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Replies of North Macedonia to the list of issues in relation to its fifth periodic report*

[Date received: 12 December 2025]

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



List of Abbreviations

Ombudsman	Office of the Ombudsman
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MoH	Ministry of Health
SCPC	State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption
MoF	Ministry of Finance
MoI	Ministry of the Interior
MTC	Ministry of Transport and Communications
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
CC	Criminal Code
MSPDY	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth
MEPP	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
MAFWE	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy
CWC	Social Work Centre
GMA	Guaranteed Minimum Assistance

General information

Reply to Paragraph 2 of the list of issues (E/C.12/MKD/Q/5)

1. In preparing legislative provisions or documents, competent authorities consistently ensure that such provisions are harmonized with international standards or that they are aligned with provisions of instruments to which the State is a party, i.e., international instruments that the country has ratified.
2. In this context, the preparation of the Fifth Periodic Report involved active involvement of all relevant institutions, in accordance with their respective competencies.

Reply to Paragraph 3 (a) of the list of issues

3. The Republic of North Macedonia, regularly prepares and reports all documents which are requested by the UNFCCC on a project basis, following UNFCCC requirements.
4. Explicit assessment of the enjoyment of economic, social, and cultural rights, particularly for marginalized and disadvantaged individuals and groups have not been assessed so far, but several cross-cutting assessments were done.
5. Climate change issues are incorporated into the Law on Environment, including details on the preparation of GHG emissions inventories as well as an action plan on measures and activities to abate the increase of GHG emissions and to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change.
6. The First, Second, Third and Forth National Communication on Climate Change were adopted by the Government and submitted to the UNFCCC Secretariat in 2003, 2008, 2014 and 2021, respectively. These communications provide technical climate projections (temperature, precipitation, extreme events) and identify sectors exposed to risk. These highlight to the international community the steps the country has taken towards mainstreaming climate change issues into policies and processes.
7. In addition, three Biennial Update Reports (BURs) have been carried out (the last in 2021) to build on the findings and recommendations of the National Communications, as well as the outcomes of the ongoing complementary projects in the country.
8. Enhanced Nationally determined contribution was submitted in 2021, too. Socio-Economic Assessment, including COVID-19 impact assessment, NDC & SDG synergies and trade-offs in Macedonian conditions, Incorporating the voices of youth in the Enhanced NDC and Macedonian Gender and Climate change indicators were developed, too.
9. North Macedonia has adopted a Long-Term Strategy on Climate Action (2020–2050), with sectoral targets and a vision of increasing resilience of society, ecosystems, and the economy. That Strategy explicitly recognizes that climate change impacts should be considered across many sectors (water resources, agriculture, biodiversity, human health, cultural heritage). It also states (in its adaptation component) the objective “to define and develop a system to monitor socio-economic vulnerability to climate change”, recognizing the importance of gender mainstreaming in climate policy, noting that “climate change negative impacts are increasing the already existing gender inequality.”
10. The country is implementing a project (funded via Green Climate Fund / UNDP) entitled “*Improving resilience ... by integrating adaptation planning processes.*” This aims to strengthen institutional capacity, better data and tools, and integrate adaptation into national and sectoral planning in priority areas including transport, agriculture, water resources, forestry, and cultural heritage. It is intended to produce the first National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for North Macedonia.
11. Specifically, in the IV NCCC, a livelihood vulnerability approach was used to measure the exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity of different regions and municipalities in country. The findings confirm that the human capacity to cope with the effects of climate change is not equally dispersed and varies greatly across the municipalities,

especially in line with indicators on primary education (almost 40% variation) and people engaged in agriculture (50% variation). Policy response options should account for the uneven distribution of impacts across different territorial units and ultimately the affected population in different regions and municipalities.

12. As per IV NCCC, women are more vulnerable to climate change due to existing gender inequalities and disproportionate levels of poverty, which can become exacerbated from the impacts of climate change. As part of this National Communication process, a series of reports and recommendations were developed for dealing with gender and climate change in a cross-cutting manner.

Reply to Paragraph 3 (c) of the list of issues

13. The Ministry of Health, within the health sector, coordinates the processes of mitigation and adaptation related to climate change. The Institute of Public Health plays a key role in preparing documents and assessments on health risks arising from climate change, while close cooperation is also maintained with the Institute of Occupational Medicine, primarily in the area of protecting workers' health, as well as with the Emergency Medical Services in addressing urgent health conditions caused by climate change, particularly extreme heat.

14. In 2025, the Government adopted the updated Action Plan for Preventing the Health Impacts of Heatwaves on the Citizens. Furthermore, an assessment was carried out regarding greenhouse gas emissions from the health sector, and measures are being implemented to reduce the sector's overall contribution to these emissions. Activities are also being undertaken in health facilities to promote the use of renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, and replace heating systems based on fossil fuels, among other measures.

15. The Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MEPP) is the key governmental body responsible for development of climate change policies. The MEPP has been designated as the National Focal Point to the UNFCCC and the National Authority for the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. The UNFCCC Gender and Climate Change Focal point has been nominated from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. The Cabinet of Prime Minister is a Designated National authority to the Green Climate Fund.

16. Climate change issues are incorporated into the Law on Environment, including details on the preparation of GHG emissions inventories as well as an action plan on measures and activities to abate the increase of GHG emissions and to mitigate the adverse impacts of climate change. Future Law on Climate Action puts overall coordination under the MEPP, including coordination on reporting obligations on adaptation.

17. So far, the adaptation component was covered by the National Communication on Climate Change and other sectoral strategies (in health, agriculture, and other sectors). The long-term strategy on Climate Action considers adaptation aspects too, although these actions have limited scope and are focused on the priority adaptation aspects identified in the framework of the Forth National Communication on Climate Change.

18. Adaptation actions are covered by the draft Law on Climate Action, too, in accordance with the Energy Governance Regulation and its implementing regulation.

19. These are the principal actors in institutional landscape for climate adaptation, disaster risk management, and sectoral resilience.

<i>Institution / body</i>	<i>Main mandate / relevant legal authority</i>	<i>Sectoral adaptation / climate role</i>	<i>Notes / caveats</i>
(MEPP)	National ministry responsible for environment, ecosystems, spatial planning, climate policy, regulation	Core lead for climate policy, adaptation strategy, coordinating cross-sectoral climate planning (mitigation and adaptation)	The Law on Environment and future Law on Climate Action puts overall coordination under the MEPP. The Long-Term Strategy, NCCC, BURs on Climate Action places overall coordination of the Strategy under MEPP.
MAFWE	Oversees agriculture, forestry, water resources, rural development	Key in adaptation in agriculture (drought resilience, water use, crop choices, irrigation), forestry (fire, pests), watershed management	Because agriculture and water are heavily climate-sensitive sectors, the ministry must implement adaptation measures in those domains
MoH	Public health, disease control, environmental health monitoring	Responsible for climate-related health adaptation (heat waves, vector-borne diseases, air quality impacts, health system resilience)	It works with the Republic Institute for Health Protection (public health agency) for monitoring and advisory functions.
Local / municipal governments	Municipal legal authority over housing, land use, local services, infrastructure	Implementation of adaptation in housing, local water drainage, building codes, local disaster response, local climate resilience measures	The national adaptation planning project emphasizes strengthening capacity at local levels.
Protection and Rescue Directorate (PRD)	Operates under the Law on Protection and Rescue; part of disaster / civil protection architecture	In disaster risk reduction, emergency preparedness, rescue; contributes to adaptation by reducing vulnerability and managing hazards	In peer reviews, PRD is seen as having a leading role in natural hazard coordination.
Crisis Management Centre (CMC)	Under the Law on Crisis Management; monitors risks, coordinates crisis response, national risk assessment	Early warning, threat assessment, coordination of responses when scale exceeds protection & rescue capacity	The Law on Crisis Management mandates a national risk assessment and sets up structures for coordination and resource allocation during crises.

<i>Institution / body</i>	<i>Main mandate / relevant legal authority</i>	<i>Sectoral adaptation / climate role</i>	<i>Notes / caveats</i>
State Inspectorate of Environment and Nature (within MEPP)	Regulatory / enforcement responsibility for environmental law compliance	Could enforce environmental/climate adaptation regulation (e.g. compliance with land-use, flood protection rules, pollution controls)	It is separate but within the environmental ministry's institutional structure.
Public enterprises / sectoral agencies (e.g. National Forests "Makedonski Šumi")	Sectoral public enterprises in forestry, water management, etc.	On-the-ground management of ecosystems, forests (which serve as buffers vs. climate impacts)	These agencies can contribute to nature-based adaptation and ecosystem resilience.
National adaptation / climate projects (e.g. UNDP / GCF projects)	Implementing agencies under international funding	They provide technical assistance, pilot adaptation measures, capacity building across sectors	For example, the "Improving Resilience" project supports adaptation in agriculture, water, heritage, transport.

Reply to Paragraph 4 of the list of issues

20. Amendments to the Law on the Ombudsman have been prepared, regulating actions and measures for the execution of the Ombudsman's mandate with respect to monitoring the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol. The said amendments further envisage the establishment of a National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, having the mandate of undertaking the following actions and measures:

- Monitoring the overall activities undertaken by state institutions in the fight against trafficking in human beings and illegal migration;
- Collecting and analysing data (both qualitative and quantitative information) from relevant institutions;
- Participating in the work of the National Commission for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration; and
- Monitoring and evaluation of the implemented legislative and policy measures with a view to enhancing institutional responses, as well as monitoring the implementation of the National Action Plan.

21. A mechanism has been established to ensure that the recommendations of the Ombudsman are duly followed and implemented by all state authorities, in full compliance with the law and in line with the principle of accountability.

22. On a quarterly basis, the Government adopts official information, i.e., reports submitted by the General Secretariat concerning actions taken in response to communications and recommendations addressed by the Ombudsman to the Government, state administration bodies, and other institutions and entities having with public authority. These reports include a disaggregated overview of data by thematic area.

23. In 2024, out of a total of 1,999 cases in which the Ombudsman instituted proceedings, violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms were established in 743 cases, amounting to 37% of the total number of cases.

24. Out of a total number of 743 cases in which the Ombudsman established violations and undertook all legally prescribed actions, in 556 cases, or 74.83%, state administration bodies, other competent authorities, and entities having public mandate accepted the Ombudsman's interventions. In 152 cases, or 20.46%, all legal remedies and procedures were exhausted. In 35 cases, or 4.71%, although a violation was established and a recommendation was submitted, a response from the competent authority is still pending.

Reply to Paragraph 5 of the list of issues

25. In the course of 2024, a total of 2,670 individuals received primary legal aid through Regional Offices for Free Legal Aid, under the Ministry of Justice.

26. In the same reporting period, a total of 230 applications for secondary legal aid were submitted, of which 174 were approved, while 40 applications were rejected.

27. The most frequently submitted requests for both primary and secondary legal aid in 2024 pertained to the following legal areas: property matters, divorce proceedings, issuance of protective measures for victims of domestic violence, child protection, determination of paternity, etc.

Reply to Paragraph 6 (a) of the list of issues

28. According to the most recently published data from the Survey on Income and Living Conditions for 2022, conducted by the State Statistical Office and released in March 2025, the poverty rate stands at 22.9%. Prior to accounting for social benefits, 41.6% of the population were exposed to the risk of poverty. Children and youth aged 0–17 years face a markedly higher poverty rate, amounting to 31.5%, compared with other age groups (21.6% among persons aged 18–64 and 16.7% among those aged 65 and over). Disaggregated by household type, the poverty rate among households composed of two adults with two dependent children reached 27.2% in 2022. With respect to most frequent economic activity status, the poverty rate among employed persons stood at 8.9%, while the poverty rate among retired persons was 9.9%. Significantly higher poverty rates were observed among the unemployed, as follows 48.3% and 33.9% among the economically inactive population.

Reply to Paragraph 6 (b) of the list of issues

29. The requested data pertaining to the level of equality is not publicly available on the official website of the State Statistical Office (SSO). However, the SSO publishes the following indicators:

- The Gini coefficient, and
- The income distribution inequality indicator, expressed as the S80/S20 quintile income share ratio (%).

30. In 2022, the Gini coefficient (an indicator measuring inequality in income distribution) registered a decline compared to the previous three years, amounting to 29.8%.

31. The indicator of income distribution inequality, expressed as the S80/S20 quintile income share ratio, stood at 5.4% in 2022, also reflecting a declining trend relative to prior years.

Reply to Paragraph 7 of the list of issues

32. On 8 February 2024, the mandate of the second composition of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) commenced, in line with the provisions of the Law on the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest, adopted in 2019.

33. In the 2024 fiscal year, the budget allocated to the SCPC was increased by 47% compared to the 2022 budget, with an identical budget foreseen for 2025. The number of

employees at the Secretariat was doubled in 2022, compared with 2020, with an additional four employees recruited by 2024. In February 2021, the Commission was allocated new office premises, which fully satisfy the functional and spatial requirements for the performance of its mandate.

34. As of January 2024, the electronic submission system for asset declarations and conflict of interest statements was introduced.

35. In order to perform its mandate and enhance the efficiency of its operational processes, the SCPC has introduced eight software solutions, with a total investment amounting to EUR 728,750, allocated as follows: Communication Portal; Performance Monitoring System; Mobile/Web Application for Raising Awareness on Anti-Corruption, aimed at strengthening public engagement in corruption prevention efforts; Protected Reporting System for Whistleblowers; E-learning Platform; Anti-Corruption Legislation Screening Tool; Document Management System; Registry System for Elected and Appointed Officials, including Asset Declaration and Conflict of Interest Declarations.

Reply to Paragraph 8 of the list of issues

36. In 2023, the Inter-Sectoral Body for Coordination of Activities against Corruption was reactivated, chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of good governance policies. The Body is mandated to implement measures or activities envisaged under national or international strategic or programme documents in the field of anti-corruption.

37. In line with a nomination by the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society Organizations, the Body also includes, with voting rights, a representative of a civil society organization that has continuously implemented activities in the field of prevention and the fight against corruption for at least ten years.

38. To monitor the implementation of anti-corruption policies, the MJ has developed a concept for a new statistical framework aimed at improving the centralized recording and tracking of data regarding the course of proceedings in cases of corruption, money laundering, and organized crime. This framework is based on indicators selected in accordance with the recommendations and good practices identified by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

39. The legal framework for the prevention of corruption incorporates international standards and good practices to a significant extent.

40. An inter-institutional consultation process is currently underway regarding the submitted Draft Law on Protected Reporting and Whistleblower Protection, which incorporates the most recent international standards in this area, particularly those set out in Directive (EU) 2019/1937 of the European Parliament and of the Council.

41. An increase in the interest in the regulation of lobbying has also been observed. In accordance with the Law on Lobbying, which is applied as of June 2022, three lobbying organizations with a total of five registered representatives have been entered in the Electronic Register of Lobbyists, Lobbying Organizations and Lobbying Activities.

42. The implementation of the Law on Civil Asset Confiscation commenced in September 2024. In this regard, institutional support activities have been undertaken to facilitate its application, including practical trainings and legal advisory events. The objective is to safeguard the public interest by preventing the disposal of assets and property-derived benefits for which lawful origin cannot be substantiated.

43. With regard to the Fifth Evaluation Round, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) determined that the country had satisfactorily implemented 13 out of 23 recommendations. Of the remainder, nine recommendations were deemed partially implemented, and one was assessed as not implemented.¹

¹ With regard to the Fourth Evaluation Round, GRECO concluded that the country had implemented satisfactorily or dealt with in a satisfactory manner a total of 14 out of 19 recommendations. Four

44. In the period from 2017 to 2024, a total of 412 cases were instituted, of which 62 were classified as high-profile cases, representing 15.05% of all registered cases during the reference period. In the same period, Orders for Conducting Investigations were issued in 187 cases.

45. In high-profile corruption cases, the alleged perpetrators include senior public office holders, such as a former Prime Minister, former Ministers, Mayors, Assistant Ministers, Secretaries General of the Government, the President of the State Election Commission, judges, and public prosecutors.

46. Since 2019, legal proceedings have also been instituted against current holders of public office. One such example is the completed procedure against one public prosecutor, as well as the ongoing criminal proceedings against two Secretaries General of the Government.

47. Following the conclusion of investigative procedures, a total of 110 indictments has been filed, while 120 court rulings have been issued, 51 of which are final and enforceable.

48. The majority of these proceedings concern the following criminal offences under the Criminal Code: Abuse of Official Position and Authority (Article 353), Money Laundering and Other Proceeds of Crime (Article 273), Mismanagement in Public Office (Article 353-c), Receiving a Reward for Unlawful Influence (Article 359), Receiving Bribe (Article 357), with a smaller number of cases concerning other crimes, including the crime of Fraud to the Detriment of the Financial Interests of the European Community (Article 249-a).

49. Regarding criminal sanctions imposed during the reporting period, a positive trend has been observed in both the number and variety of sanctions adjudicated.

50. Thus, in 2021, a total of 23 criminal sanctions were imposed; in 2022, 35 sanctions were imposed; in 2023, a total of 31; and in 2024, 17 criminal sanctions were pronounced.

51. In the reporting period, prison sentences were imposed as follows: three individuals were sentenced to 15 years of imprisonment each, two individuals to 12 years of imprisonment each, two individuals to 9 years imprisonment each, and two individuals to 8 years of imprisonment each.

52. A notable feature in 2024 is the imposition of pecuniary penalties ranging from a minimum of EUR 3,000 to a maximum of approximately EUR 8,000.

53. In one case, property with a total value of EUR 10,676,653 was confiscated, and a motion was submitted for the confiscation of additional assets amounting to EUR 4,753,382. In 2024, in one case, a confiscation order was issued in the amount of EUR 839,457; in another case, damage compensation order was rendered in the amount of EUR 196,862; and items with a total value of EUR 915,854 were seized.

Reply to Paragraph 9 of the list of issues

54. Pursuant to Article 14 of the Law on the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination, the Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD) was established as an independent and autonomous state authority, whereas Article 15 further defines its financial independence, stipulating that the Commission shall autonomously manage the funds allocated from the State Budget. Moreover, the specific budgetary section designated for the CPPD shall be voted upon separately by the Assembly, based on the Commission's proposal. These legal provisions are aligned with the Paris Principles governing the functioning and independence of national human rights bodies. However, in practice, the budget of the CPPD is planned and approved by the Ministry of

recommendations were assessed as partially implemented, while one remained unimplemented. The respective evaluation report has been published.

Finance (MoF), contrary to the legal provision requiring the budget to be voted upon and adopted by the Assembly upon the Commission's proposal.²

55. Approvals for employment are granted by the MoF. In accordance with such practice, the actual independence of the CPPD remains a persistent challenge. The professional service is composed of 17 staff members, who, together with the 7 Commissioners, constitute a total of 24 individuals in terms of human resources and institutional professional capacities. This situation results in a persistent shortage of personnel with respect to the implementation of the Commission's core competencies, thereby underscoring the continued and essential need for the recruitment of staff in the areas of prevention, promotion, analysis, and report preparation. The aim is to reinforce and promote the Commission's proactive role, in addition to the reactive function it has predominantly exercised over the past four years.

56. The reactive functioning of the CPPD is further supported and implemented through funds secured via participation in projects in which the Commission is a stakeholder, as well as through established cooperation with civil society and international organizations. Over the past four years, the CPPD has concluded 19 memoranda of cooperation with civil society organizations, 4 memoranda with international organizations, and 11 memoranda with public institutions, including the Ombudsman's Office. Key preventive activities implemented in 2024 are related to the electoral process, cooperation with international organizations, methodology development, public events, and initiatives:

- In connection with the elections held in 2024, the CPPD issued public appeals to the competent institutions for the elimination of discriminatory practices in the exercise of the right to vote. Recommendations were issued to ensure the accessibility of polling stations for persons with disabilities. There was monitoring of hate speech in the media, with over 50 documented cases.
- A customized online reporting form for hate speech was developed and made available on the official website of the CPPD.
- The theatrical performance entitled "8%?", addressing the issue of intersectional discrimination, was supported and performed in several cities, incorporating the personal testimonies of individuals affected.
- A Participatory Gender Audit (PGA) of the CPPD was carried out. A report was prepared containing recommendations for the integration of gender perspectives into the policies and operational practices of the CPPD.
- In cooperation with civil society organizations, a methodology for measuring discrimination was developed. Workshops were organized for defining indicators and collecting disaggregated data.
- A public event entitled "Dialogues on Equality" was held, focusing on inclusive education. Panel discussions were organized addressing the challenges faced by the Roma population, the LGBTIQ+ community, and persons with disabilities.
- The CPPD submitted a formal communication to the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) concerning the protection of pregnant teachers employed on fixed-term contracts.
- QR codes were developed to facilitate the reporting of discrimination in educational, social, and health care institutions.

57. The budget of the CPPD for 2025 amounts to MKD 32.7 million, representing an increase of 7.79% compared to the 2024 budget. This increase results from the need to align with amendments to legislative and other normative provisions, particularly in relation to the remuneration of public sector employees and holders of public office, as well as the provision of transitional allowances. Consequently, salary-related expenditures constitute 86% of the total CPPD budget. The remaining financial resources account for merely 17.73% of the projected institutional needs.

² This results in a line-item allocation of funds that circumvents the actual needs of the CPPD, thereby negatively impacting its resources, operational capacity, and the effective fulfilment of its mandate.

58. With a view to further advancing the right to equality and non-discrimination, in the forthcoming period an analysis will be conducted to assess the alignment of the Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination with the European Union acquis in the area of equality and non-discrimination. The analysis will include compliance with Directive (EU) 2024/1499 on the strengthening of equality and non-discrimination frameworks, and Directive (EU) 2024/1500 on the enhancement of mechanisms for institutional coordination and cooperation.³

59. A 2025–2026 Action Plan is currently being drafted in accordance with the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination 2022–2026. The primary objective is to ensure effective prevention and protection against discrimination, through the full respect of the principle of equality and the prohibition of discrimination against any individual and/or group of individuals, on grounds of their personal characteristics.⁴ In line with the National Strategy, all activities foreseen in the Action Plan will apply to all categories of citizens.

60. In 2024, the CPPD received four new complaints concerning discrimination based on sexual orientation and/or gender identity in the area of public information and media. Three of these cases were established, while one remains under examination. Additionally, three other cases instituted by complaints lodged in 202, the proceedings for which continued and then ended in 2024, were also confirmed. In 2024, a total of six cases were registered, involving harassing language and speech inciting, encouraging, or instructing discrimination in public informing and media against members of the LGBTI community.

Reply to Paragraph 10 of the list of issues

61. In 2025, the MSPDY prepared an Assessment of the Three-Year Progress and Impact of the Gender Equality Strategy 2022–2027. The Strategy introduces, for the first time, result-level indicators, representing a significant advancement in comparison with the previous Gender Equality Strategy for the period 2013–2020, which did not include indicators of this nature. A total of 260 indicators has been identified, 99 of which pertain to the National Action Plan on Gender Equality 2022–2024. The preparation of the second Gender Equality Action Plan for the period 2025–2027 is currently underway.

62. With regard to gender equality policies, the gender gap in employment remained unchanged in 2024, standing at 15.3%, while the gender gap in activity rates showed a slight decline, from 19.2% in 2023 to 18.7% in 2024. By the end of 2025, the Ministry, with the support of UN Women, will start the preparation of an Analysis of the Gender Pay Gap.

63. The MAFWE continuously implements targeted activities for women in rural areas. Under the 2024 Programme for Financial Support for Rural Development, which envisages a total budget of MKD 759,257,694, the following measures have been envisaged:

- Measure 115 – “Support for an active female member of an agricultural household”, which is exclusively intended for women farmers, with a maximum support amount of MKD 360,000 per beneficiary. The allocated funds for this measure amount to MKD 4,100,000;
- Measure 112 – “Assistance for young farmers to start agricultural activity”, with a total budget of MKD 12,241,000. The maximum amount of support per young farmer is MKD 600,000;
- Measure 113 – “Support to promote agricultural production”, with a total budget of MKD 2,300,000. The maximum amount of assistance per young farmer is MKD 1,200,000.

³ The recommendations resulting from this analysis will serve as a basis for the drafting of amendments and supplements to the relevant laws.

⁴ Particular attention is given to members of vulnerable social groups, including ethnic communities, women and girls, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, the elderly, children, refugees, persons with lower socio-economic status, internally displaced persons, as well as other vulnerable groups, members of religious communities, and any person subjected to differential treatment without a justified reason or legitimate aim.

64. Under the Programme for Supporting the Social Security of Women Engaged in Agricultural Activities for 2024, with a total allocated amount of MKD 6,000,000, support is also envisaged for young mothers engaged in agricultural activities, specifically for the purpose of maternity leave in the duration of nine months (per live birth), in the total amount of MKD 100,000. This represents an increase of approximately 24%, or MKD 19,000 more, compared with the previous year.

Reply to Paragraph 11 of the list of issues

65. The Operational Plan for Active Employment Programmes, Measures, and Labour Market Services for 2025 sets forth programmes, measures, and services aimed at employment promotion, with the objective of job creation and the employment of unemployed persons, with particular focus on youth, long-term unemployed individuals, and recipients of guaranteed minimum assistance.⁵

66. Under the Roma Inclusion Strategy 2022–2030, efforts will be made to increase their inclusion in active employment measures and services by introducing a quota of 5 % for their inclusion. Under the 2025 Operative Plan for Active Employment Programmes and Measures and Labour Market Services, the Roma are listed as a special category. Through the self-employment measure, young Roma aged 29 or younger may open their own business with a grant of up to 10,000 euros in denar countervalue, Roma aged over 29 may do so with a grant of 7,000 euros, two joined young Roma aged 29 or younger with a grant of 20,000 euros, one aged 29 or younger and one aged over 29 with a grant of 17,000 euros and two persons aged over 29 may open a joint business with a grant of 14,000 euros. The self-employment measure defines the participation criteria and the obligations of the unemployed persons.

67. The Law on Social Protection stipulates that when submitting a request for exercising the right to a guaranteed minimum assistance, all working-age members should be unemployed persons registered at the relevant employment centre. This encourages the participation of all working-age household members in the active employment measures to seek and gain employment.

68. The assessment of the needs and the level of employability of all registered unemployed persons from a single household is carried out by professionals at the social work centre (SWC) and the employment centre in order to select the most employable person, for whom an individual activation plan is prepared, so as to include them in the active employment measures and services taking into account their age, education, previous work experience, professional qualifications and skills acquired and the job openings on the labour market.

69. The individual activation plan is prepared by the SWC in cooperation with the employment centre and the beneficiary of guaranteed minimum assistance. The local units of the Employment Agency and the SWC electronically exchange data about the social status of the applicants/beneficiaries of social protection rights. An electronic exchange of individual plans for beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance has also been established.

70. The project “Activating Vulnerable Groups on the Labour Market”, co-funded by the EU, totalling 4.2 million euros, was carried out in the period September 2019–October 2024. The project was aimed at supporting the process of activation of beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance, the long-term unemployed, women, persons aged 29 or younger, the Roma and other vulnerable groups on the labour market.⁶ A total of 4,594 persons were

⁵ When implementing the employment programmes and measures, the principle of diversity and inclusion is respected for all social categories in the private sector in accordance with the principles of equitable and adequate representation of ethnic, gender, religious, racial or any other vulnerable categories of citizens, in compliance with UN and ILO standards and practices.

⁶ These persons were provided with: counselling and motivation services (so-called CAM programme, which includes psychosocial support before inclusion in employment measures and mentoring support during training or employment), as well as active employment measures 1) trainings in sought-after professions and crafts; 2) Workplace trainings at well-known employers; 3) Subsidised

successfully included with active programmes for increasing employability. As a result of the activities undertaken, 36 % of participants gained employment by the end of the project, while 32.4 % were employed six months after the end of the support.

71. In order to facilitate the process of activation of beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance (GMA) a new mentorship programme, which includes support for GMA beneficiaries when looking for work, connecting with the business sector and support in the initial stage of employment, will also be piloted. Among other things, mentors will cooperate closely with the SWC and the employment centres. The pilot phase will cover 120 GMA beneficiaries, at least 30 % of whom need to become employed and maintain the employment status for at least a year. Upon completion of the pilot phase, the second project for improving the social services, funded with a loan from the World Bank, is planned to activate GMA beneficiaries on a larger scale.

72. The employment of persons with disabilities is governed by the Law on Employment of Disabled Persons.⁷ The provisions of the aforesaid law envisage the following measures for improving the conditions for employment and work of a disabled person:

- Providing nonrepayable funds for permanent employment of an unemployed disabled person, adaptation of the workstation where the disabled person will work if needed and procurement of equipment;
- Tax exemption and providing funds for contributions and
- Financial support in operations.

73. In order to introduce a modern approach to employing persons with disabilities, a draft Law on Employment and Professional Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities has been prepared. The goal of this law is employment of persons with disabilities on the open labour market without discrimination and in a work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible. Professional rehabilitation is carried out through measures, services and activities that are undertaken to strengthen the capacities of, train or retrain the person with disabilities for the purpose of their employment, keeping a job or switching jobs or professions to suit their needs.

74. In 2025, the draft law will be finalised in accordance with the guidelines of the Government.

75. Persons under international protection having the status of refugees or persons under subsidiary protection have an equal right to employment as Macedonian nationals. In practice, difficulties are faced by asylum seekers who do not have a national identification number (NIN), which is issued by the MoI, and thus do not have access to the administrative and legal operations of the financial and market systems, i.e. cannot open a bank account or conclude an employment contract. Persons having the status of refugees or persons under subsidiary protection have a limited validity of the identity card, which prevents them from concluding permanent employment contracts and denies them real access to the labour market or the active employment measures. The persons for whom the Government has adopted a decision to grant temporary protection under the Law on International and Temporary Protection, such as persons from Ukraine, still do not have access to employment due to the non-harmonisation of certain laws, such as the Law on Work and Employment of Foreigners and other laws that govern the access to the socioeconomic rights by this category of persons.

76. There has been a decrease in activity on the labour market among men from 67.4 % in 2019 to 61.8% in 2024 and among women from 47.3 % to 43.7 % over the same period.⁸ The employment rate decrease is also significant: among men it decreased from 55.9 % in 2020 to 53.6 % in 2024 and among women from 39.3 % to 38.3 %. The number of registered

employment (salary subsidies); 4) Youth internship and 5) Second chance – secondary vocational education completion programme.

⁷ Official Gazette No. 44/00, 16/04, 62/05, 113/05, 29/07, 88/08, 161/08, 99/09, 136/11, 129/15, 147/15, 27/16, 99/18 and 103/21.

⁸ The difference in activity on the labour market between the sexes remains significant, with men having a greater rate of activity of about 19.2 percentage points than women.

unemployed women decreased from 78,564 in 2020 to 49,154 in 2024, which indicates improvement of employment of women and decrease of the working-age population.

Reply to Paragraph 12 of the list of issues

77. The new Law on Labour Relations is still being drafted. The longstanding work on the text of the law has been carried out and will continue with the inclusion of all stakeholders, primarily union representatives and employers, as well as representatives of the scientific community, judges, lawyers, non-governmental organisations etc., while 11 public debates have also been held across the entire country.

78. Each law or act in the socioeconomic area is mandatorily considered by the Economic and Social Council, which is the most senior forum where social dialogue takes place at the national level.

79. 6) The Law on Minimum Wage was first adopted in 2012. Since then, in March every year, the Minister of Economy and Labour, upon obtaining the opinion of the Economic and Social Council, announces the minimum wage for the current year, beginning with the salary for March.

80. The application of this law is supervised by the State Labour Inspectorate, which has a preventive and corrective role. In this regard, a total of 27 decisions concerning the non-payment of a minimum wage were adopted in 2024, with warnings being issued. In the period January–July 2025, a total of 16 decisions concerning the non-payment of a minimum wage were adopted in 2025, with warnings being issued and one criminal report filed.

Reply to Paragraph 13 (a) of the list of issues

81. At present, in accordance with the applicable legislation, trade unions, i.e. unions at the level of employers, cannot engage independently in legal transactions, i.e. they do that through higher-level unions (sectoral unions or union federations). However, in the aforesaid new law, which is being drafted, in accordance with the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No. 87) of the ILO, trade unions, i.e. unions at the level of employers, will be able to acquire legal personality independently, without prior approval from a higher union of which they are member.

Reply to Paragraph 13 (b) of the list of issues

82. Article 237 of the Law on Labour Relations stipulates that the employer may remove employees from the work process only in response to an already started strike. The number of employees removed from work may not exceed 2 % of the number of employees who take part in the strike. The employer may remove from the work process only employees who incite violent or nondemocratic behaviour that obstructs the negotiations between the employees and the employer.⁹

83. Article 239 of the law stipulates that organising or taking part in a strike organised in compliance with the provisions of this law and the collective agreement does not constitute a violation of the employment contract. An employee may not be put in a less favourable position than other employees due to organising or taking part in a strike organised in compliance with the provisions of the law and the collective agreement. An employee may be dismissed only if they have organised or taken part in a strike that is not organised in compliance with the law and the collective agreement or if during the strike they committed another gross violation of the employment contract.

84. An employee may not be forced to take part in a strike in any manner.

⁹ While employees are removed from work, the employer is obliged to pay for those employees the contributions envisaged by the special regulations for the lowest rate for payment of contributions.

Reply to Paragraph 13 (c) of the list of issues

85. Article 200 of the Law on Labour Relations stipulates that union representatives are protected from dismissal in accordance with this law. A union representative may not have their salary decreased or employment contract terminated due to union activities. While holding the office, the employer may terminate their employment contract only with prior consent from the union. If the union does not provide a response as to granting or refusing consent within eight days, it will be deemed accepting of the decision. If the union does not grant consent, the consent may be replaced by a court order. This protection lasts during the term of office and at least two years after the end of the term of office. An employee who has been elected or appointed to a union office which has been established by a statute and the performance of which requires suspension of the employee's work at the employer, their employment is in abeyance and they have the right to return to a post for performing duties that are in line with their level of education within five days from leaving the office that they held.

Reply to Paragraph 14 of the list of issues

86. The amendments to the Law on Social Protection of 2022 enabled every GMA beneficiary to receive a one-off allowance amounting to 1000 denars with the payments for the months of March, April and May 2022 for the purpose of alleviating the consequences of the economic and energy crisis and the commodity price shock in the country.

87. The Law on Financial Support of Socially Vulnerable Categories of Citizens Aimed at Dealing with the Energy Crisis was adopted, providing 3000 denars per month, or a total of 12,000 denars for 4 months, for each beneficiary of the right to: special allowance, disability allowance, social security for senior citizens, allowance for assistance and care for permanent beneficiaries of this right and single parents who are GMA beneficiaries and the special allowance beneficiaries, beneficiaries of the right to pension not exceeding 14,000 denars, beneficiaries of the right to bodily injury allowance and unemployed persons who are beneficiaries of the right to material assistance through pecuniary welfare. By March 2023, approximately 220,000 beneficiaries at risk were covered and around 21 million euros were paid.

88. The Law on Social Protection and the Law on Child Protection have also been amended: the special allowance for children with disabilities has been increased by 15 %, the age limit has been lowered for exercising the right to permanent allowance for parents who raised a child with disabilities without placing them in an institution (from 64 to 62 years of age for men and from 62 to 60 for women), inclusion of children and persons with combined disabilities in the personal assistance service has been ensured and the age limit of 65 years for using the service has been eliminated. A ruling of the Constitutional Court also eliminated the upper limit of 65 years for exercising the disability right.

89. Furthermore, social and child protection rights are aligned with living costs each year in January.

90. The Law on Financial Support of Socially Vulnerable Categories of Citizens ensured financial support for a period of five months, from December 2023 to April 2024, to persons in a socially vulnerable category of citizens, aiming to alleviate the consequences of the price crisis for the standard of living.

91. The law allocated 2000 denars per month, or a total of 10,000 denars for five months, for each beneficiary of the right to special allowance or the right to disability allowance and to single parents who are GMA beneficiaries.

92. Full-time primary and secondary school pupils whose families' total monthly net-salary incomes do not exceed 50.000 denars were also covered, with 1200 denars per month, or a total of 7200 denars for 6 months, each for primary school pupils and 1800 denars per month, or a total of 10,800 denars for 6 months, each for secondary school pupils. Full-time students who study at state universities but live in a place other than the place of study and hold a monthly intercity transportation ticket received assistance equal to the price

of the monthly intercity transportation ticket from the student's place of residence to the place of study, amounting to no less than 600 denars and no more than 1200 denars for a period of 7 months.

93. This law covered beneficiaries of pensions not exceeding 19,000 denars who are nationals and gained the right to pension or to a proportional part of a pension in the country and live here, including:

- 3000 denars per month for pension beneficiaries who received a monthly retirement income not exceeding 14,000 denars;
- 2000 denars per month for pension beneficiaries who received a monthly retirement income totalling 14,001 to 16,000 denars;
- 1500 denars per month for pension beneficiaries who received a monthly retirement income totalling 16,001 to 19,000 denars.

94. The financial support targeted 55 % of the total number of pension beneficiaries, i.e. 181,442.

95. Aiming to improve the pensioners' standard of living, the Law Amending the Law on Pension and Disability Insurance increased all types of pension by 2500 denars on 1 September 2024 and a further 2500 denars on 1 March 2025. With the fixed pension increase of 2500 denars on 1 September 2024, the lowest pension was increased from 13,192 denars to 15,692 denars.

96. In order to adapt services to the individual needs of the beneficiaries, in 2023 the personal assistance service was also made available to children over the age of six and adults.

97. In order to achieve full protection of beneficiaries in the social protection system, efforts are being made to develop social services at local level. The MSPDY establishes a network and keeps records of authorized social service providers per type of social services offered that have been issued work permits, with those records being posted publicly on the website of the Ministry.

98. In total, 141 social service providers have been established and licensed across more than 40 municipalities within the national social protection system. Licensed social service providers¹⁰ have the capacity to serve over 5,000 people. Most of the services target the elderly and persons with disabilities. Around 1,600 personal assistants, caregivers and close to 400 professionals are operating in the country as of this date, 90% of whom are women.

99. The Ministry provides funds for the development and provision of social services and for this purpose, at least once a year, it announces a public call/public competition for the provision of social services by municipalities, the City of Skopje and municipalities within the City of Skopje, an association and a private social services provider from the network of authorized social services providers.¹¹ The number of concluded administrative contracts, as of June 2025, reached 83, of which 54 administrative contracts are with licensed providers of social services selected in keeping with the public competition announced, while 29 administrative contracts have been concluded with municipalities that provide services through licensed providers.¹² 26 grant contracts have also been concluded with municipalities and the establishment of new social services at local level is underway.

100. A new IT system for integrated administration of cash transfers, social services and public authorizations (Social Welfare Information System – SWIS) has been developed, with

¹⁰ (home care and assistance services: in the community, out-of-family social protection, counselling services, professional assistance and support).

¹¹ The network of authorized social services providers funded by the state has increased compared to previous years.

¹² As compared to 2024, in 2025 only, there has been a further increase by approximately 30% in the number of authorized social service providers, which allows for greater coverage of beneficiaries using free-of-charge social services, as well as the inclusion in the labor market of the most vulnerable categories i.e. beneficiaries of guaranteed minimum assistance, who are otherwise the most prevalent service providers as a whole.

the aim of better case management and monitoring of activities undertaken by social institutions.¹³ As of mid-2025, the software has been introduced across 20 SWCs.

Reply to Paragraph 15 of the list of issues

101. With regards to citizen registration, as part of the activities that the Office for Management of Registers of Births, Marriages, and Deaths has undertaken to implement the Law Amending the Law on Civil Registry, and ¹⁴within the period of up to and including May 2025, 159 cases remain pending out of a total of 526 registrations completed.

102. Two working meetings of the Working Group for Resolving Issues Related to Statelessness were held in Parliament under its new composition. At the last meeting of this task force, a Draft Law on Civil Registry was disseminated to the competent institutions and organizations for comments and suggestions. When it comes to all cases pending, a proposal will be put forward for them to be completed under a special Government Decision and, if necessary, transitional and final provisions, as well as amendments to other relevant laws will be prepared.

Reply to Paragraph 16 of the list of issues

103. The prevalence of malnutrition in the country, specifically undernutrition, does not currently constitute a major public health concern. A more prominent health challenge is represented by the prevalence of overweight and obesity among children, which is systematically tracked through the activities of the Institute of Public Health and the regional Public Health Centres, as outlined in the National Annual Public Health Program (NAPHP).¹⁵

Reply to Paragraph 17 of the list of issues

104. In the housing sector, the Ministry of Transport and Communications is in the process of implementing a project for the construction of apartments for people at social risk and other vulnerable groups across several cities in the country. The Ministry also announces public calls for the allocation of social apartments for people at social risk, to which members of the Roma community are entitled to apply.

105. In 2025, the MSPDY, with the support of the joint EU and CoE project “Roma Integration, Third Phase”, began preparing a Law on Social Housing. The process will encompass all standards of transparency, inclusiveness and cumulateness, through the active participation of all relevant national institutions, international and civil society organizations.¹⁶

106. The legalization of informal settlements is the responsibility of municipal authorities. With EU support, the legalization of seven settlements inhabited predominantly by Roma was enabled. Five projects worth around 4.5 million euros were financed in two cycles, focusing on improving living conditions in Roma settlements in eight municipalities: Shuto Orizari, Veles, Vinica, Prilep, Bitola, Berovo, Shtip and Kichevo.¹⁷ Further EU support is

¹³ It is expected to produce increased efficiency in operations and greater accuracy of data in decision-making, as well as solutions for the processes of exercising cash transfers and services.

¹⁴ (Official Gazette No. 129/23).

¹⁵ Measures implemented to address these issues include the adoption of evidence-based dietary recommendations for the population, as well as mandatory nutrition standards in schools, established through formal regulations. Additionally, the NAPHP provides continuous monitoring of hygiene, water quality, and sanitation conditions in schools, with particular focus on institutions in rural areas, thereby ensuring alignment with national and international public health standards.

¹⁶ This provides a basis for a systematic and sustainable solution to the housing needs of the most vulnerable categories of citizens, in keeping with constitutional principles and European standards and commitments to social justice and inclusion.

¹⁷ The interventions included the preparation of Detailed Urban Plans for the legalization of Roma settlements, support for the legalization of Roma properties, renovation of Roma homes, development

planned for the legalization of settlements and facilitating Roma access to property documents. In the domain of communal infrastructure, each year, at the proposal of the Ministry of Public Works, the Government adopts a Program for Support for the Implementation of the Roma Strategy.¹⁸

Reply to Paragraph 18 of the list of issues

107. The MoH has undertaken a range of measures aimed at improving the overall quality of the healthcare system and addressing the shortage of qualified medical professionals. These measures include investments in medical education, continuous professional development programs, and initiatives to encourage healthcare workers to serve in underserved areas.

108. In 2025, the MoH allocated a budget of MKD 6,000,000 for the implementation of the Roma Strategy, specifically for engaging 20 Roma Health Mediators. Twenty individuals were contracted under service agreements across various municipalities, receiving a net monthly remuneration of MKD 22,000, with an increase of MKD 2,000 starting from 2025. These arrangements were approved by the MoF, and contracts for all 20 mediators were concluded for the period up to December 31, 2025.

109. Roma Health Mediators play an active role in facilitating access of this community to healthcare services at all levels of care.¹⁹ This initiative was launched several years ago through a partnership between civil society organizations and the MoH, with the aim of improving the health status of the Roma population.

110. Regarding persons with disabilities, measures have been implemented to improve both the adequacy and physical accessibility of healthcare services.²⁰ While these initiatives have enhanced access and awareness to some extent, many persons with disabilities still encounter difficulties in reaching services and receiving fully appropriate care.²¹

Reply to Paragraph 19 of the list of issues

111. Primary healthcare for persons accommodated in the Reception Centre for Foreigners (RCF) is provided through the functioning of an outpatient clinic and the presence of a physician within the premises of the RCF.²² This service is implemented within the framework of cooperation with the Red Cross of the City of Skopje, which includes the provision of primary healthcare, medical examinations and consultations, as well as the provision of medicines, and is regulated by a Memorandum of Cooperation.

112. Secondary and tertiary healthcare is ensured through cooperation with the MoH. Foreign nationals accommodated in the RCF, regardless of their formal status, enjoy the same rights as all other citizens in the country, and the provisions contained in the national legislation apply to them.

of social infrastructure and development of specific services in the Roma community. The projects were implemented in partnership with municipalities, civil society and the private sector.

¹⁸ The funds for the implementation of this Program are allocated through a public call to local self-government units for the implementation of communal infrastructure projects for places inhabited predominantly by Roma population.

¹⁹ Mediators provide a wide range of support, primarily focusing on ensuring access to health services for the Roma community, assistance with personal documentation, health insurance, immunization, and social protection. They are widely recognized within the Roma population as trusted individuals to whom community members can turn for guidance and support regarding health-related issues.

²⁰ These include adaptations of certain healthcare facilities, provision of assistive devices, staff training on disability-sensitive care, and development of targeted programs to address specific health needs.

²¹ Overall, these actions represent an important step toward greater equity and responsiveness in the healthcare system, although further efforts are required to fully meet the needs of all populations and ensure the right to health for all citizens.

²² (on working days during regular working hours, and, if necessary, on-call during non-working days and upon the admission of new persons).

113. Participation in leisure and recreational activities appropriate to their age, as well as the right to legal, social, medical, and psychological assistance during their stay in the RCF, are regulated in accordance with Article 159 paragraph (8) of the Law on Foreigners²³ and the Rulebook on the House Rules of the Reception Centre for Foreigners.²⁴

114. Persons who, in the procedure conducted before the Ministry of Interior (MoI), have been granted the status of a person under international protection (refugees or persons under subsidiary protection) apply for exercising the right to health insurance to the locally competent SWC. Based on the status obtained, they are granted health insurance, for which the MoI transfers funds to the Health Insurance Fund on a monthly basis. Through this legal solution, these persons acquire the status of health insured persons and are equal to Macedonian citizens in terms of access to health services available in the country. Asylum seekers are not health insured persons because they do not have a unique identification number, which should be issued to them by the MoI in order to be part of the administrative-legal system, but they have access to health services as provided for by law. These persons receive health services through their accommodation in the Reception Center for Asylum Seekers Public Institution, from where they are referred to state health clinics for secondary and tertiary health services, with the MSPDY and MoH directly paying for health services to public health institutions for each individual service, thus asylum seekers exercise the right to access to health care.

115. Persons from Ukraine who have the status of persons under temporary protection, based on a decision of the Government, do not have access to health insurance based on their refugee status.

116. Children who are unaccompanied and without parental care, having the status of persons regulated under the Law on International and Temporary Protection, exercise the right to health insurance through the guardianship system, which is operated via services provided by the SWC. The authority in charge of this matter is the MSPDY.

Reply to Paragraph 20 of the list of issues

117. The MoH has undertaken comprehensive and targeted measures to enhance the availability and quality of sexual and reproductive healthcare services, particularly for Roma communities and persons with disabilities. Mobile healthcare teams provide gynecological and reproductive services in rural and underserved areas, ensuring regular examinations, diagnostics, and treatment of common health issues affecting women.²⁵

118. In one of the largest Roma communities, Suto Orizari, a dedicated primary gynecologist has been appointed to provide regular, continuous, and personalized healthcare services to women.²⁶ As a result, these interventions have contributed to improved health outcomes, greater preventive protection, and a reduction of health disparities among vulnerable populations.

Reply to Paragraph 21 of the list of issues

119. Article 215 of the Criminal Code, “Unauthorized production and distribution of narcotic drugs”, specifies that no one who possesses narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for personal use shall be penalized. Article 216 of the Criminal Code regulates the provision of narcotic drugs.

²³ “Off. Gazette”, No. 97 of 28 May 2018.

²⁴ “Off. Gazette”, No. 93 of 7 April 2020.

²⁵ Programs have also been introduced to provide modern contraceptives free of charge or at subsidized rates, improving access to preventive care and family planning.

²⁶ These services include health counselling, ongoing education on sexual and reproductive health, free and regular PAP screenings, monitoring of pregnancies, and timely detection of potential malignant conditions. This comprehensive and systematic approach significantly improves access to healthcare, strengthens awareness and knowledge of preventive measures, and promotes active engagement of Roma communities and persons with disabilities in regular health services.

120. With regard to the measures undertaken to reduce drug use and implement harm reduction programmes, the preventive and treatment programmes have been strengthened with the aim of reducing drug-related harms. As a result, there has been increased participation in harm reduction services, leading to improved health outcomes among drug users, a reduction in overdose-related mortality, a decrease in the frequency of injecting practices, and reduced risks of transmission of HIV and Hepatitis B and C infections.

121. Treatment for persons with drug dependence is available in the public healthcare system, treatment, and includes outpatient care, inpatient treatment, detoxification, and opioid agonist therapy with methadone and buprenorphine. The majority of individuals with substance use disorders are treated in outpatient settings, where they have access to opioid agonist therapy, psycho-social interventions, individual and group counselling, as well as social and psychotherapeutic support. The *Programme for Health Care of Persons with Addictive Disorders* prioritizes the inclusion of as many individuals as possible in opioid agonist therapy programmes, with the dual aim of reducing illicit drug use and enhancing the overall health and social functioning of patients.

122. Treatment services are available at the Psychiatric Hospitals in Skopje, Demir Hisar and Negorci, the University Clinic for Toxicology in Skopje, and Centres for Prevention and Treatment of Drug Abuse functioning within hospitals in Tetovo, Kumanovo, Strumica, Shtip, Gevgelija, Ohrid, Bitola, Veles, Kavadarci, the General Hospital “8th September” Skopje, the Health Centre Skopje (at the Idrizovo Correctional Facility and Skopje Prison), as well as the Bitola Prison.²⁷

123. National legislation provides for criminal sanctions for possession of drugs for personal consumption.

Reply to Paragraph 22 of the list of issues

124. In line with its strategic commitment to inclusive and equitable education, the MoES has implemented a wide range of legal, institutional, and programmatic measures to ensure quality and equal education for all children, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, Roma children, stateless and refugee children, girls, and children from rural and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The new Law on Primary Education²⁸ guarantees free, compulsory, and inclusive education for every child and mandates municipalities and schools to remove physical, linguistic, and economic barriers. All students receive free textbooks, and transport is provided for those living more than 2 km from the nearest school.

125. In accordance with Article 37 of the Law, over 50 Roma educational mediators are currently active in 28 priority municipalities to support Roma pupils, reduce dropout rates, and improve school-family communication.

126. Additionally, under Article 36, the Ministry provides tutoring support to students with learning difficulties who are unable to achieve passing grades in subjects within their current curriculum.

127. The system of learning and personal educational assistants for children with disabilities has expanded significantly and the system has grown from 818 assistants engaged in the 2023/2024 academic year to 1,186 assistants in 2024/2025. For the 2025/2026 academic year, additional educational assistants will be engaged based on identified needs. These targeted and inclusive measures have led to noticeable progress, with primary school enrolment rates among Roma children increasing by 15% since 2020 and significantly improved access to inclusive education for children with disabilities.

²⁷ As of December 2024, methadone treatment has been provided to approximately 1,630 individuals, with an additional 440 court-mandated cases, while buprenorphine treatment has been provided to approximately 440 individuals and 90 court-mandated cases. In total, treatment has been secured for around 2,600 persons with substance use disorders.

²⁸ Official Gazette No. 161/19, 229/20, 3/25 and 74/25.

128. The MoES has established a legal foundation that guarantees inclusive education at the secondary level. Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and adapted curricula are implemented to meet the diverse learning needs of students with disabilities. Teaching approaches are customized to ensure every student receives appropriate support. Inclusive support teams operate both at the school level and for each individual student. In 2024, for the first time, a public call was launched to engage educational assistants in secondary schools, with 150 students identified as requiring such assistance. To promote equity in secondary education, the Ministry provides free transportation for students with disabilities and those from vulnerable backgrounds. Students in special circumstances – such as those in correctional facilities or with disabilities – are exempted from specific educational fees, including costs for recognition of certificates. Educational assistants and mediators are assigned to help bridge gaps in learning and participation. Furthermore, students who achieve notable success in national and international competitions are eligible for special incentives.

129. Roma students benefit from scholarships aimed at reducing dropouts and encouraging academic success. Within the academic 2023/2024 when 920 scholarships were ensured and awarded to secondary Roma students, in the academic 2024/2025, a total of 1200 scholarships were ensured. Educational mediators for Roma secondary were introduced under Article 31 in the Law on Secondary Education²⁹ offering guidance, build stronger connections between families and schools, and help ensure full inclusion. Awareness activities are also carried out to combat discrimination and promote equal opportunities.

130. Secondary students without a national identification number are assigned a temporary unique education number to facilitate their enrolment. These students are supported through access to education in their mother tongue and additional learning assistance, enabling their smooth integration into mainstream education without administrative or structural barriers.

131. To support participation and achievement in secondary education, the MoES offers a range of scholarships, including those for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, Roma students, talented and high-achieving youth, and students with disabilities.

132. Investing in child protection and early childhood development is a priority of the MSPDY.³⁰ In April 2025, a total of 39,820 children were provided care in preschool institutions. The construction of new kindergartens, the extension and adaptation of existing facilities in order to expand the capacity for enrolment of children, the opening of groups in other sections within public kindergartens covering rural areas too, as well as more intensive cooperation with local self-government units, which are important factors in providing child protection, are all continuously supported.

133. Considering the need for inclusiveness in preschool institutions, the Law on Child Protection provides that if parents have a child with a disability, that child is to be assigned priority when enrolling in kindergarten.

134. The 2024/2025 school year is the sixth consecutive year when, under a Government decision, Roma children from families at social risk are included in preschool education, being exempted from enrolment fees using a special systemic solution.

135. In the 2024/2025 school year, the number of Roma children enrolled in public childcare institutions at national level is 472.³¹

²⁹ Official Gazette No. 229/20 and 78/25.

³⁰ In the period from 2022 to May 2025, the number of children integrated into the childcare system has increased by 3,565 with the opening of new kindergartens across the country.

³¹ 1. 30% of the national total of 36,472 children included in kindergartens are Roma. According to UNICEF, only 9% of Roma children and the most disenfranchised children aged 0 to 6 attend state kindergartens, compared to 37% of the total population
https://www.unicef.org/northmacedonia/mk/media/16881/file/ChildGuarentee_ServicesImplementation_MK.pdf

136. A total of 150 Roma children, or 43%, are covered by the Government's Recommendation for Exemption from Enrolment Fees for Roma Children from Families at Social Risk.³²

137. According to current legal regulations, preschool education is not mandatory. However, recognizing the importance of early learning, socialization and developing skills for refugee children to have a chance for successful early integration into society, the MSPDY supports and facilitates access to kindergartens for these persons too. Currently, they pay a 1400 denar enrolment fee for inclusion in kindergartens managed by municipalities. A kindergarten, i.e. educational activities intended for preschool children, is also organized within the Reception Centre for Asylum Seekers Public Institution, with the support of UNHCR programs where asylum seeker children are cared for.³³

Reply to Paragraph 23 of the list of issues

138. In response to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgment in *Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia*, the Government has undertaken coordinated and multifaceted actions to prevent segregation and discrimination of Roma children in the education system.

139. Desegregation Action Plans: After the amended Law on Primary Education, the MoES initiated the drafting of School-Level Desegregation Plans aligned with Article 37 of the new Law on Primary Education. Schools identified with risks of de facto segregation, such as "Gjorgji Sugarev" Primary School in Bitola, "Goce Delchev" in Shtip, "Dobre Jovanovski" in Prilep, "Panko Brashnarov" in Veles, and "Rade Kratovche" in Kochani, have been mandated to develop and implement desegregation strategies in close coordination with local municipalities.

140. Enrollment procedures have been revised to prevent grouping Roma children into separate classes and to ensure that class composition reflects the ethnic diversity of the broader school population. The State Education Inspectorate actively monitors segregation indicators, and a functional complaint mechanism against discrimination operates at both school and ministerial levels, allowing timely redress of issues.³⁴

141. Building upon these efforts, the MoES has also acted decisively on the opinion of the CPPD and the ECtHR judgment by conducting multiple inspection supervisions, strengthening cooperation with local governments, supporting Roma students through educational mediators, and initiating amendments to the legal framework.

142. The amendments to the Law on Primary Education³⁵ are designed to clearly define school district zoning and enrolment processes with explicit mechanisms to prevent physical segregation based on ethnicity. Beyond addressing specific segregation cases, the Ministry incorporates recommendations from international bodies to ensure equal access to quality education for all children.

³² Under a Government Conclusion adopted in October 2024, plans have been put forward to enrol 350 Roma children from families at social risk in 21 public institutions-kindergartens, and exempt them from paying enrolment fees. To date, 19 out of 21 municipalities are implementing this measure.

³³ However, the biggest problem faced by persons under international and temporary protection when enrolling their children in preschool institutions is the necessity of submitting a certificate issued by a health institution that the child has received all vaccines according to the vaccination calendar, an obligation pursuant to amendments to the Rulebook on Keeping Pedagogical Documentation and Records in Kindergartens and Early Childhood Development Centres from 2019. In order to overcome this obstacle, it is necessary for the MoH to provide a protocol for checking vaccination status in their home countries in order to ensure unhindered access to education for these children.

³⁴ Schools implement protocols to create safe and inclusive environments, including peer education, teacher training on human rights and inclusion, and anonymous reporting channels. Awareness campaigns are particularly targeted at protecting LGBTI, Roma, and other vulnerable groups from harassment and violence.

³⁵ Off. Gazette No. 3/2025.

143. Key legal improvements supporting Roma education include:

- Tutors for Students (Article 36);³⁶
- Mother Tongue Education;³⁷
- School Zoning (Article 63);³⁸
- Alignment with Anti-Discrimination Laws (Article 5);³⁹
- Protection Against Retaliation;⁴⁰
- Prevention of Segregation During Enrolment;⁴¹
- School Inclusion Teams;⁴²
- Balanced Classroom Composition;⁴³
- Programs for Protection Against Violence and Discrimination (Article 66).⁴⁴

144. These comprehensive measures demonstrate the MoES's full institutional commitment to upholding equality in education, enforcing the rulings of the ECtHR, and actively combating all forms of discrimination and segregation in the school system. Early results are promising, with over 70% of previously monoethnic classes in the 2024/25 academic year reporting improved ethnic integration and a reduction in segregation-related complaints.

Reply to Paragraph 24 of the list of issues

145. In accordance with the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the Law on Primary Education guarantees the right to education in students' mother tongue if they represent at least 20% of the local population, with instruction provided in Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, Bosnian, and Roma languages. Roma language instruction is offered as an optional subject in over 20 schools, supported by trained teachers and approved curricula, including a new Roma language textbook introduced in 2023. Teachers receive training in bilingual education methodologies, and public universities offer degree programs in minority languages.

³⁶ The Ministry provides additional support through tutors for students facing learning difficulties who cannot achieve passing results in their subjects during the academic year. This support is provided with parental consent under a formal tutorship program.

³⁷ To respect the linguistic and cultural identities of smaller ethnic communities, elective courses in the language and culture of Roma, Vlachs, Bosniaks, Turks, and Serbs are offered starting from Grade III. According to the Nine-Year Primary Education Concept, Roma students can study their mother tongue through the elective subject "Language and Culture of the Roma" from Grades III to IX. The law allows formation of study groups smaller than 15 students for these communities, facilitating access despite smaller population sizes.

³⁸ Amendments reinforce mandatory enrolment in schools based on children's place of residence, ensuring prevention of physical segregation by ethnicity. Local governments are responsible for establishing school zones to avoid ethnic separation, except in municipalities predominantly inhabited by a single ethnic group. Enrolment lists are prepared by local authorities using registry data to ensure compliance.

³⁹ Primary education explicitly prohibits all forms of discrimination – direct or indirect – based on gender, ethnicity, disability, social origin, religion, age, and other protected grounds, consistent with national and international legislation.

⁴⁰ New provisions forbid any adverse consequences against individuals who act to combat discrimination.

⁴¹ Discriminatory practices and physical separation of students on any discriminatory grounds during enrolment and class formation are prohibited.

⁴² Mandated to ensure equal access to education and to take measures preventing discrimination and segregation.

⁴³ Schools are required to balance the ethnic composition of classes to prevent physical segregation unless only one class per grade exists.

⁴⁴ Schools must implement programs protecting students from violence, abuse, neglect, discrimination, substance abuse, and juvenile delinquency. Funding is allocated through a Ministry-formed commission, and municipalities must develop action plans if segregation is detected.

Curricular diversity is enhanced through cultural studies that include the history, literature, and contributions of various ethnic and cultural groups, emphasizing interethnic respect and cooperation.

146. The distribution of students and schools by instructional language in the country is as follows:

- Albanian language instruction is provided in 246 schools across 42 municipalities, serving a total of 57,401 students, which represents 32.26% of the total student population nationwide.
- Bosnian language instruction is offered in 2 schools located in 2 municipalities, with 246 students enrolled, making up 0.14% of the national student population.
- Serbian language instruction is available in 4 schools across 3 municipalities, with 130 students enrolled, accounting for 0.07% of the total student population.
- Turkish language instruction is conducted in 56 schools throughout 28 municipalities, with 6,386 students, representing 3.59% of the students at the national level.
- Macedonian language instruction, the majority language, serves 113,746 students, comprising 63.94% of the student population nationwide.

147. In the spirit of our commitment to inclusiveness and respect for human rights, the country continuously undertakes measures to advance the rights of communities, especially in the field of education.

148. According to the legal framework, instruction in primary education is conducted in Macedonian and in the languages of the communities. In the 2024/2025 school year, teaching is carried out in Albanian, Turkish, Bosnian, and Serbian languages, covering 304 schools and over 64,000 students.

149. Additionally, pursuant to Article 24 of the Law on Primary Education, students have the right to study the elective subject “Language and Culture of the Communities.” With amendments to the Law on Primary Education, elective subjects are organized in groups that require at least 15 students from the same grade, regardless of whether they belong to the same or different classes.

150. As an exception, for students from the Bosniak, Turkish, Serbian, Roma, and Vlach communities, the subject “Language and Culture of the Community” can be taught in groups with fewer than 15 students. These groups may also be composed of students from a single class or multiple parallel classes. The criteria and procedures for forming such groups are determined by the MoES, based on proposals from the Bureau for Development of Education.

151. The MoES continuously provides support to promote multiculturalism, interethnic integration, and tolerance through activities of municipalities and schools that include providing teaching materials, teacher training, and logistical support.⁴⁵

152. The MoES issues a Public Call for grants to primary and public secondary schools that contribute to the development and promotion of multiculturalism, interethnic integration, and tolerance.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Furthermore, the state is obligated, under the constitutional principle of multiculturalism and in accordance with international standards, to ensure conditions for preserving the identity, language, and culture of every community.

As data indicate, these policies are actively applied; however, challenges remain in ensuring equal access, especially in rural areas and among smaller communities. In this regard, further cooperation with international partners for technical assistance, expertise, and exchange of good practices is needed.

⁴⁶ Activities supported by the grants may be implemented independently in schools where instruction is delivered in multiple languages or in partnership with another school. Grants of up to 30,000 Macedonian denars are awarded, with applications evaluated and ranked by a Commission according to established criteria. Schools apply with projects for joint activities among students who receive instruction in different languages. Projects should promote good practices and activities that nurture harmonious relationships based on respect for differences, while building a multiethnic and

153. For the 2024/2025 academic year, a total of 20 grants were awarded to secondary schools (8 independently, 12 in partnership with another school) and 59 grants to primary schools (18 independently, 41 in partnership with another school).

multicultural society. This enables the development of modern, successful, and effective educational institutions that promote multiethnic and multicultural values, individualized approaches to students, a positive emotional climate, and constructive multi-directional communication within a supportive and encouraging school environment. These activities are a public policy defined in Article 46 of the Law on Primary Education and Article 24-v of the Law on Secondary Education.