari during pregnancy, child-birth and in the first few months of motherhood as well as the results from the research [Utilizing the rights of social and children's protection by the Roma community](#) publicly launched for stakeholders and representatives of relevant institutions.

A response was drafted and sent to competent institutions, including a public statement on the case "Roma Public Room" where Roma women were victims of sexual harassment through the Internet as well as victims of hate speech. In addition, two appeals were submitted to the Commission for Prevention and Protection of Discrimination. The first appeal was related to the restricted right to drinking water of the Roma community "Three Acacias" in Prilep, while the second one to the discriminatory relations and disabled access to the city pool "Markovi Kuli" for which the Commission determined intersectoral discrimination.

With the support received in 2020 from the Joint Rapid Response Fund on Covid-19, five<sup>38</sup> associations continued to provide free of charge legal and paralegal aid for textile workers in the period January - July 2021. In this period the associations secured a total of 703 legal and administrative as well as 43 paralegal services for the citizens of 11 towns<sup>39</sup>. Most often the support was provided for issues related to violations of worker's rights, social protection, using anti-crisis measures, debts, and execution. Fifteen (15) requests for secondary legal aid were submitted, out of which 10 cases have already been completed in the basic courts.

Three open debates took place to inform the workers on their rights in case of unemployment, nonformal employment and use of anti-crisis measures of the Government. At the same time, 12 settlements were visited where informative and educational material was distributed to the citizens. In addition, workers were trained on the concept of discrimination on the job and protection from such violations by means of the protective mechanisms available.

Seven educational videos were developed and published on: [Realization and protection of the rights in a procedure in front of employers](#); [Rights in case of unemployment](#); [Excising social protection rights in case of unemployment](#); [Cessation due to business reasons](#); [Legal rights in case of cessation and expectations from the new Law on Working Relations](#), [Overtime and unpaid work](#); [Precarious workers and employees with time-bound contracts](#).

For the violation of worker's rights, 30 protection procedures were initiated in front of the State Labor Inspectorate, out of which 14 had a positive outcome, seven were negative and nine initiatives were not completed until the end of the project. Most of the initiatives were salary related – not paid salaries and payroll contributions, reduced salary or nonregulated payment of salary, unpaid supplements for working on holidays or on a Sunday, not respecting the measures for prevention and protection of Covid-19 thereby violating the principle of safety at the workplace, administrative assistance, violation of the right to annual holiday, terminating work contracts, paying salaries below the legal minimum and other infringements.

Two cases of strategic litigation could be identified; one initiated in 2020 with the last hearing in December 2021, while the another scheduled for June 2022. The procedure reached the phase of presenting evidence and consequently the court has already violated the principle of urgency of working disputes i.e., the six-month deadline for decision-making from the date of submission. The second case has been completed in favor of the party. It was a working relations dispute for pension and disability insurance rights i.e., the employer had not paid payroll contributions (due to pandemic reasons) for an employee who had retired.

To achieve sustainability of the services provided by the authorized associations rendering free of charge legal aid, a request was drafted, sent and a meeting took

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<sup>38</sup> EHO - Educational Humanitarian Organization - Shtip; National Roma Center - Kumanovo; Helsinki Committee on Human Rights - Skopje; Youth Cultural Center – Bitola and Izbor - Strumica

<sup>39</sup> Skopje, Bitola, Demir Hisar, Prilep, Kumanovo, Shtip, Strumica, Valandovo, Kochani, Sveti Nikole and Vinica.

place with the Minister of Justice for the purpose of efficient implementation of the public call and for increasing the Budget allocated to supporting associations.

The **project Access to Justice for the Most Marginalized** continued its implementation in the period January – October 2021. The project is funded by the European Union and implemented by FOSM in partnership with HOPS – Health Options Project Skopje and Association for Legal Education and Transparency STATION (LET Station) from Prilep. Only in 2021, 3,127 legal and paralegal services were delivered to more than 1,000 citizens of marginalized communities. Most often the citizens had queries for issues related to social protection, employment rights, health insurance, economic measures for financial assistance to citizens, family relations, discrimination, family violence etc. The services were provided by legal and paralegal experts by applying various tools such as: on-the-spot visits, telephone, online platforms, and counselling in the premises of the associations. In addition, a mobile office was established for providing legal and paralegal assistance by a team of lawyers/paralegals visiting rural communities and providing advice to citizens who did not have access to the institutions.

Ten educational workshops were organized on topics of interest to the citizens. The workshops were visited by 360 citizens from three municipalities. 8<sup>th</sup> March was marked with a video podcast stressing the shortcomings in the operation of the institutions in cases when family violence and gender-based violence was reported.

Two workshops were organized to improve the knowledge of the current paralegals as well as two trainings for representatives of the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Ongoing creative workshops were also organized for sex-workers producing two audio podcasts, a Manifesto, banner, and a comic.

In the work of the partner-organizations, three systemic shortcomings were identified and three urgent interventions were sent: on the non-compliance of the stated deadline for payment of subsidies for marked bovine and bee colonies; multiannual delay in the citizenship procedure; delay in the procedure for scanning registers for electronic evidence due to which the Registers of the Administration for Register Books (ARB) - Regional Office Prilep were kept in the seat of the ARB in Skopje for almost a whole month. Additional eight strategic litigation cases were identified related to violation of rights that led to the provision of court representation.

The website [www.pravnozajakni.mk](http://www.pravnozajakni.mk) continued to serve as a resource center for sharing information, advice and educational material related to access to justice. In the lifetime of the project three publications were developed and distributed: [Report on the application of the Law on Free Legal Aid in the period October 2019 – December 2020](#), [Analysis of monitoring the implementation of the sustainable development goal 16.3](#) and [Report on violated human rights of marginalized communities through case-studies](#).

FOSM along with its project-partners participated actively in the development of the Fifth National Action Plan on Open Government Partnership related to the priority area Access to Justice.

Recognizing FOSM's commitment and the accomplished results, the Delegation of the European Union in the Republic of North Macedonia extended its support for the project Access to Justice for the Most Marginalized for the period January 2022 - July 2023.

At the end of 2020, FOSM secured support for five associations<sup>40</sup> to implement **social-economic activities** in the course of 2021 and made its services sustainable. All associations were supported and mentored by CEED-hub for the purpose of developing successful business plans, implementing them but also learning new digital marketing and sales skills. As part of the support the following were established: Club 5, Hopi Modular, Drive and Committee. The associations successfully organized over 50 events in the premises of Club 5 and the Committee, and these premises were also let as co-working space. Further, on the platform [pogon.mk](http://pogon.mk) 16 shops were registered with the possibility to sell their products, out of which 14 were non-formal. The Hopi Modular product was developed as green work post available for purchases on the website [hopimodular.mk](http://hopimodular.mk), including other products made from recycled materials also available on the website. In addition, cooperation was established with Roma seamstresses sewing scarfs and masks with Roma motifs. Total revenue of approximately 18,000 denars was generated from the economic-social services. They were invested in funding some of the legal and paralegal services provided by the associations.

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<sup>40</sup> Station L.E.T, ESE, HOPS, LGBTI Support Center and Association of Roma Lawyers.

Grant Letter	Amount
Grant Number OR2021-77806	\$2,213,649
Grant Number OR2021-83443	\$1,528,696
Grant Number OR2021-83494	\$150,000
4 Network Allocatios issued after deadline - Grant Letter will be signed in 2022	\$696,766
Total	\$4,589,111
FPOS Rollover2020/2021	\$336,699
FPOS Rollover 2021/2022	-\$644,799
Total FPOS Budget spent in 2021	\$4,281,011
<b>Financial Reporting Package 2021</b>	
Contribution Revenue from FPOS as per FRP 2021	\$4,287,381
Forex Loss/Gain	-\$6,370
Total	\$4,281,011

I declare that I am authorized to sign this report on behalf of the above organization, that I have examined the foregoing statements and to the best of my knowledge they are true, correct and complete.

BY: Ljiljana Ristevska, Head of Finance and Human Resources



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Date: April12, 2022



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