



EU TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE  
TO CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS  
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS AND TÜRKIYE

DG ENEST Guidelines for  
EU Support to Civil Society  
in the Enlargement Region  
2021–2027

2024 Assessment

Country Report for  
**NORTH MACEDONIA**



Funded by  
the European Union



This study was carried out by a team of researchers under the supervision of the EU TACSO 3 project.

**Lead Expert and main author:** Snježana Bokulić

**Data analyst and survey expert:** Dr. Blerina Metanj Subashi

**Country Analysis Authors:**

Natasha Mazari – Albania

Kanita Kulić – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Sara Salihu – Kosovo

Marija Armenski – North Macedonia

Jelena Pajović van Reenen – Serbia

Özge Konuralp – Türkiye

**EU TACSO 3 Team Leader:** Richard Allen

**Legal Advisors**

Prof. as. Dr. Ersida Teliti - Albania

Selim Kulić – Bosnia and Herzegovina

Alban Krasniqi – Kosovo

Miljan Vlaović MSc – Montenegro

Goce Kocevski – North Macedonia

Prof. Dejan Vučetić – Serbia

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ulaş Karan – Türkiye

**Proofreading:** prof. Jonathan Boulting M.A. (Eng. Lit. Trinity, Cantab)

**Graphic Design:** Bojan Ivanović, Brigada Design

Belgrade, Serbia, June 2025

<https://tacso.eu>

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

<b>AIP</b>	Agency for Information and Privacy
<b>AML</b>	AntiMoney Laundering
<b>BCSDN</b>	Balkan Civil Society Development Network
<b>CAF</b>	Charities Aid Foundation
<b>CBK</b>	Central Bank of Kosovo
<b>CFT</b>	CounterTerrorism Financing
<b>CIVIKOS</b>	A civil society platform in Kosovo (name used for CSO engagement)
<b>CoE</b>	Council of Europe
<b>CSO</b>	Civil Society Organisation
<b>CY</b>	Connecting Youth (in reference to policy papers on youth guarantee and employment)
<b>DG ENEST</b>	DirectorateGeneral for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
<b>ECNL</b>	European Center for NotforProfit Law
<b>ECPMF</b>	European Centre for Press and Media Freedom
<b>ECtHR</b>	European Court of Human Rights
<b>EU TACSO 3</b>	EU Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations phase 3
<b>EWB</b>	European Western Balkans
<b>FATF</b>	Financial Action Task Force
<b>FIU</b>	Financial Intelligence Unit
<b>GLPS</b>	Group for Legal and Political Studies
<b>IMC</b>	Independent Media Commission
<b>IMF</b>	International Monetary Fund
<b>KAS</b>	Kosovo Agency of Statistics
<b>KCSF</b>	Kosovar Civil Society Foundation
<b>KPST</b>	Kosovo Pension Savings Trust
<b>KWN</b>	Kosovo Women Network
<b>LGBTIQ</b>	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Intersex, and Queer
<b>MCYS</b>	Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports
<b>MIA</b>	Ministry of Internal Affairs
<b>MoF</b>	Ministry of Finance
<b>NCEI</b>	National Council for European Integration
<b>NGO</b>	NonGovernmental Organisation
<b>ODIHR</b>	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (of the OSCE)

<b>OGG</b>	Office for Good Governance
<b>OGP</b>	Open Government Partnership
<b>OPM</b>	Office of the Prime Minister (of Kosovo)
<b>OSCE</b>	Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
<b>RCC</b>	Regional Cooperation Council
<b>RK</b>	Republic of Kosovo
<b>SIGMA</b>	Name given to the SIGMA Monitoring Reports (a monitoring framework used in the assessment)
<b>SLAPP</b>	Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation
<b>TAK</b>	Tax Administration of Kosovo
<b>UNSCR</b>	United Nations Security Council Resolution
<b>VoA</b>	Voice of America

## Introduction to Annex

---

This country analysis is an Annex to the DG ENEST Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society 2021–2027: Assessment Report 2024.

This assessment for North Macedonia provides evidence for the situation against the Guidelines' indicators for 2024, and a comparison with the previous year, 2023, and the baseline year, 2021.

This annex provides a summary of the evidence for assessment of the situation in North Macedonia against the 59 indicators in the Guidelines. This annex should be read in conjunction with the main report, which is available on the [tacso.eu](https://tacso.eu) website.

## Methodology

---

The analysis is based on data collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary research included surveys with CSOs and public officials and a legal analysis of relevant laws. Secondary sources, such as reports produced by CSOs, national human rights institutions, the government, and others, were reviewed to provide relevant information and data.

An interview with the Head of the Sector for Policy Development and Coordination at the General Secretariat, where the Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) is part, was conducted to assess whether the public structures responsible for implementing civil society cooperation strategies are appropriately resourced.

The public officials' survey was conducted from 10 February to 3 March 2025. The aim was to collect the perspectives on specific relevant indicators from selected public officials who, in their work, engage most closely with CSOs. The survey consisted of closed questions and was anonymous. For North Macedonia, 19 responses were received from public institutions. In 2024, most public officials were from local self-government units, unlike in 2021 and 2023, when the majority were from the central government.

The CSO capacity and resilience assessment was based on a survey of CSOs conducted between 19 January and 10 February 2025. The survey was open to any CSOs willing to participate. It was disseminated through various channels with the support of CSOs, CSO networks, the National Resource Centre, UN agencies, international organisations and public institutions, to make sure that the outreach covered a broad variety of CSOs. The validation of responses was ensured at the data-checking stage. Respondents who indicated that they did not belong to the target group were filtered out. Based on the number of valid responses received, the margin of error is 7%. This margin of error has been statistically calculated using the number of CSOs listed in the official Central Register of North Macedonia to determine the population size.

Two hundred and one (201) valid responses were received for North Macedonia, an increase of 43% compared to 2023 (141 valid responses), and 121% compared to 2021 (91 valid responses).

Regarding the demographic characteristics (age group, gender, role within the organisations, self-identification as a minority, organisation size, sector of work, turnover, and number of employees) of the civil society organisations that responded to the survey, the sample remained the same.

In terms of the geographical distribution, the proportion is similar to what it was in 2023, with around half of the respondents from the capital city and the other half from the rest of the country.

Location	2023	2024
Skopje	57%	54%
Rest of the country	43%	46%

When it comes to regional distribution, the sample remained similar to that in 2023.

	2023	2024
<b>Skopje</b>	57%	54%
<b>East</b>	6%	8%
<b>Southeast</b>	6%	4%
<b>Northeast</b>	5%	6%
<b>Pelagonija</b>	12%	10%
<b>Vardar</b>	6%	3%
<b>Southwest</b>	2%	5%
<b>Polog</b>	6%	6%
<b>No location</b>		1%
<b>Total</b>	141	201

In terms of gender distribution, 43% of the respondents are men, 56% are women, and 1% prefer not to disclose their gender. The gender composition of the sample has remained consistent since 2021.

When it comes to age, most respondents (43%) have chosen not to disclose their age. Among those who did share their ages, one-third are over 51 years old, and 18% are between 41 and 50. This differs from the results in 2021 and 2023, when only a small fraction (1%) opted not to reveal their age. The proportion of respondents over 51 is similar to that of previous years. However, there has been a significant decrease in the percentage of respondents aged 31–40, which has dropped to 4% in 2024, compared to approximately one-quarter in 2023 and 2021. Likewise, the proportion of those aged 41–50 has decreased, with around one-third in 2021 and 2023 as compared to 18% in 2024.

In total, 14% of the respondents identified as belonging to a community, minority, or marginalised group, and most of those identified as belonging to such a group identified as Roma. The proportion of respondents belonging to a community, minority, or marginalised group remained the same as in 2023. Still, it slightly differed from 2021, when 24% declared belonging to a community, minority, or marginalised group.

An overwhelming proportion (81%) of the respondents were senior managers, primarily executive directors, but there were also other managers, governing board members, and others. The proportions seen in 2021 (59%) and 2023 (71%) are different. In terms of tenure within the organisation, 62% of the respondents surveyed have been within the organisation for up to 10 years, 14% between 11 and 20 years, and 12% less than a year, whilst 11% have been there for more than 21 years. The proportions are similar to those in 2021 and 2023.

In 2024, one-third of the respondents are affiliated with civil society organisations (CSOs) established between 2011 and 2020. Twenty-eight per cent are part of CSOs founded between 2001 and 2010, while 17% represent organisations established between 1991 and 2000, and another 17% are involved with those founded after 2021. In total, 7% of the participating CSOs were established in 1990 or earlier. The distribution of these organisations is similar to previous years in 2021 and 2023, with one notable exception: the percentage of respondents from CSOs established between 2001 and 2010 was around 40% in both 2021 and 2023 but has decreased to 28% in 2024. Conversely, the proportion of respondents from organisations founded after 2021 has slightly increased compared to 2021 and 2023, when it was 5% and 7%, respectively.

All the respondents come from officially registered organisations, which was also the case in 2021 and 2023. Eighty-four per cent of participating CSOs come from citizen associations, 6% from foundations,

and 8% from not-for-profit organisations, or associations. The proportions are like those in 2021 and 2023.

In terms of geographic scope, 63% of the surveyed civil society organizations (CSOs) operate nationally, while 45% work at the local level. Additionally, 44% of CSOs work regionally and 44% internationally. Compared to previous surveys in 2021 and 2023, there has been an increase in the proportion of organisations working locally, which rose from 34% in 2021 and 2023 to the current 45%. Similarly, the percentage of those working regionally has increased from 39% in 2021 and 35% in 2023 to the current 44%.

In terms of their areas of focus, 26% of civil society organisations (CSOs) work on environmental issues and climate change, while 22% concentrate on education, research, and innovation. Another 22% focus on youth and youth rights. Following these, 19% of CSOs address social inclusion, 16% work on human rights, and 15% promote public participation in policy and decision-making. Additionally, 7% of CSOs are involved in advocacy for minority rights and gender equality. The distribution of focus areas among the sectors is consistent with data from 2021 and 2023.

Regarding the size of the CSOs participating in the survey (i.e. number of staff members), most of the respondents surveyed, some 62%, are part of small CSOs with 1–10 permanent, full- or part-time staff and volunteers working at the time of the survey. Fourteen per cent of the respondents are part of CSOs with 21 to 50 staff members, 12% are with no personnel at all and 5%, from CSOs with more than 50 staff members. The distribution is similar to what it was in 2021 and 2023.

In terms of the size of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) based on their annual turnover, the survey found the following distribution: 21% of the CSOs reported a yearly turnover below EUR 5,000, while 20% had turnovers between EUR 100,000 and EUR 500,000. Additionally, 19% had turnovers between EUR 5,000 and EUR 25,000, 11% between EUR 50,000 and EUR 100,000, 7% reported no annual turnover, 7% had turnovers between EUR 25,000 and EUR 50,000, and another 7% had turnovers exceeding EUR 500,000. This distribution is consistent with what was observed in 2021 and 2023.

For indicators that have a normative assessment, such as compliance with legislation or standards, the following traffic-light system was used to provide a quick visual guide:

5 – fully meets standards
4 – meets most standards
3 – moderately meets standards
2 – minimally meets standards
1 – does not meet standards

The traffic light system was applied to those indicators where such an assessment was deemed meaningful. It was based either on the data collected through the CSO survey, or on the detailed analysis of applicable laws, policies and procedures against standards. The justification of the assessment is available in the respective country reports and related analyses in Annexes 1–7.

The remaining indicators provide an overview of year-on-year trends, building on the baseline established in 2021, and also applied in 2023.



## Specific Objective 1

**A conducive environment for civil society to carry out its activities is in place.**

**SO 1.1.** All individuals and legal entities in the Enlargement Region can establish, join and participate in non-formal and/or registered organisations, can assemble peacefully and can express themselves freely

**Indicator 1.1.a: Extent to which relevant domestic legislation provides that:**

- Associations can be established or registered without discrimination on any grounds;
- No unlawful restrictions are placed on the scope of their activities or pursuit of their objectives;
- Their termination may only occur following a decision by an independent and impartial court;
- No unlawful restrictions are placed on freedom of peaceful assembly;
- Freedom of expression is exercised by all, and no unlawful restrictions are imposed.

2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

The legal framework regulating all three rights (freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and freedom of expression) in North Macedonia continued to present certain shortcomings in 2024.

The Law on Associations and Foundations (LAF) in North Macedonia, adopted in 2010, governs civil society organisations (CSOs) and aligns with European human rights standards. However, two key shortcomings remained limiting the law’s full compliance with international standards.

The first one is the 2022 amendments<sup>1</sup> which introduced provisions that prohibit the use of specific names<sup>2</sup> for organisations and established a «Commission for Use of Names» tasked with granting consent for the use of historical figures’ names in association titles. These changes were made in response to public and political pressure<sup>3</sup>, raising questions about their necessity and alignment with international human rights norms. One of the primary concerns is the retroactive application of the law. The amendments require already registered organisations to comply with the new naming restrictions, resulting in erasure from the registry (de facto banning) if they fail to comply. This raises serious constitutional concerns, as retroactive law application is generally prohibited under North Macedonia’s legal framework. Additionally, the establishment of a non-judicial body—the Commission for Use of Names—with decision-making power over association registration raises concerns about their compliance with international standards.

In line with these amendments, in 2024 the Administrative Court (Case [No. U-5.519/2023, dated September 25, 2024](#)) dismissed the lawsuit filed by the Cultural Centre Ivan Mihailov in Bitola. The case

<sup>1</sup> Law amending the Law on Associations and Foundations. *Official Gazette No. 239/2022*.

<sup>2</sup> Including nicknames, pseudonyms, initials of persons who on any basis, manner or form, 'were or are related to' racial, religious, national, ethnic and other intolerance, hatred, genocide, extremism, spreading or supporting fascism, Nazism, National Socialism and the Third Reich.

<sup>3</sup> Since 2019 several "cultural clubs" of the Bulgarians in North Macedonia applied for legal registration at the Central Registry and were registered as associations. In 2022 their activity became more publicly visible with the ceremonial opening of the clubs including participation of high dignitaries of Republic of Bulgaria. The clubs and associations were named after historical persons. Two of them, particularly the club *Ivan Mihailov club* in Bitola and the *Tsar Boris III club* in Ohrid, provoked significant hostile sentiments among the population, who perceived them as reincarnations of the fascistic ideology of WW2. Their registration caused fierce debate (even among the expert public) on the legality of their registration, since the use and celebration of the aforementioned historical figures instigates ethnic hate, violates the rights of others and infringes the constitutional order of the country. *Official Gazette, 239/2022*.

was against the Ministry of Justice's decision, which determined that the association's name was not compliant with the 2022 amendments to the Law on Associations and Foundations on the use of names of historical figures in names of organisations. As a result, the association was removed from the Central Registry. The decision is currently under review by the Higher Administrative Court.

Another issue within the LAF is the vague definition of the non-partisan principle<sup>4</sup>, which requires NGOs to operate independently from political affiliations. The law prohibits civil society organisations from performing activities on behalf of or for a political party, influencing elections, and providing direct or indirect financial support to political parties. While the principle of non-partisanship is vital to ensuring the independence of CSOs, the imprecise language used in the law raises concerns about its interpretation and potential misuse. The terms «performing activities for a political party» and «impacting elections» are not clearly defined, creating legal uncertainty that may allow authorities to selectively target CSOs engaged in legitimate advocacy, election monitoring, or public policy debates. A restrictive or overly broad interpretation of the non-partisan requirement could lead to self-censorship among CSOs, discouraging their participation in democratic discourse owing to fear of legal repercussions. This could significantly undermine civic engagement and pluralism, which are fundamental democratic principles. It is also worth mentioning that there has been an ongoing process for amending the Law on Associations and Foundations since 2022, currently being undertaken by a working group within the Ministry of Justice. The objectives of this amendment process were outlined in the Government's Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society (2022 – 2024).<sup>5</sup>

The Law on Public Assemblies aligns with most international standards and has not changed in 2024. However, issues remain in 2024 that need to be addressed to be fully in line with international standards. These include the requirement for prior notification for public assemblies organised by non-citizens and the legal definition of the minimum number (at least 20 people) of attendees necessary for a gathering to be classified as a public assembly.

The Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation guarantees freedom of expression and regulates restrictions on this freedom due to damage to the reputation and dignity of a person. To avoid arbitrary interpretation, the law defines specific exceptions where liability for insult or defamation does not apply. These exceptions are important because they serve as a safeguard or protective mechanism against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), even though such lawsuits are not explicitly identified or named in the Law. While the law does not directly reference SLAPPs, these built-in protections play a similar role by aiming to prevent the misuse of legal actions to silence public criticism or participation. However, there should be a greater emphasis on providing adequate training for judges and ensuring the effective implementation of these safeguards. These safeguards serve as grounds for exemption from liability for defamation. Judges may apply them in each specific case, but as of 2024, there is no available information on such cases.<sup>6</sup>

As a result of the inconsistent implementation of the Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation, the situation remains challenging in practice.

For example, in October 2024, the Judicial Council issued a [Public Reprimand](#)<sup>7</sup> against a judge who had excluded the media and the public from attending a hearing in a case of significant public interest (Feroinvest v. Investigative Reporting Lab—IRL). The decision from the Judicial Council clearly states that excluding the public from court hearings is a serious violation of transparency and the right to information, both of which are essential for media freedom.

4 Article 13 of the LAF states (1) Organisations cannot perform activities for a political party, i.e. cannot provide direct or indirect financing to a particular political party and influence the elections. (2) Influencing elections, in terms of paragraph (1) of this Article, shall be considered participation of the organizations in elections and election campaign for a particular political party and direct or indirect financing of the election campaign of a political party. *Official Gazette 52/2010*.

5 Legal recognition of other forms of association (informal associations); revision of the provisions on prohibition of non-partisan action and influence in elections; analysing the functionality of the model for acquiring public interest status; integrating the data of registered organisations into a single database in an open format; protection of the non-profit character; setting up general criteria for the method of state funding etc.). *Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society with Action Plan 2022–2024*, p.7.

6 To determine the effectiveness of these safeguards, it is essential to analyse all judgments related to insult and defamation. This task is labour-intensive, as the judgments are not published regularly or on time, and it requires specific, focused research.

7 Sakam da Kazam 2024a

The decline in media freedom was highlighted by both Freedom House and the Global Media Freedom Index, which reported a decrease in the country's ranking compared to 2023. Freedom House<sup>8</sup> ranked North Macedonia 67th in the world on the Global Freedom Score, as a partly free country in 2024, a slight deterioration from its 68th place ranking in 2023: and in 2024, the country has been considered to fit a transitional and hybrid regime, which was not the case the previous year.

According to the Global Media Freedom Index<sup>9</sup> from Reporters Without Borders, North Macedonia deteriorated its score to 36 in 2024, down from 38 in 2023 (the Index is based on a score ranging from 0 to 100 that is assigned to each country or territory, with 100 being the best possible score –the highest possible level of press freedom – and 0 the worst).

Regarding freedom of expression, the Constitutional Court ruled that the rights of a journalist's public expression of thought<sup>10</sup> were violated in two specific cases: (Case [No. U 11/2023 on January 10, 2024](#)<sup>11</sup>, and [Case No. 26/2023 on February 7, 2024](#)<sup>12</sup>). The Court found that both the Civil and Appellate Courts failed to recognise the capacity in which two journalists were present in Parliament during the events of April 27, 2017. One journalist was there to cover the presidential election and was unjustly prevented from doing so. The Court emphasised that the state must create conditions that allow journalists to report freely. This is especially significant given that the case law of the Constitutional Court recognising violations of freedom of expression has been limited to a handful of cases since 1992 to the present.

As a result of all the above-mentioned challenges, according to the Civicus Monitor, the civic space in North Macedonia remained narrowed/restricted in 2024, which is the same as in 2023.<sup>13</sup>

---

8 Freedom House 2024

9 Reporters Without Borders 2024

10 The Constitutional Court protects the freedoms and rights of the individual and citizen, including freedom of belief, conscience, thought, and public expression of thought, political association and action, as well as the prohibition of discrimination based on gender, race, religious, national, social, or political affiliation—all of which are integral to the broader right to freedom of expression (Article 16).

11 Constitutional Court <https://ustavensud.mk/archives/25522>

12 Constitutional Court <https://ustavensud.mk/archives/25838>

13 Civicus Monitor 2024, North Macedonia.

## SO 1.2. Public authorities protect CSOs from interference and attacks and respect their right to privacy.

### Indicator 1.2.a: Extent to which CSOs have access to an effective remedy to challenge or seek review of decisions affecting exercise of their rights

2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

There have been no noticeable changes since 2021 regarding Civil Society Organisations' (CSOs) access to an effective remedy to challenge or seek review of decisions that affect their rights. CSOs are allowed to contest or seek a review of decisions impacting their rights under the same rules, criteria, and procedures as other legal entities. From a legal perspective, they meet the requirements for legal standing.

However, many CSOs, especially smaller ones, encounter challenges accessing their right to legal remedies. Smaller CSOs often lack the means to hire skilled lawyers or tax/accounting consultants. At the same time, they do not have the in-house knowledge and expertise to formulate an effective appeal/lawsuit. Lacking this capacity results in poorly written appeals/lawsuits and an inability to predict and manage the legal risks to which the CSOs might be exposed during their mission achievement. This mainly concerns taxation, accounting, civil liability from events, insurance, and inspections. Pro bono legal services are scarce. In addition, lawyers often lack sufficient expertise in non-profit law when available. Additionally, CSOs do not have access to legal aid when they cannot afford to hire a professional lawyer, nor are they exempt from court and other procedural costs and fees. This absence of a tailored support system for CSOs contributes to a higher risk of fines, inability to perform their mission and loss of credibility among constituencies.

In 2024, 9% of respondents to a CSO survey indicated that government authorities made decisions that negatively impacted their ability to exercise their rights. This percentage suggests that the overall situation has remained relatively stable compared to 2023, when 15% reported similar issues. It also marks a decrease from 2021, when 20% of CSOs reported that government decisions adversely affected their rights.

In 2024, none of the respondents indicated they were able to challenge adverse decisions, compared to 2% in 2023 and 5% in 2021. This consistent pattern highlights ongoing difficulties in accessing legal remedies.

Equally concerning is the proportion of CSOs reported being unable to challenge such decisions. In 2024, 5% of respondents declared they were unable to challenge these decisions, a figure that is not significantly different from those of 2023 (10%) and 2021 (12%).

**Indicator 1.2.b: Extent to which CSOs are protected by law from threats, attacks, judicial harassment and discriminatory treatment, in particular:**

- threats including intimidation, harassment, defamation, as well as hate speech online and offline;
- attacks including acts of violence, physical abuse, searches and damage to property;
- judicial harassment including arbitrary arrest and detention, unlawful interference with communications, and abuse of criminal, civil and administrative proceedings or threats thereof;
- discriminatory treatment including disproportionate reporting requirements for CSOs.

2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In 2024, the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination and the Criminal Code remained unchanged. It is important to note that domestic legislation lacks a specific definition of threats and attacks against civil society organisations (CSOs). As for discrimination, CSOs are subject to the same general rules that apply to all citizens and legal entities.

Throughout the years, compared to 2021, the practice of malicious targeting of CSOs through inspections and investigations ceased. Some issues persist, particularly regarding the implementation of laws, which often do not align with their intended purpose. With the rise of anti-gender movements in recent years, CSOs focused on gender equality and the protection of LGBTQ+ rights have come under a smear campaign led by right-wing and conservative activists. This is frequently accompanied by the spread of misleading information and targeted references to specific civil society activists on social media, leading to a surge in hate speech and online threats against them. While the police have shown some willingness to identify perpetrators of online harassment, the processes involving prosecution and the courts remain slow.<sup>14</sup> The same challenges arise when CSOs are victims of Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPP). Although the law provides safeguards against SLAPPs, the application of these regulations has been inconsistent.

A landmark verdict in 2024 marked the first conviction in North Macedonia for hate speech based on sexual orientation in a case initiated by CSO. This verdict established a crucial legal precedent in the fight against discrimination and online incitement to violence. Despite hate speech being criminalised since 2014, no prior convictions have been issued, making this ruling a historic step toward enforcing protections for marginalised communities, particularly the LGBTQ+ community. By holding the defendant accountable for disseminating racist and xenophobic material through a computer system, the court has underscored the importance of legal consequences for hate speech, sending a clear message that such actions will not go unpunished. Although the suspended sentence reflects a moderate sanction, it represents judicial recognition of hate speech as a serious offence, paving the way for more vigorous enforcement and greater protection of human rights in the country.<sup>15</sup>

The case of journalist Miroslava Simonovska from November 2024 serves as an example of state intimidation and institutional pressure on reporters. It highlights an abuse of power by public prosecutors aimed at silencing critical journalism. The unauthorised surveillance of Simonovska, allegedly conducted by the Higher Public Prosecutor’s Office, emphasises the threats to media independence and privacy. Such actions contribute to self-censorship among journalists and weaken democratic accountability. Additionally, the fact that Mustafa Hajrulahi, head of the Higher Public Prosecutor’s Office, publicly shared the recorded video to a national television station raises serious concerns about state interference and the abuse of power against journalists.<sup>16,17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> BIRN, 2024

<sup>15</sup> Queer Centre, 2024

<sup>16</sup> SDK, 2024

<sup>17</sup> TELMA, 2024

According to Reporters Without Borders, the situation for journalists in North Macedonia in 2024 was not hostile; however, widespread disinformation and a lack of professionalism are leading to a low public trust in the media. This erosion of trust puts independent media outlets at risk of threats and attacks. Additionally, many government officials exhibit poor and demeaning attitudes toward journalists.<sup>18</sup> Still, according to the 2024 *Balkan Public Barometer*, 54% of respondents in North Macedonia expressed distrust in the media, while 41% reported having trust. This marks a significant shift compared to 2023, when media distrust stood at 66% and only 32% of respondents said they trusted the media.<sup>19</sup>

**Indicator 1.2.c: Proportion of CSOs that operate effectively without threats, attacks, judicial harassment, in terms of: - number of complaints concerning lack of protection of CSOs;**

- number of attacks on CSOs and their members;
- number of instances of damage to property;
- number of instances when CSO offices were unlawfully searched, subjected to inspections;
- number of instances of interference with the communications of CSOs.

In 2024, 13% of CSOs reported experiencing threats, physical attacks, property damage linked to such incidents, or being subjected to unlawful searches and communication interference by authorities. While this figure reflects a similar situation compared to 11% in 2023, it remains lower than the 23% recorded in 2021.

Encouragingly, the proportion of CSOs reported not experiencing any threat, physical attack, property damage, or unlawful interference has improved. In 2024, 81% of respondents indicated they had faced no such incidents, mirroring the 80% reported in 2023 and marking an increase from 67% in 2021.

According to data from the Register of the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (ZNM), the violations of journalists' and media workers' rights have been declining over the past three years. In 2022, seven attacks were recorded, of which two cases were legally resolved. In 2023, the number of attacks dropped to five, with two cases reaching a legal resolution, while in 2024, four attacks were recorded, with no legal resolution so far. It is worth mentioning that, according to the registry of cases of violations of journalists' and media workers' rights, maintained by the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (ZNM) since 2014 and publicly available on their website, a total of 90 cases have been recorded to date (2025). Of these, 30 cases involve female journalists, while 60 cases concern male journalists or media workers.<sup>20</sup>

Still, regarding SLAPP lawsuits against journalists and media workers, the numbers show an increase, rising from four lawsuits in 2021, five in 2022, and six in 2023 to eight lawsuits in 2024.<sup>21,22</sup>

Total number of SLAPPs in North Macedonia			
2024	2023	2022	2021
8	6	5	4

Hate speech in North Macedonia remains alarmingly high, with LGBTIQ+ individuals and activists frequently targeted through online threats, discrimination, and incitement to violence. The Helsinki Committee's latest report recorded 98 cases of hate speech in November 2024, indicating a consistent trend of hostility toward marginalised groups, including civil society activists and CSOs. Despite some legal progress, including the first court ruling against hate speech based on sexual orientation, enforcement remains weak, allowing such speech to spread unchecked. A critical concern is the deep mistrust in institutions. According to reports, 89% of LGBTIQ+ individuals do not believe that law enforcement or

<sup>18</sup> Reporters Without Borders 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Balkan Public Barometer 2024

<sup>20</sup> Associations of Journalists of Macedonia

<sup>21</sup> Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2024

<sup>22</sup> Associations of Journalists Macedonia, 2024

the judiciary will protect them due to systemic prejudice, homophobia, and transphobia.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, 80% of victims of violence choose not to report incidents, fearing inaction or further victimisation.<sup>24</sup> Discrimination complaints are mostly filed with CSOs (44%), the Commission for Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination (33%), or the Ombudsman (22%), but 77% of these cases remain unresolved.<sup>25</sup> This widespread lack of institutional response fuels self-censorship, fear, and the normalisation of hate speech. Without stronger institutional commitment, legal accountability, and proactive enforcement, discrimination will continue to undermine fundamental rights and social cohesion. Urgent systemic reforms are essential, including law enforcement training, judicial accountability, and more effective legal protections, to combat hate speech effectively and rebuild trust in institutions.<sup>26</sup>

The Skopje Pride parade has become a prominent example when hate speech has been sharply intensified in North Macedonia, with online attacks targeting President Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, the LGBTQ+ community, and ethnic minorities. The anti-LGBT group, “Take Responsibility”, has fuelled this discourse by using derogatory language and conspiracy theories to undermine her support for gender equality.<sup>27</sup> Hate speech has extended beyond the President Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, with inciting comments directed at Skopje Pride and the ruling VMRO-DPMNE party, including anti-Albanian rhetoric. This situation highlights how hate speech is used as a political weapon to discredit individuals and suppress marginalised communities, emphasising the urgent need for stronger protections against discrimination and online abuse.<sup>28</sup>

Despite all the challenges mentioned, the majority of public officials surveyed in 2024 believed that CSOs could operate effectively without facing threats, attacks, judicial harassment, or discriminatory treatment.

### SO 1.3. Measures used to fight extremism, terrorism, money-laundering or corruption are targeted and proportionate, in line with the risk-based approach, and respect human rights standards on freedom of association, assembly and expression

**Indicator 1.3.a: Extent to which laws to combat extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption do not unduly restrict legitimate activities of CSOs.**

2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In October 2024, Parliament passed amendments to the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism<sup>29</sup>. These amendments address deficiencies identified in the law by the Report of the fifth round of evaluation from MONEYVAL regarding the system to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing. They also align national law with EU legislation and fulfil the necessary criteria for joining the Single European Payments Area (SEPA) platform. Importantly, the 2024 amendments do not include provisions that may negatively impact the work of civil society organisations (CSOs).

<sup>23</sup> PINA, 2025

<sup>24</sup> PINA, 2025

<sup>25</sup> PINA, 2025

<sup>26</sup> PINA, 2025

<sup>27</sup> BIRN, 2024

<sup>28</sup> BIRN, 2024

<sup>29</sup> Official Gazette No. 208/2024

However, the issue of high fees<sup>30</sup> for registering a beneficial owner, an obligation established in the 2022 Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism, persisted in 2024. Since the end of 2022, the registered CSOs who failed to register their beneficial owner within 15 days have faced significant financial burdens to complete the registration. The tariff of the Central Registry introduced in 2022 is a progressive fee that has been substantially increasing the longer CSOs have missed the deadline. All those missing the deadline for over 90 days, need to pay 1050 EUR as a fee (not a fine) to complete the process.<sup>31</sup>

**Indicator 1.3.b: The proportion of CSOs whose ability to undertake legitimate activities is not restricted by the implementation of laws to combat extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption, and in particular by:**

- being judicially harassed for their alleged connections with extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption;
- discriminatory restrictions placed on funding;
- authorities or banks preventing them from opening bank accounts, sending or receiving money.

The findings from the CSO survey reveal a similar situation for civil society organisations regarding judicial harassment, discriminatory funding restrictions, and financial access issues over the past three years.

In 2024, 7% of respondents stated their activities were restricted due to judicial harassment, discriminatory restrictions based on funding sources, or difficulties accessing banking services. The situation remained similar in 2023, 11%, and in 2021, 12%. In addition, the proportion of respondents who were not restricted due to judicial harassment nor experienced discriminatory restrictions based on funding sources or difficulties accessing banking services remained the same: 87% in 2024 and 86% in 2023.

#### **SO 1.4. Public authorities treat all CSOs equally with regards to their operations, and equitably with other entities (such as businesses)**

**Indicator 1.4.a Extent to which laws (1) do not require CSOs to submit more reports and information, and (2) do not submit CSOs to more inspections and sanctions, than business entities, all else being equal.**

2024	5 – fully meets standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

Under the Law on Associations and Foundations, civil society organisations (CSOs) are required to publish their annual reports on their websites. Additionally, they must submit annual financial reports to the Central Registry, but only if their yearly turnover exceeds EUR 2,500. These requirements remained unchanged in 2024, meaning that CSOs, like businesses, must file annual financial statements. Inspections and sanctions apply equally to CSOs and companies, maintaining the same regulatory framework. However, business entities have additional obligations and face stricter penalties, particularly regarding profit distribution, which is more heavily regulated than in the non-profit sector. This legal framework ensures financial transparency while recognising the distinct nature of CSOs and business entities.

<sup>30</sup> Which effectively punish CSOs who fail to register beneficial owners in a timely manner

<sup>31</sup> Central Registry of Republic of North Macedonia

## SO 1.5. Central and/or local public authorities have enabling policies and rules for small community organisations and civic initiatives (grass-roots organisations)

**Indicator 1.5.a: Small community/local organisations and civic initiatives are allowed to operate by law without registering.**

2024	5 – fully meets standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

In 2024, as in 2023, informal groups have been able to operate without legal restrictions, except when engaging in activities that specifically require them to be registered as formal legal entities. This situation permits informal initiatives and grassroots movements to function freely, if they do not participate in activities that necessitate official registration under the law (such as state funding, entering into a legally binding contract, in the case of the organisation of an event when the issue of liability might not be clear, etc).

**Indicator 1.5.b: In law, unregistered small community/local organisations and civic initiatives enjoy the same right to participation in decision-making processes as registered CSOs.**

2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

The same as in 2023, the Code of Good Practices for Civic Participation in decision-making processes continues to guide the involvement of volunteer groups, non-profit organisations, associations, foundations, and advocacy groups in policy discussions. However, it remains a non-mandatory document, meaning that public authorities are not required to adhere to it, and its application depends on the discretion of individual institutions. Currently, there are no standardised legal norms, procedures, or consistent terminology governing public consultations at the various levels of decision-making. Instead, participation is determined on a case-by-case basis, with institutions independently deciding how and to what extent the public is involved. Consequently, both registered and non-registered groups, as well as individuals relevant to the topic, may be invited based on the institution's preferences rather than through a structured and inclusive process.

## SO 1.6. All CSOs are free to solicit and receive funding.

**Indicator 1.6.a: Extent to which relevant laws allow CSOs to seek a broad range of funding, including from abroad, without undue restrictions, as regards:**

- cash and in-kind donations from all sources;
- funding from domestic public bodies;
- funding from institutional, corporate or individual donors;
- funding from foreign governments or multilateral agencies

2024	5 – fully meets standards <sup>32</sup>
2023	5 – fully meets standards <sup>33</sup>
2021	5 – fully meets standards

In 2024, the legal framework in North Macedonia remained the same as in 2023, continuing to allow civil society organisations (CSOs) to receive funding from various sources. These sources include the state budget, municipalities, the City of Skopje, and foreign donors, with no legal restrictions on accessing diverse financial resources. However, if a CSO receives funds from institutions or countries associated with unconstitutional activities or potential terrorism financing, it may face additional scrutiny and restrictions to prevent money laundering and the misuse of funds. Additionally, regulations from the Anti-Money-Laundering (AML) and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) have led banks to implement stricter controls on CSO transactions. These require extensive documentation, which adds a significant administrative burden and makes it more challenging for CSOs to access and manage their financial resources efficiently. For example, some CSOs receive funding from private donors in Europe but face challenges with bank requests regarding the purpose of those funds.

**Indicator 1.6.b: Proportion of CSOs that can access a broad range of funding without undue government interference.**

The findings from the CSO survey reveal no significant changes in the application of restrictive practices, such as arbitrary audits, frozen accounts, and foreign agent registration requirements. In 2024, none of the surveyed organisations reported experiencing these forms of administrative pressure. This is consistent with 2023, when only 1% of respondents faced such issues, and with 2021, when the proportion was 2%.

Moreover, the percentage of CSOs that confirmed they had not experienced arbitrary audits, frozen accounts, or foreign agent registration requirements showed a slight improvement compared with 2021. In 2024, 92% of respondents indicated they faced no such restrictions, closely aligning with the 95% reported in 2023. This marks some improvement from 2021, when only 80% of respondents reported being unaffected by these measures.

<sup>32</sup> The assessments for 2023 and 2021 were changed to reflect a more rigorous application of indicator criteria.

<sup>33</sup> The assessments for 2023 and 2021 were changed to reflect a more rigorous application of indicator criteria.

## SO 1.7. Public financial and non-financial support to CSOs is available in IPA beneficiaries, and provided in a transparent, accountable, fair and non-discriminatory manner

**Indicator 1.7.a: The level of public funding available for CSOs and associations is clearly articulated in laws and regulations, and the rights and duties of the state body invested with the ability to set and revise the level of public funding available is clearly defined in law.**

2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

The situation regarding public funding at the central level in North Macedonia remains unchanged compared to 2023. It continues to be governed by the Law on Associations and Foundations, the Code of Good Practices for State Funding, the Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2022–2024, and the corresponding Action Plan<sup>34</sup> for the same period. Despite the Action Plan’s stipulation that state funding should cover 30% of the total income/turnover of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) by 2024, this percentage was not achieved and was not included in the state budget.

Challenges related to outdated legal regulations and practices, which were established decades ago, persisted in 2024. These regulations fail to address the current needs of civil society. Additionally, a standardised system for allocating state funding to civil society organisations by state institutions is lacking. Payment practices involving funds from accounts/central budget lines other than the designated 463 accounts for transfers to non-governmental organisations (such as budget lines number 464, 472, 425, etc.) continued complicating the inspection and supervision of overall state funding for civil society organisations in 2024.

In 2024, the former working group on state funding reform, established by the prior government and active from 2022 to 2024, shared their proposed draft legislative provisions with the Ministry of Justice. However, before the Ministry of Justice could provide a legal opinion on the matter, the Ministry of Finance issued a written negative opinion regarding the legal provisions that would regulate state funding and establish a State Fund for Civil Society. As a result, no further developments have occurred, and the process is currently stalled. Under the new government, the Ministry of Justice is in the process of re-establishing the working group to draft the new Law on Associations and Foundations, which will also include provisions for state funding.

**Indicator 1.7.b: Percentage of public budget actually disbursed to CSOs in a year.**

The rebalance of the Republic of North Macedonia’s budget for 2024 has effectively reduced the funds allocated to civil society organisations (CSOs) under budget line 463—transfers to non-governmental organisations. This adjustment has led to significant cuts in funding from several key ministries. For instance, the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations (MPSICR) initially planned to allocate 18 million denars (approximately EUR 295,000), but with the rebalance, these funds have been completely withdrawn. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, now restructured as the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth (MSPDY), originally allocated 532,422,000 denars (approximately EUR 8,690,000). However, the rebalance has reduced this amount by 15 million denars, leaving 517,422,000 denars (approximately EUR 8,413,000). This reduction, a significant blow, has had a direct impact on the operations of recipient organisations. The Agency for Youth and Sports (AYS) also experienced a reduction of about 85 million denars (approximately EUR 1,380,000). Furthermore, the rebalance has eliminated the funds planned

<sup>34</sup> State funding is also part of other Laws, such as the Law on Social Protection, the Law on Free Legal Aid, the Law on Environmental Protection, the Law on Disabled Persons Organisations, and the Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games.

for civil society organisations by the Agency for the Realisation of Community Rights (ARCR). At the same time, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MEPP) saw a decrease in its allocated funds from 50 million (approximately EUR 813,000) to 35 million denars (approximately EUR 570,000). Interestingly, although the overall amount allocated under budget line 463 has increased due to the rebalance (from approximately EUR 19,500,000 to approximately EUR 29,000,000), this increase is primarily due to funds allocated to the newly established Ministry of Sports, which received approximately 633 million denars (approximately EUR 10,000,000). The increase is also attributed to the rise in planned funds for political parties, which are also disbursed under budget line 463 through the Ministry of Justice. Unfortunately, the 2024 budget rebalance does not provide sufficient funds for the country’s continuous and comprehensive development of civil society organisations. The cuts affect CSOs in crucial areas such as human rights protection, social cohesion, non-discrimination, and inter-ethnic tolerance. Moreover, the rebalance fails to allocate funds for horizontal priority areas like the rule of law, gender equality, sustainable development goals, and the development of civil society—areas that are vital for the country’s progress and are often central to the programmes of many CSOs.<sup>35</sup>

The funding of CSOs from the local self-government units remained challenging in 2024, with the focus of these funds being concentrated mainly on sports and cultural organisations, with disparities between the regions. The Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation report of 2024, based on the data from 2023, showed that civil society organisations (CSOs) in North Macedonia received approximately 290.6 million MKD (around EUR 4.7 million) from municipal budgets. Most of these funds, reported by 78 out of 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje, were allocated under budget line 463 for transfers to NGOs, with a clear focus on sports and cultural organisations. The Southeast Region received the highest support, totalling 88.8 million MKD (approximately EUR 1.4 million), primarily from the Municipality of Strumica, which allocated over 42 million MKD (approximately EUR 700,000). The Vardar Region followed with 49.4 million MKD (approximately EUR 800,000), mainly from Kavadarci.<sup>36</sup>

In comparison, the Skopje Region allocated 41.9 million MKD (approximately EUR 680,000), led by Municipality Centar’s 15.2 million MKD (approximately EUR 250,000). Notably, the City of Skopje did not report any funding for CSOs. Similar patterns were observed in the East, Northeast, and Pelagonia regions, with municipalities like Shtip and Kumanovo focusing on sports-related organisations. In comparison, the Polog and Southwest regions received the least support, a total of 12.2 million denars (approximately EUR 200,000) and 9 million denars (approximately EUR 150,000), respectively, with some municipalities, including Ohrid, reporting no funding at all. Overall, the report reveals a municipal financing concentration on sports and culture and significant disparities in support levels between municipalities, which highlights the challenges in achieving balanced support for civil society across the country.<sup>37</sup>

**Indicator 1.7.c: Extent to which legal provisions regulating the award of public funding to CSOs ensure that:**

- funding criteria are clearly defined, objective and publicly announced;
- evaluation of proposals is clear and impartial;
- conflict of interest is clearly regulated;
- reporting requirements are clear and proportionate.

2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

<sup>35</sup> ‘The Budget Rebalance of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2024 has de facto reduced the funds allocated to civil society organisations’, Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation.

<sup>36</sup> MCIC, 2024

<sup>37</sup> MCIC, 2024

The legal provisions governing the award of state funding remained unchanged in 2024. As in 2023, the existing Law on Associations and Foundations indicates that associations and foundations can receive funds from the state budget, municipal budgets, and the City of Skopje. It also grants the Government, municipalities, and the City of Skopje the authority to establish criteria for distributing and using these funds.

Under the current framework, funds are based on annual plans and programmes adopted by the government and local government units. However, there are no legal provisions that outline clear guidance or establish minimum standards for the development of these documents. The LAF also fails to regulate or delegate authority to adopt a specific bylaw that would define essential elements such as the criteria for fund allocation, the procedure for awarding funds, the composition of evaluation commissions, and mechanisms for monitoring and oversight. The absence of such regulations leaves room for inconsistencies in how funds are distributed and reduces the transparency of the process.

The Code for Good Practices on State Funding from 2007 remains a relevant reference point for improving the system. However, as a form of soft law, it is non-binding and lacks the legal force required to ensure compliance. Despite its comprehensive guidance, its implementation depends heavily on the willingness of institutions to adhere to its principles. Transforming this Code into a binding legal norm could provide a solid foundation for establishing more transparent and accountable funding procedures.

The absence of legal standards or norms requiring institutions to adhere to clear, objective criteria, particularly for preventing conflicts of interest, remained an issue in 2024. This lack of standards also affects the mechanisms for open and transparent monitoring and evaluation of the application process. Consequently, the transparency and accountability of state funding continued to be vague and somewhat arbitrary, as noted in the State Audit Report for the Ministry of Culture. The report pointed out that unclear legal standards and norms mandating institutions to adhere to specific criteria for transparency and accountability had led to numerous inconsistencies and irregularities.<sup>38</sup>

**Indicator 1.7.d: Central governments make the information on awards publicly available and sufficiently detailed to identify individual awards.**

2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

Even though the latest assessment conducted in 2024 (for 2023) by Metamorphosis<sup>39</sup>, revealed that North Macedonia exceeds the regional average of 59.10% in terms of openness and transparency of the Government, and that it is the only country in the region that actively implements a dedicated Government Transparency Strategy, nevertheless, in practice challenges remain, particularly regarding the availability of detailed information about awards to the public.

Compared to 2021 and 2023, there have been no significant changes in central government institutions' openness and transparency, particularly in publicly available detailed information about awards. The situation also remained challenging in 2024 on account of the lack of clear legal standards and norms. Most awards are published on institutional websites but often lack sufficient details about the evaluation process, methodology, and application rankings. Furthermore, the information provided is frequently problematic to search for and access, raising concerns about the transparency and openness of these processes.

For instance, the State Audit Office's report published in 2024 identified serious transparency issues and deficiencies in the Ministry of Culture's project funding for 2023. The report highlighted a lack of clear criteria, oversight, and accountability in allocating 318 million denars (approximately EUR 5.15 mil-

<sup>38</sup> Solucija, 2024

<sup>39</sup> Metamorphosis, 2023

lion). The audit uncovered non-transparent selection processes, unclear qualifications for commission members, and subjective evaluation criteria, which created opportunities for favouritism and inconsistent categorisation of projects. Additionally, some projects were funded outside of regular competitions, and certain legal entities received support beyond established limits, compromising fair distribution.<sup>40</sup>

On a positive note, however, it is worth mentioning that in response to the 2023 State Audit Office report highlighting irregularities in state funding from the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the newly appointed Minister in April 2024 has announced the 2025 Annual Competitions for Funding Projects of National Interest across various cultural fields. These competitions aim to support projects that promote and preserve North Macedonia’s cultural heritage in disciplines such as the visual arts, architecture, drama, museum activities, literature, music, and international cooperation. For the first time, applications must be submitted electronically through the National e-services portal, marking a shift towards digitising public funding processes. The Ministry’s financial support will align with the 2025 national budget, and the results of the competition will be communicated electronically and published on the Ministry’s website. Applicants will also receive detailed feedback. Additional information and technical assistance are available through designated contacts at the Ministry and on the National e-services portal.<sup>41</sup>

**Indicator 1.7.e: Proportion of CSOs indicating that the provision of domestic public funds is transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory.**

2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	1 – does not meet standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

The findings from the CSO survey reveal ongoing concerns about the transparency and fairness of state funding, with little improvement observed over the past three years. In 2024, only 10% of respondents described state funding as transparent and fair, a proportion like 2023 with 14%, and to 2021 with 5%.

The data show persistent concerns, particularly regarding transparency. In 2024, 68% of respondents stated that state funding was not transparent. This figure is consistent with the results from 2023 (65%) and nearly identical to the 69% reported in 2021. This situation highlights ongoing challenges in ensuring clear and accountable funding practices.

The figure for the perception that state funding is sufficiently or very fair has remained unchanged. In 2024, 13% of respondents held this view, which aligns with the proportion reported in 2023 (19%) and 10% recorded in 2021.

In contrast, the 2024 Public Officials’ survey revealed that most respondents perceived the authorities as being sufficiently open, fair and inclusive in the provision of public funds.

**Indicator 1.7.f: Public funding does not exclude CSOs on the basis of their constituency representation.**

The CSO survey findings indicate significant changes in civil society organisations’ engagement with public funding over the past three years. In 2024, 36% of CSOs applied for public funding, down from 42% in 2023 and 54% in 2021.

Among those who applied in 2024, 60% were unsuccessful, an improvement from the 73% in 2023 and 81% in 2021, indicating some progress in accessing funds. Reasons for rejection showed a shift: 42% cited favouritism by authorities (down from 61% in 2023), while 25% noted intense competition as a factor, a rise from the 7% in 2023. Additionally, 17% felt excluded from funding based on their constituencies,

<sup>40</sup> A1 ON, 2024

<sup>41</sup> Ministry of Culture, 2024

similar to 10% in 2023, but relatively consistent with the 15% in 2021.

Furthermore, 39% of respondents did not apply because of a perceived lack of success chances, similar to 44% in 2023. Lack of awareness about funding opportunities affected 23% of respondents, and 18% were discouraged by insufficient funding, figures consistent with previous years. The proportion of CSOs not applying because they did not need public funding remained stable at 19%.

Contrary to the CSO respondents, most public officials surveyed in 2024 perceived their institution's state funding as inclusive, believing it adequately supports a diverse range of CSOs, including those working with various target groups, serving multiple communities and beneficiaries, and addressing a wide variety of topics.

## SO 1.8. Individuals and corporations enjoy tax benefits for their donations to CSOs.

### Indicator 1.8.a: Tax legislation allows for tax relief as regards:

- Individual giving
- Corporate giving

2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

On account of the deficiencies and limitations of the Law on Donations and Sponsorship, the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the Network for Financial Sustainability of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), initiated the process of amending the Law in 2022. While the draft version of the amended Law was published in January 2024,<sup>42</sup> on the *Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations* for comments and feedback, it had not been adopted by the end of 2024. These amendments were developed through collaborative efforts and consultations within a working group that included the Network for Financial Sustainability of CSOs in Macedonia. The proposed changes aim to introduce expanded tax incentives to encourage philanthropy and financial contributions to public interest activities. Key measures include individuals who donate to legal entities engaged in activities of public interest being eligible for a personal income tax reduction or refund of up to 20% of their annual income tax, capped at 24,000 denars (approximately EUR 400). In addition, key fiscal measures include corporate profit tax deductions of up to 10% for long-term donations, and VAT exemptions on goods and services donated to support public interest activities.

Additionally, property and material goods donations would be exempt from inheritance and gift tax. These amendments are designed to simplify the donation process, reduce administrative burdens, and promote long-term financial support for civil society initiatives. By doing so, they aim to strengthen the culture of giving in North Macedonia, with the expectation that they will be adopted in 2025.

### Indicator 1.8.b: Proportion of private individuals who have given money to a CSO.

According to the Charities Aid Foundation's World Giving Index 2024, in North Macedonia, 45% of people donated money in 2024<sup>43</sup>, compared to 39% in 2023, 51% in 2022, and 45% in 2021.

<sup>42</sup> Unique National Register of Regulations, 2024

<sup>43</sup> World Giving Index 2024

## SO 1.9. Tax benefits are available to CSOs.

### Indicator 1.9.a Extent to which applicable tax laws provide for the following:

- CSO income generated from grants, donations, and membership dues, income from economic activities, investment income, real property, gifts and inheritance is not subject to taxation;
- Any excess revenue or profit generated through economic activity and used for mission-related purpose by CSOs is not subject to corporate income/profit tax.

2024	3– moderately meets standards
2023	3– moderately meets standards
2021	3– moderately meets standards

The tax benefits available to civil society organisations (CSOs) in North Macedonia remained unchanged in 2024, maintaining the same provisions as in 2021. Organisations registered under the Law on Associations and Foundations continue to be exempt from profit tax, provided they operate within the specified legal framework. Non-taxable revenues, as defined by the Law on Profit Tax, include membership fees, charitable contributions, donations, grants, gifts (both monetary and in-kind), legacies, dividends from trade companies established with association funds, and funds received from the state budget, local self-government budgets, and the Budget of the City of Skopje. Moreover, donations in the form of property given for public interest remain exempt from property tax for five years following the donation, in accordance with the Law on Donations and Sponsorships.

Civil society organisations that engage in economic activities as part of their not-for-profit mission (and profits are reinvested) are also subject to taxation as revenues if the total annual revenue from economic activities (that is reinvested for the organisation’s mission) exceeds 1,000,000 denars (EUR 16,000) when 1% tax is applied only to the amount exceeding this threshold.

The process to adopt the Law on Social Enterprises in North Macedonia began in 2015, aiming to allow civil society organisations to engage in income-generating activities aligned with their social missions. This would help diversify funding and reinvest surplus into public benefit objectives. Although the law was expected to be adopted in 2024 (published in the *Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations*) delays occurred, and it was not adopted despite two EU-funded Technical Assistance projects. The proposed law includes tax exemptions for employing marginalised groups and for social enterprises.

## SO 1.10. The policies and legal environment provide incentives and facilitate volunteering for and employment in CSOs.

### Indicator 1.10.a: Laws regulating volunteering are adopted.

2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

Volunteering in North Macedonia is regulated by the Law on Volunteerism, which was enacted in 2007. However, the amendments to the Law on Volunteerism remained unadopted in 2024. These amendments were intended to clarify the roles of volunteer organisers, define requirements for organisations hosting volunteers, introduce volunteering opportunities into public institutions, state bodies, and local self-governments, and establish a volunteer register within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. Additionally, they aimed to formally recognise the National Council for the Promotion and Development of Volunteering, an advisory body responsible for overseeing strategy implementation and promoting volunteering. Despite the significance of these amendments in improving the legal framework for monitoring, they were not adopted in 2024, nor was the National Council established.

### Indicator 1.10.b: Government volunteering strategies and programmes support volunteering for CSOs and have sufficient resources allocated for implementation.

2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

Despite the existence of the National Strategy for Promoting Volunteerism (2021–2025) and its accompanying Action Plan, both initiatives remained underfunded and lacked sufficient resources in 2024, just as they did in the previous year. Additionally, the National Council for the Promotion and Development of Volunteering has yet to be established, which further hampers the effective implementation of volunteering policies. The National Youth Strategy (2016–2025) emphasises that both local and national institutions do not invest adequately in volunteering or actively promote it among young people. The strategy also underscores the importance of volunteering as a vital component of the education system, extending its relevance beyond vocational education and training (VET) to all levels of education. Meanwhile, incentives and support for volunteering have remained stagnant. Volunteers continue to receive tax-free reimbursements for expenses related to their work, including training, food, and transportation. Additionally, civil society organisations (CSOs) that engage interns through employment programmes can obtain subsidies to cover volunteer-related costs. However, state-supported programmes aimed at encouraging volunteering have not evolved, limiting the potential for further expansion of volunteer engagement.

### Indicator 1.10.c: Proportion of CSOs that benefit from state employment strategies and programmes.

The findings from the CSO survey indicate similarity in the proportion of organisations that reported benefiting from government employment strategies in 2024. Only 3% of respondents stated that they accessed such benefits, a decrease from 11% in 2023 and 10% in 2021. In previous years, a larger share of CSOs reported utilising these strategies, with many organisations leveraging the support to promote internship programmes and, in 2024, to employ marginalised groups and youth.

**Indicator 1.10.d: Proportion of CSOs that benefit from state volunteering strategies and programmes.**

The findings from the CSO survey reveal that the percentage of respondents benefiting from state volunteering programmes in 2024 remained low, consistent with previous years. In 2024, only 5% of CSOs reported receiving support through these programmes, which is similar to 6% in 2023 and 7% in 2021.

**Indicator 1.10.e: Proportion of employees in CSOs in relation to the total workforce.**

In 2024, the workforce in North Macedonia totalled 790,813 people, according to data from the World Bank.<sup>44</sup>

Based on the Central Registry's methodology, the CSO sector, encompassing all types of organisations regardless of their primary area of work, employed 2,619<sup>45</sup> people. This represents 0.33% of the country's total workforce. This proportion remained stable though out the years.

Proportion of employees in CSOs in relation to total workforce			
2024	2023	2022	2021
0,33	0,33	0,32	0,33

**Indicator 1.10.f: Percentage of people who have volunteered to give their time to an organisation.**

According to the CAF World Giving Index 2024, the proportion of people in North Macedonia who volunteered their time for an organisation remained the same as in the 2023 report, 9%.<sup>46</sup> This places the country among the bottom ten globally in terms of volunteer participation.

In previous years, the volunteering rate was 14% in 2022 and 11% in 2021, suggesting a gradual decline in participation.

44 <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=MK>

45 Data requested from Central Registry of Republic of North Macedonia ([www.crm.org.mk](http://www.crm.org.mk)), submitted 14 March 2025, data received 30 April 2025

46 World Giving Index 2024



## Specific Objective 2

### Strengthened cooperation and partnership between CSOs and public institutions.

#### SO 2.1. Public authorities and institutions include CSOs in decision- and policy-making processes.

##### Indicator 2.1.a: Laws, bylaws, strategies, other acts of public interest and policy reforms are effectively consulted with CSOs in that:

- CSOs have access to the draft document from the beginning of the drafting process to the end of the adoption procedure;
- At least 15 days are allowed for commenting before the draft document enters adoption procedure;
- The use of extraordinary/expedited procedures to adopt legislation without allowing for consultation is an exception and duly justified;
- Reports on results of public consultations, including reasons for rejection of comments, are published in a timely fashion;
- Working groups members from CSOs are selected based on a public call, clear criteria and in line with equal treatment;
- Working group members from CSOs include representatives of society as a whole, including women's groups, LGBTIQ groups, migrant groups, minorities, disability groups, and others as appropriate, in line with the Human Rights Based Approach.

2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

The findings from the 2024 assessment indicate a continuous deterioration of the effectiveness of the consultations with civil society regarding policy creation, decision-making, and the drafting of legislation, policy documents, strategies, and other key reform processes. This situation is similar to the situations observed in 2021 and 2023, highlighting persistent challenges in ensuring meaningful civil society involvement in decision-making. Article 10 of the Law on the Organisation and Work of State Administration Bodies<sup>47</sup> outlines clear requirements for state authorities to engage citizens and civil society through public announcements, public forums, and consultations with interested associations and legal entities when drafting laws and regulations. Despite these legal provisions, the practical implementation of these measures continues to fall short. Additionally, two key government documents – the Methodology for Policy Analysis and Coordination<sup>48</sup> and the Methodology for Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)<sup>49</sup> – provide further guidance on ensuring inclusive and transparent consultation processes. However, progress in aligning practice with policy remains limited. The annual reports from the Ministry of Information Society and Administration concerning the RIA process reveal the findings regarding its application in practice.<sup>50</sup>

Public consultation processes in North Macedonia have faced significant challenges in recent years, marked by declining engagement, reduced transparency, and limited inclusion of stakeholders in deci-

<sup>47</sup> Law on the Organisation and Work of the Bodies of the State Administration.

<sup>48</sup> Official Gazette 52/2006

<sup>49</sup> Official Gazette 37/2008

<sup>50</sup> Unique National Register of Regulations, 2025

sion-making processes. The *Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations* (ENER), the primary platform for public consultations, has experienced a notable decrease in published regulations, reflecting a weakening of participatory policymaking.<sup>51</sup>

In the past years, the number of published regulations per year varied between 78 in 2021, 49 in 2022, 59 in 2023, and 48 in 2024.<sup>52</sup> This sharp decline suggests a reduction in the use of *Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations* as a consultation platform and a broader weakening of participatory processes, raising concerns about transparency and stakeholder inclusion in legislative development.

The decline in public consultations is further reflected in the continued challenges surrounding the implementation of the Code of Good Practices for Civic Participation in Decision-Making Processes<sup>53</sup>. This document, designed to enhance CSO engagement in developing strategies, programmes, action plans, and legislation, remains challenging, with no observed progress since 2021. While the Code is non-binding, it provides valuable recommendations for improving CSO participation in policymaking. The framework has not effectively compensated for its limited implementation of Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIA), where public consultations are intended to play a key role.

The lack of meaningful and structural consultations was noted for the Growth Plan and Reform Agenda processes by the Reform Agenda Monitor Report conducted by the European Policy Institute – Skopje. North Macedonia submitted its Reform Agenda on schedule despite the election year, receiving approval from the European Commission (EC) in October. This agenda includes 37 reforms and 136 measures set for implementation from December 2024 to August 2027, focusing on institutional strengthening and stakeholder engagement. Its development was urgent, under the influence of political shifts, yet largely disconnected from the public. Consultations with civil society and experts occurred in late 2023 and April 2024, organised by the Secretariat for European Affairs, but the record of these discussions is limited. Interviews with the public officials conducted as part of this monitoring suggested that national consultations were brief and limited in participation owing to time constraints. A follow-up presentation aimed at updating stakeholders lacked reliable draft documents, making meaningful input difficult and resulting in discussions that were more informational than consultative.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the numerous discussions in the past and a draft model for civil society inclusion in the EU accession, presented by the Secretariat for European Affairs, backed by various donors, the country entered 2024 without a defined model.

The 2024 SIGMA report<sup>55</sup> on Public Administration in North Macedonia further underscores these issues. The report highlights that the country has one of the highest rates in the region for using non-standard («shortened» or fast-track) procedures to adopt laws, with 78% of Government-sponsored laws in 2023 passed through such procedures. This practice significantly limits the time available for preparation, analysis, parliamentary scrutiny, and debate, thus diminishing opportunities for meaningful public consultations. The Western Balkans' regional average for fast-tracked laws is 41%, highlighting North Macedonia's disproportionate reliance on these procedures.<sup>56</sup>

The SIGMA report also identifies weaknesses in implementing Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIA) and public consultations. While the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2023–2030 aims to improve evidence-based policymaking through RIAs and consultations, no comprehensive whole-of-government policy on better regulation has been established. Additionally, institution-

51 Between 2009 and 2015, the number of regulations published on ENER remained consistently high, typically exceeding 200 per year. However, starting in 2016, a noticeable decline began. That year saw only 77 regulations published, followed by 125 in 2017, 139 in 2018, and 185 in 2019. The downward trend became more pronounced in 2020, with only 25 regulations published.

52 Unique National Register of Regulations, 2025

53 Official Gazette 99/2011

54 EPI, 2025

55 OECD, 2025

56 OECD, 2025

al responsibility for managing and overseeing public consultations remains unclear and ineffective in practice. Public consultations focus only on laws and strategies, and exclude secondary legislation, further limiting opportunities for broader stakeholder engagement. Although the *Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations* (ENER) platform remains the central platform for consultations, the documents published there are often not the final versions approved by the Government, undermining transparency and public trust in the consultation process. Furthermore, monitoring and reporting on the outcomes of public consultations are weak, making it difficult to assess the quality of engagement or the impact of consultations on final policy decisions.<sup>57</sup>

In December 2024, progress was noted for improving consultation processes, by amending<sup>58</sup> and the adoption of the Decision for Establishing a Council for Cooperation Between the Government and Civil Society. Drafting the amendments, supported by the Technical Assistance for improving the enabling environment for Civil Society Organisations in the Republic of North Macedonia, introduced new obligations for civil society representatives to actively inform, consult, and engage key stakeholders and constituencies in their areas of work. The amendments also mandated that the Council hold quarterly sessions, reduced the number of members, and adjusted the list of ministry representatives to align with the reorganisation of state administration. Additionally, a new voting system was introduced, allowing CSOs to vote for different candidates within their designated work areas, alongside a mandatory minimum number of votes for election validity. These amendments were expected to help revive the Council, which had been non-operational for over two years.

While these amendments represent a positive step toward improving CSO engagement in decision-making, they fall short of addressing the broader structural challenges affecting public consultations. The fragmented availability of public consultation guidelines, according to the SIGMA report, which are spread across six different documents, contributes to confusion among public officials. As a result, only 56% of public officials in North Macedonia feel confident in the guidance available for conducting public consultations, compared to 73% in other Western Balkan countries. Public perception further reflects these shortcomings. Only 20% of citizens of North Macedonia believe that the Government effectively consults and involves stakeholders such as the private sector and civil society organisations in policymaking, notably lower than the 32% Western Balkan average.<sup>59</sup> This is in line with the findings from the 2024 Civil Society Organisation (CSO) survey, which reveals a decline in the proportion of CSOs effectively consulted during the drafting of laws and policies. In 2024, only 23% reported effective consultation, down from 35% in 2023 and 31% in 2021.

Nevertheless, the Public Officials' survey showed that the majority of the public officials perceived that they effectively consulted CSOs in drafting laws, bylaws and other strategic documents in 2024, which is contrary to the CSOs respondents' perceptions. Positive examples of CSO engagement included their participation in the development of municipal budgets, strategies, action plans, and other strategic documents. Public officials noted that CSOs were informed about these opportunities through open calls published on institutional websites, social media channels, and the *Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations* (ENER).

#### **Indicator 2.1.b: CSOs are effectively included in oversight mechanisms.**

This indicator was not assessed.

#### **Indicator 2.1.c: Proportion of CSOs that have participated in consultations during preparation of state reports under international human rights and other legal obligations, and the implementation of treaty body recommendations.**

This indicator was not assessed.

<sup>57</sup> OECD, 2025

<sup>58</sup> 'Invitation to Online Consultations on the Amendment of the Decision for Establishing the Council for Cooperation Between the Government and Civil Society', Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations at the Government of Republic of North Macedonia

<sup>59</sup> OECD, 2025

## SO 2.2. Public authorities and institutions acknowledge the importance of civil society in societal policy debate and EU integration processes.

**Indicator 2.2.a: Extent to which CSOs assess the attitude of public officials towards civil society as supportive.**

2024	1 – does not meet standards	16%
2023	2 – minimally meets standards	26%
2021	1 – does not meet standards	12%

The findings from the 2024 CSO survey indicate a similarity in perceptions of public officials' support for civil society organisations (CSOs). In 2024, only 16% of respondents described the attitudes of public officials as supportive, a change from 26% in 2023 and closely resembling the 12% reported in 2021. In contrast, the percentage of respondents who viewed public officials as non-supportive changed to 70% in 2024, up from 62% in 2023 and similar to the 73% recorded in 2021.

By way of contrast, a significant number of public officials surveyed assessed their support of CSOs as positive in 2024.

## SO 2.3. Public authorities contribute to civil society strengthening by cooperating with civil society through strategic policy frameworks and relevant institutional mechanisms.

**Indicator 2.3.a: Proportion of CSOs that were effectively consulted in the preparation of civil society cooperation strategies.**

In 2024, North Macedonia continued to implement its Strategy for Cooperation and Development of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) for 2022–2024,<sup>60</sup> adopted on December 28, 2021. Developed with support from an EU-funded project, the Strategy involved a comprehensive consultation with stakeholders to promote civil society engagement. As this strategy neared completion, the Government's Sector for Policy Analysis and Coordination Unit for Cooperation with CSOs began the consultation process for a new strategy for 2025–2028. In November 2024, the Unit for Cooperation published a call for stakeholder consultations to submit proposals for the new plan<sup>61</sup>. In total, nine CSOs submitted proposals. There was no public information about the type of proposals and whether they were accepted. The new strategy also includes and addresses the incomplete measures (around 40% realisation of the planned activities) from the previous action plan priorities. It will focus on three key areas: strengthening the legal and financial framework for CSO development, enhancing CSO involvement in democratisation and the EU integration process, and promoting the role of civil society in addressing socio-economic challenges at local and national levels.

According to an analysis conducted by the Civic Resource Centre on the implementation of the Government Strategy for Cooperation and Development of Civil Society, from 2022 to 2024, seven activities (8.6%) were fully implemented, while 20 activities (24.7%) were continuously being implemented or in total 33.3% have been implemented. Additionally, the initiation of 29 activities (35.8%) started but was not completed by the end of 2024. Furthermore, the implementation of 25 activities (30.9%) had not yet begun.<sup>62</sup> It is important to note that this analysis differs from the monitoring of the strategy's implementation carried out by the Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations. According to their

<sup>60</sup> Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2021

<sup>61</sup> NVO SORABOTKA, 2024

<sup>62</sup> Civic Resource Centre, 2025

report, 45.07% of activities have been implemented, 29.60% have been initiated but remain incomplete, and 24.70% of activities have not yet been implemented.<sup>63</sup>

**Indicator 2.3.b: IPA beneficiaries have adopted currently valid civil society cooperation strategies.**

2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

During 2024, North Macedonia continued to implement its Strategy for Cooperation and Development of CSOs for the period 2022–2024. It was adopted on 28 December 2021.

**Indicator 2.3.c: Civil society cooperation strategies are accompanied by adopted budgeted action plans.**

2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

North Macedonia has an active Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of CSOs 2022–2024, along with a corresponding Action Plan 2022–2024<sup>64</sup>. However, the Government has not allocated the necessary funds to support the implementation of the Action Plan.

**Indicator 2.3.d: Proportion of CSOs that rate civil society cooperation strategies as relevant and effective.**

In 2024, only 9% of respondents rated the Strategy for Cooperation and Development of CSOs as both relevant and effective, marking a change from 18% in 2023, but aligning closely with the 10% recorded in 2021.

**Indicator 2.3.e: Public structures responsible for the implementation of civil society cooperation strategies are appropriately resourced.**

The Unit for Cooperation with the Civil Society Sector<sup>65</sup> at the General Secretariat of the Government of North Macedonia is responsible for coordinating the implementation process of the Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of CSOs, guided by inputs from the Network of Public Officials tasked with monitoring the Strategy’s progress. As an advisory body, the Government’s Council for Cooperation with the Civil Society Sector, together with the Network of Public Officials, plays a key role in overseeing the Strategy’s implementation and fostering dialogue between CSOs and the Government. Additionally, relevant ministries are expected to provide support to ensure the effective execution of the Strategy’s objectives.

<sup>63</sup> Data was presented at the consultation session regarding the new Strategy for Cooperation 2025–2028 held in May 2025. The official report is not published yet.

<sup>64</sup> NVO SORABOTKA

<sup>65</sup> NVO SORABOTKA

The Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), which is part of the Sector for Policy Development and Coordination under the General Secretariat, currently operates with limited resources. Although these resources are considered adequate for handling the Unit's reduced workload, there are concerns about its ability to meet future demands effectively.

The Sector for Policy Development and Coordination consists of three units, with the Unit for Cooperation with CSOs as the only operational unit within the Sector. Although the Sector formally has 16 employees, most have been reassigned to other units because of the reduced workload. Currently, the Unit for Cooperation with CSOs has only four full-time employees, along with two additional staff members who handle requests. Despite this limited staffing, the reduced workload has allowed the team to manage its responsibilities effectively. The lower demand is attributed to the Council for Cooperation's ongoing two-year boycott, the lack of CSO funding distribution from the General Secretariat (the Unit for Cooperation with CSOs was mandated with state funding up until 2022 when these funds were transferred to the Ministry of Political System and Interethnic Relations, which was one of the main reasons for the boycott by the CSO members within the Council for Cooperation), and minimal engagement with public interest organisations. Under these circumstances, the current team has nevertheless been able to sustain operations. However, staffing challenges have arisen. In 2024, two employees left for other public sector positions, further diminishing the Unit's capacity at a critical time— although preparations are now underway for the election of new Council members in 2025 and the development of a new strategy for cooperating with CSOs. To effectively manage this increasing workload, the Sector requires at least two additional employees. To address ongoing staffing issues, a functional analysis was conducted within the General Secretariat, which recommended a new systematisation scheduled for implementation in 2025. This new structure is expected to restore some of the employees who were previously reassigned to other units. However, limited staffing has affected the Unit's ability to manage certain tasks. While the Unit continues to produce reports on state funding, public consultation processes, and strategy monitoring, resource limitations have hindered comprehensive oversight.

In terms of financial resources, the Sector's budget is integrated into the overall government budget, and the General Secretariat no longer maintains a dedicated budget for CSO support. Since 2022, state funding for CSOs has been managed by the Ministry for Political System and Interethnic Relations, with no funds allocated for CSO-related activities through the General Secretariat in 2023 or 2024. While most activities related to public consultations are financed by EU-funded projects, the Sector can still organise events on government premises when external funding is not available. In 2024, the Sector's budget covered only employee salaries, with no resources allocated for additional programmatic activities. Despite these financial limitations, the Sector is adequately equipped to host Council meetings and other engagements.

However, approximately two-thirds of public officials surveyed in 2024 believed that the Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society was adequately resourced with both financial and human capital. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy that only about one-third of public officials were aware of the name of the state structure responsible for implementing the Strategy in 2024.

**Indicator 2.3.f: Mechanisms for dialogue between civil society cooperation councils and central governments meaningfully include CSOs in that:**

- they have an agreed programme of work
- they have agreed rules of procedure
- they meet regularly
- rules allow CSOs to call the meetings and contribute to agenda setting
- there is adequate follow-up to conclusions and recommendations

2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	1 – does not meet standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

The Government Council for Cooperation with the Civil Society Sector, established in 2018, continues to serve as the main channel for consulting and engaging civil society in policy dialogue and decision-making processes in North Macedonia.

However, the Council for Cooperation with Civil Society remained inactive throughout 2024, continuing the trend observed in 2022 and 2023. This inactivity stemmed from a boycott initiated by civil society organisation (CSO) members in response to the government’s decision to revoke a previously adopted resolution from 2019. The boycott lasted nearly two years, and in July 2024, the terms of the current Council members expired.

During 2024, the Civic Resource Centre organised two events related to the Council’s work. The first session occurred in the first half of the year, before the expiration of the Council members’ mandates, to unblock the Council’s operations. Unfortunately, no progress was made. The second session took place in September when a new State Secretary was elected, who pledged to support the revival of the Council’s activities and enhance cooperation between the government and CSOs.

A notable change in 2024 has been the introduction of amendments to the Decision<sup>66</sup> Establishing a Council for Cooperation Between the Government and Civil Society, which was enacted in December 2024. These amendments include several key updates aimed at improving the Council’s functionality and engagement. The amendments also restructured the Council’s composition. They have included reducing the number of members, updating ministry representatives to reflect the recent reorganisation of state administration, and reassessing the areas of work for CSOs. Furthermore, the revised framework introduces a new voting system that allows each organisation to vote for different candidates within its designated area of work. To ensure the legitimacy of elections, a mandatory minimum number of votes has been established for elections to be considered valid. These amendments are expected to enhance the Council’s effectiveness, improve stakeholder engagement, and strengthen collaboration between the Government and civil society.

It is important to note that, despite the ongoing boycott of the Council’s activities, a survey conducted by the Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Organizations within the General Secretariat has shown that in 2024, 56% of respondents view the Council as a significant entity for cooperation and policy influence in civil society development. In contrast, 21% do not recognise the Council, while 23% have no opinion. This represents an increase of six percentage points compared to 2022, when 50.3% of the 296 civil society organisations (CSOs) surveyed acknowledged the Council’s importance for cooperation and policymaking.<sup>67</sup> Additionally, in 2024, 36.5% of organisations believed that the Council makes decisions and develops policies based on consultations with civil society. Meanwhile, 25.5% disagreed with this statement, and 38% had no opinion. This indicates a change from 2022, when only 30.7% of organisations believed that consultations with civil society informed the Council’s decisions and policies.<sup>68</sup>

<sup>66</sup> Official Gazette No. 268/2024.; NVO SORABOTKA, 2024

<sup>67</sup> The survey was conducted in January 2025 and in total 203 valid responses from CSOs were received

<sup>68</sup> Civic Resource Centre, 2025



### Specific Objective 3

## CSO capacity and resilience to carry out their activities effectively are reinforced

### SO 3.1. CSOs' internal governance structures follow the principles of good governance.

**Indicator 3.1.a: Proportion of CSOs that have an independent and effective governing body, with clear terms of reference to oversee the organisation's strategic goals, impact, management, legal compliance, and accountability.**

2024	3 – moderately meets standards	44%
2023	3 – moderately meets standards	44%
2021	2 – minimally meets standards	40%

In 2024, accountability and good governance continued to pose challenges for Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in North Macedonia, mirroring the situation in 2023 and 2021. According to a CSO survey, 44% of organisations reported having independent and effective governing bodies with clearly defined roles for overseeing strategic goals, impact, management, legal compliance, and accountability. This percentage was unchanged from 2023, reflecting a situation similar to 2021 when it stood at 40%. A notable issue is that 50% of the surveyed CSOs include paid staff members in their governing bodies. This raises concerns about role overlap and the integrity of governance. This percentage is similar to 2021 and 2023 when it was consistently 47%.

**Indicator 3.1.b: Proportion of CSOs that regularly check potential conflicts of interest with regard to the political, economic and personal relationships of their governing body.**

2024	1 – does not meet standards	12%
2023	1 – does not meet standards	13%
2021	2 – minimally meets standards	22%

Regular conflict of interest checks is crucial for good governance and accountability, yet they remain largely neglected by CSOs in North Macedonia. In 2024, according to the CSO survey, only 12% of organisations conducted annual reviews of potential conflicts of interest, showing a situation similar to that of 13% in 2023, and a decrease from 22% in 2021.

Findings from the CSO survey indicate that in 2024, 45% of organisations required their governing body members to sign conflict of interest declarations only once – upon assuming their roles – rather than reviewing them periodically. In addition, 26% of CSOs never request their governing body members to sign such declarations, raising serious concerns about transparency, ethical governance, and prevention of conflicts of interest in the sector.

**Indicator 3.1.c: Proportion of CSOs that share relevant information on their organisation, using the means and channels that are accessible to all stakeholders in terms of publishing.**

2024	2 – minimally meets standards	38%
2023	3 – moderately meets standards	42%
2021	2 – minimally meets standards	36%

CSO transparency is a crucial aspect of good governance and accountability. According to the CSO survey, 38% of organisations in 2024 had published their governing documents and structures on their websites. This is similar to the 42% in 2023, and 36% in 2021. Despite the legal obligations outlined in the Law on Associations and Foundations, 19% of CSOs did not publicly disclose this information in 2024, which is in alignment with the figure in 2023, which was 24%.

**Indicator 3.1.d: Proportion of CSOs that have an organisational gender equality policy.**

2024	2 – minimally meets standards	34%
2023	2 – minimally meets standards	35%
2021	2 – minimally meets standards	50%

Gender equality is crucial for the socio-economic development of peaceful societies. According to the 2024 CSO survey, 34% of respondents reported having gender equality policies in place. This figure is similar to the 33% reported in 2021 and 35% in 2023, indicating that the overall adoption of gender equality policies remains limited.

A deeper analysis of the survey reveals a notable gap between human rights organisations and non-human rights organisations regarding the implementation of gender equality policies. In 2024, only 31% of non-human rights CSOs reported having such policies, in line with the 30% in 2023. In contrast, 38% of human rights CSOs reported having gender equality policies in place in 2024, similar to the 40% in 2023.

**Indicator 3.1.e: Proportion of CSOs that have an organisational strategy, including vision, mission, and goals.**

2024	4 – meets most standards	79%
2023	4 – meets most standards	79%
2021	5 – fully meets standards	85%

A clear strategic framework—including a defined strategy, strategic plan, mission, vision, and goals—is essential for CSOs' effectiveness, sustainability, and impact. However, the proportion of organisations with such documents in place has not changed. According to the CSO survey, 79% of respondents in 2024 reported having these key documents, the same as in 2023 (79%), and similar to 85% in 2021.

### SO 3.2. CSOs are able to communicate the results of their activities to the public.

#### Indicator 3.2.a: Proportion of CSOs that have at least one on-line channel of communication.

2024	5 – fully meets standards	99%
2023	5 – fully meets standards	100%
2021	5 – fully meets standards	99%

According to the CSO survey, 99% of respondents reported using at least one communication channel to engage with the public and stakeholders in 2024, compared to 100% in 2023 and 2021.

Facebook remains the most widely used platform, chosen by a similar proportion of respondents, from 97% in 2023 and 96% in 2021 to 95% in 2024. Similarly, website usage remained similar, from 77% in 2023 and 68% in 2021, though decreasing to 60% in 2024. Instagram usage remained similar at 54% in 2024, compared to 59% in 2023, and increasing from the baseline 40% reported in 2021.

YouTube was utilised by 31% of the respondents in 2024, which was lower than the 43% in 2021 and 42% in 2023. In addition, messaging platforms have shown relatively stable usage, from 33% in 2021 to 36% in 2023 and 37% in 2024.

Conversely, X (formerly known as Twitter) was used by 12% of the respondents in 2024, a decrease from 24% in 2021, and more similar to 17% in 2023.

According to the results of the CSO survey, in 2024, organisations in North Macedonia predominantly used two to four communication channels. A notable 64% of these organisations engage with their stakeholders and the public through this range of channels. Specifically, 19% use three channels, and 20% utilise four channels.

#### Indicator 3.2.b: Proportion of CSOs that have specialised communication staff.

This indicator was not assessed.

#### Indicator 3.2.c: Proportion of CSOs that cooperate with the media.

According to the CSO survey, 26% of the respondents actively engaged with the media in 2024, which is similar to the 32% in 2023 and a decrease from the 38% of 2021.

CSOs cooperating with media		
2024	2023	2021
26%	32%	38%

### SO 3.3. CSOs are transparent about their programme activities and sources of funding.

#### Indicator 3.3.a: Proportion of CSOs that publish their annual reports and financial statements.

2024	3 – moderately meets standards	46%
2023	3 – moderately meets standards	57% <sup>69</sup>
2021	4 – meets most standards	66% <sup>70</sup>

The transparency and openness of civil society organisations (CSOs) demonstrate their commitment to accountability. In 2024, 46% of respondents reported that they published annual and financial reports. This is consistent with the previous years: 43% in 2023 and 52% in 2021.

On the other hand, 15% of CSOs did not publish an annual report in 2024, which is similar to 20% in 2023 and 17% in 2021. The main reasons for not publishing included inactivity during the reporting period, which exempted them from the legal requirement to do so.

Among those that did publish reports, 53% made their reports available on their websites in 2024. This figure is comparable to 66% in 2023 and 63% in 2021. Additionally, 32% of CSOs published hard copies of their reports in 2024, which is the same as the 31% reported in 2023, but shows a decrease from 48% in 2021.

#### Indicator 3.3.b Proportion of CSOs that publish information on their sources of funding and amounts received in the previous year.

2024	2 – minimally meets standards	34%
2023	2 – minimally meets standards	37%
2021	2 – minimally meets standards	35%

The results of the CSO survey indicate a similar situation regarding funding sources and amounts disclosed over the past three years. In 2024, 34% of CSOs disclosed the amounts and sources of their funding. This represents an alignment with 2023, when 37% of organisations reported full transparency, and with 2021, when the figure was 36%.

When it comes to publishing funding sources, 59% of organisations disclosed where their funding originated in 2024. This figure is similar to 2023, where 60% shared this information, and 68% in 2021.

In addition, 46% of respondents disclosed funding amounts in 2024, which was similar to 42% in 2023 and 2021, when the same percentage of organisations shared this information.

The proportion of CSOs that did not publish any funding-related information also remained similar to previous years. For instance, in 2021, 23% of CSOs published no details about their funding sources or amounts, which aligned with 26% in 2023. In 2024, the figure was 21%.

<sup>69</sup> The 2023 value for Indicator 3.3a was originally published as 43%. Following the recalculation of the value to rectify an error, the revised value for 2023 is 57%.

<sup>70</sup> The 2021 value for Indicator 3.3a was originally published as 52%. Following the recalculation of the value to rectify an error, the revised value for 2023 is 66%.

### Indicator 3.3.c: Degree of public trust in CSOs

According to the *Balkan Public Barometer*<sup>71</sup>, in 2024, only 32% of the public expressed trust in civil society, while 54% stated they did not trust this sector. This is similar compared to 2023, when 36% of the public reported having confidence in civil society. The proportion of those who did not trust the sector remained unchanged from 2023, when it was 55%.

Trust in Civil Society		Do not trust Civil Society	
2024	2023	2024	2023
32%	36%	54%	55%

## SO 3.4. CSOs monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work.

### Indicator 3.4.a: Proportion of CSOs that have carried out an evaluation of their work in the last year.

2024	4 – meets most standards	70%
2023	5 – fully meets standards	82%
2021	4 – meets most standards	80%

In 2024, 70% of CSOs conducted evaluations of their organisation, projects, or internal processes, reflecting a decline from 82% in 2023 and 80% in 2021. Still, the primary focus of evaluations has remained consistent. In 2024, project-related evaluations were the most common, conducted by 59% of organisations, followed by evaluation of internal processes (28%) and strategic evaluations (18%), mirroring patterns observed in previous years. Among the 11% of CSOs that did not conduct evaluations, the main reasons cited were the lack of a formal requirement, a perceived absence of necessity, or insufficient financial resources.

## SO 3.5. CSOs use research and evidence to underpin their work.

### Indicator 3.5.a: Proportion of CSOs whose work is based on evidence generated through research.

2024	4 – meets most standards	80%
2023	4 – meets most standards	77%
2021	4 – meets most standards	75%

The advocacy role of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) is crucial in addressing societal challenges, and its effectiveness relies heavily on the use of research-based evidence. In 2024, 80% of CSOs employed various research methods to inform their work, marking a similarity with 77% in 2023 and 75% in 2021. Among the research methods utilised, focus group discussions remained the most common in 2024, used by 50% of CSOs. Targeted surveys with specific groups followed, with 38% of organisations

<sup>71</sup> Balkan Public Barometer, 2024

employing this method, while desk research was used by 36%. Field research was conducted by 26% of organisations, public opinion surveys by 18%, and randomised control trials by 11%. These preferences align with the trends seen in 2023 and 2021. Still, some CSOs did not carry out any research to support their advocacy efforts. This figure was 17% in 2024, similar to 14% in 2023 and 11% in 2021.

**Indicator 3.5.b: Proportion of CSOs whose work is informed through consultation with people who have a stake in their current or future work.**

2024	5 – fully meets standards	91%
2023	5 – fully meets standards	94%
2021	5 – fully meets standards	94%

Stakeholder consultation remains a fundamental approach for CSOs to gather evidence and ensure their work aligns with societal needs. In 2024, 91% of CSOs reported engaging with various stakeholders, including local communities, members, local and national authorities, public institutions, private businesses, and academia. This represents an alignment with 2023 and 2021, when 94% of CSOs conducted such consultations.

Among the most frequently consulted groups, CSO members ranked 62%, followed by local communities (51%) and local authorities (48%). 42% of organisations engaged national authorities, 32% consulted public institutions, 29% collaborated with private businesses, and 21% sought academic input. These patterns have remained consistent compared to 2023 and 2021, reflecting established stakeholder engagement practices.

Despite the widespread use of consultations, 4% of CSOs did not engage with any stakeholders, a proportion that has remained relatively stable since 2021.

**SO 3.6. CSOs work in fair and respectful partnerships to achieve shared goals.**

**Indicator 3.6.a Proportion of CSOs taking part in local, central and international CSO networks.**

Networking remains a key strategy for CSOs to collaborate, amplify their impact, and achieve shared goals. In 2024, 81% of CSOs reported being part of a network—local, national, or international—closely aligning with the figures from 2023 and 2021, when 82% of CSOs indicated network participation.

CSOs taking part in local, central and international network		
2024	2023	2021
81%	82%	82%

National networks remain the most common form of affiliation, with 59% of CSOs engaged in them, followed by international networks (50%) and local networks (23%). This distribution has remained consistent over the years.

Despite the widespread participation in networks, 14% of CSOs remain unaffiliated, a proportion that has stayed unchanged in recent years.

**Indicator 3.6.b: Proportion of CSOs engaged in cross-sectoral partnerships with academia, social partners and private sector.**

In 2024, 60% of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) surveyed reported engaging in networks and cross-sector cooperation with universities, social partners, or private companies. This percentage is similar to 64% in 2023, but shows a decline from 72% in 2021.

CSOs engaged in cross-sectoral partnerships with academia, social partners and private sector		
2024	2023	2021
60%	64%	72%

In 2024, the private sector was the most common partner for cross-sector cooperation, with 38% of CSOs forming partnerships with private companies. This was followed by universities at 34% and social partners at 22%. This trend aligns with 2023, when cooperation with the private sector was similar at 43%, while partnerships with universities accounted for 35%.

**SO 3.7. CSO have a diversified funding base.**

**Indicator 3.7.a: Proportion of CSOs whose sources of donor income are diversified.**

2024	3 – moderately meets standards	60%
2023	3 – moderately meets standards	53% <sup>72</sup>
2021	3 – moderately meets standards	51%

Regarding donor diversification, 60% of respondents reported having a diversified donor base in 2024, indicating they received funding from at least two different types of donors, with no single donor accounting for more than 50% of their budget. This figure is different compared to 53% in 2023 and 51% in 2021. However, 40% of respondents reported a lack of such diversification.

The proportion of CSOs without donor support in 2024 was 16%, indicating a difference compared to previous years: 22% in 2023, and 11% recorded in 2021.

For the second consecutive year, the European Commission was identified as the most significant donor, chosen by 46% of respondents in 2024. While this represents a decline from 65% in 2023, it still reflects the Commission's dominant role in supporting CSOs. In 2021, the European Commission was ranked as the second-largest donor.

Local and national governments emerged as the second most significant source of funding in 2024, selected by 42% of respondents, similar to in 2023, when the figure was 47%. Close behind were foreign private foundations and international CSOs, both identified as significant donors by 40% of respondents. Additionally, 27% received funding from bilateral donors, 18% from intergovernmental organisations, and 14% from domestic private foundations.

When examining the extent to which European Union funds supported CSO budgets in 2024, responses

<sup>72</sup> The 2023 3.7.a was originally published as 50%. Following the recalculation of the value to rectify an error, the revised value for 2023 is 53%.

reflected varying degrees of contribution. For one-quarter of respondents, EU funds covered between 1% and 25% of their budgets. Another 21% reported that EU funding accounted for more than 50% of their budgets, while 18% indicated that EU support covered between 25% and 50% of their budgets.

State funding from local self-government units and the national government played a less substantial role. Among respondents receiving funding from local self-government units, only 25% reported that such funding covered between 1% and 25% of their budgets. The proportion of respondents whose local government funding exceeded 25% was negligible in 2024. Funding from national government sources was even more limited, with only 11% of respondents indicating that national funds covered between 1% and 25% of their budgets, and 7% stating that national funding accounted for between 26% and 50% of their budgets.

For CSOs relying on foreign private foundations, funding patterns were relatively balanced. An equal proportion of respondents (8%) reported that such funds covered either 1% to 25% or more than 50% of their budgets. Similarly, international CSOs contributed between 1% and 25% of the budgets of 16% of respondents, and 7% indicated that this source accounted for 26% to 50% of their funding; while 8% reported that international CSOs covered more than 50% of their budgets.

Bilateral donors also played a notable role. In 2024, 15% of respondents reported that bilateral donor funding covered between 26% and 50% of their budgets. A similar proportion (6%) stated that bilateral donors covered between 1% and 25% of their budgets, while 5% indicated that bilateral donors accounted for more than 50% of their funding.

**Indicator 3.7.b: Proportion of CSOs raising funds from sources other than donors e.g. membership fees, corporate/individual giving and income generating activities.**

2024	4 – meets most standards	74%
2023	4 – meets most standards	74% <sup>73</sup>
2021	5 – fully meets standards	63%

The results of the 2024 CSO survey indicate that 74% of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) reported having at least one source of income apart from donor funding. This proportion is same as 2023, and different from 2021, at 82%.

Among CSOs that have alternative income sources, the majority (37%) reported having two additional sources of income, followed by 19% with three sources, while 13% reported only one source. The proportion of CSOs with more than four income sources remains insignificant.

In terms of specific income sources, the most common revenue streams reported by CSOs in 2024 include: Membership fees – reported by 39% of respondents; Economic activities – reported by 33%; Individual donations – reported by 30%; Private business contributions – reported by 23%; Crowdfunding – reported by 5%, making it the least utilised income source.

For those generating income through membership fees, one third indicated that this revenue covered between 1% and 25% of their annual budgets. Similarly, around one quarter of CSOs earning income from economic activities and individual donations stated that these sources accounted for 1% to 25% of their budgets. The reliance on private business contributions was comparatively lower, with only 17% of respondents reporting that these revenues covered between 1% and 25% of their budgets. Meanwhile, crowdfunding remains the least utilised source of income, with just 5% of respondents indicating that crowdfunding revenues accounted for 1% to 25% of their budgets, a trend that is consistent with previous years.

<sup>73</sup> The 2023 value for Indicator 3.7.b was originally published as 78%. Following the recalculation of the value to rectify an error, the revised value for 2023 is 74%.

### SO 3.8. CSOs have effective, empowered and developed human resources.

#### Indicator 3.8.a: Proportion of CSOs that employ staff.

In 2024, 67% of civil society organisations (CSOs) reported employing at least one staff member, a difference from the 77% in 2023 and in line with 69% in 2021. In 2024, the most common staff size among CSOs was between one and five employees, with 38% of respondents indicating this. For larger numbers of employees, 16% of CSOs had more than ten, while 14% employed between six and ten staff members. This is similar to 2023, when 44% of respondents belonged to CSOs with one to five employees, 24% had between six and ten employees, and 10% employed more than ten staff members. In 2021, nearly half (48%) of respondents worked in CSOs with one to five employees, while the proportions of organisations with more than ten employees (11%) and those with between six and ten employees (10%) remained relatively stable. Notably, the percentage of CSOs that did not employ staff increased in 2024, at 31%, compared to 20% in 2023 and 26% in 2021.

CSOs that employ staff		
2024	2023	2021
67%	77%	69%

#### Indicator 3.8.b: Proportion of CSOs that have organisational human resources policies.

2024	1 – does not meet standards	0%
2023	1 – does not meet standards	0%
2021	1 – does not meet standards	0%

In 2024, none of the Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) reported having all key human resources policies in place (recruitment, diversity, equality, inclusion, disciplinary, grievance/complaints, performance evaluation, redundancy, performance evaluation, remuneration, and bullying, harassment, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults policies), mirroring the situation from 2021 and 2023 (with only one organisation having all policies).

The most commonly adopted policies in 2024 were those related to recruitment, diversity, equality, and inclusion, each adopted by 31% of CSOs. This proportion is similar to 2021, when 30% of organisations had these policies, but slightly different from 2023, when 42% had a recruitment policy. Additionally, policies addressing workplace protections—such as bullying and harassment—were maintained at 23%, the same level as in 2023. The percentage of organisations with performance evaluation policies remained similar, from 23% in 2023 to 15% in 2024. Other policies, including those for safeguarding children and vulnerable adults, disciplinary measures, and grievance and complaint mechanisms, remained unchanged from their 2023 levels.

The proportion of CSOs lacking any human resources policies saw a change: in 2024, 42% of organisations reported having no policies, compared to 32% in 2023 and 28% in 2021.

#### Indicator 3.8.c: Proportion of CSOs that have advertised publicly their staff and volunteering vacancies in the last year.

This indicator was not assessed.

**Indicator 3.8.d: Proportion of CSOs that have organisational policies encouraging recruitment of a diverse workforce.**

In 2024, 18% of CSOs reported having both a Recruitment Policy and a Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion Policy. This proportion is relatively consistent compared to 2023 (20%) and 2021 (13%).

**Indicator 3.8.e: Proportion of CSOs whose staff and volunteers have attended a training course in the past year.**

2024	5 – fully meets standards	78%
2023	5 – fully meets standards	77%
2021	5 – fully meets standards	79%

In 2024, 81% of CSOs reported supporting their employees and volunteers through various training programmes. This figure is relatively similar to 85% in 2023 and 82% in 2021.

## References

### Laws, Bylaws, Strategies and other Policy Documents

Short ref	Full description and name
Government of Republic of North Macedonia, 2021	Government Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2022–2024, Government of Republic of North Macedonia, December 2021 <a href="https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/sites/default/files/Strategija%20usvoena%2028%2012%202021.pdf">https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/sites/default/files/Strategija%20usvoena%2028%2012%202021.pdf</a>
Official Gazette No. 208/2024	Official Gazette 208/2024, (Amending the Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism), 9 October, 2024 <a href="https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/e7daa6d673824b91a13d03e318e0565d.pdf">https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/e7daa6d673824b91a13d03e318e0565d.pdf</a> <a href="https://ufr.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ZSPFFT-2024-izmena.pdf">https://ufr.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/ZSPFFT-2024-izmena.pdf</a>
Official Gazette 239/2022	Official Gazette 239/2022, page 2 (Amendments to the Law on Associations and Foundations), 2 November, 2022 <a href="https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/268136d2ec8c49da988a7b589c08816f.pdf">https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/268136d2ec8c49da988a7b589c08816f.pdf</a>
Official Gazette 52/2010	Official Gazette 52/2010, page 2 (Law on Associations and Foundations), 16 April, 2010 <a href="https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/623772ADC92FEE42A1DB496E1E190648.pdf">https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/623772ADC92FEE42A1DB496E1E190648.pdf</a>
Official Gazette 53/2005	Official Gazette 53/2005 (Law on Environment Protection), 5 July, 2005 <a href="https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/ACF1AC118E6F81438BE8DD53D5A613FO.pdf">https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/ACF1AC118E6F81438BE8DD53D5A613FO.pdf</a>
Official Gazette 101/2019	Official Gazette 101/2019, (Law on Free Legal Aid), 22 May, 2019 <a href="https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/93af90af565443e38308333c2c2146cd.pdf">https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/93af90af565443e38308333c2c2146cd.pdf</a>
Official Gazette 104/2019	Official Gazette 104/2019, (Law on Social Protection), 23 May, 2019 <a href="https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/e19ef6763a344beeaddf059157344512.pdf">https://www.slvesnik.com.mk/Issues/e19ef6763a344beeaddf059157344512.pdf</a>
Official Gazette 89/2008, 59/2012, and 23/2013	Official Gazette 89/2008, 59/2012 and 23/2013 (Law on Disabled People Organisations),
Official Gazette 99/2011	Official Gazette 99/2011 (Code of Good Practices for Civic Participation in Decision-Making Processes), 22 July, 2011 <a href="https://dejure.mk/zakon/kodeks-na-dobri-praktiki-za-uchestvo-na-gragjanski-ot-sektor-vo-procesot-na-kreiranje-politiki">https://dejure.mk/zakon/kodeks-na-dobri-praktiki-za-uchestvo-na-gragjanski-ot-sektor-vo-procesot-na-kreiranje-politiki</a>
Official Gazette 52/2006	Official Gazette 52/2006 (Methodology for Policy Analysis and Coordination), 20 April, 2006 <a href="https://dejure.mk/zakon/metodologija-za-analiza-na-politikite-i-koordinacija">https://dejure.mk/zakon/metodologija-za-analiza-na-politikite-i-koordinacija</a>

Short ref	Full description and name
Official Gazette 37/2008	Official Gazette 37/2008 (Methodology for Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA), 19 March, 2008 <a href="https://dejure.mk/zakon/metodologija-za-procenka-na-vlijanieto-na-regulativata">https://dejure.mk/zakon/metodologija-za-procenka-na-vlijanieto-na-regulativata</a>
Government of Republic of North Macedonia	Law on Games of Chance and Entertainment Games <a href="http://www.ujp.gov.mk/files/attachme nt/0000/0939/_____ .pdf">http://www.ujp.gov.mk/files/attachme nt/0000/0939/_____ .pdf</a>
Government of Republic of North Macedonia	Law on the Organisation and Work of the Bodies of the State Administration <a href="https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/zakoni/zakon_za_organizacija_i_rabota_na_organite_na_drzhavnata_uprava.pdf">https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/zakoni/zakon_za_organizacija_i_rabota_na_organite_na_drzhavnata_uprava.pdf</a>
Government of Republic of North Macedonia	Draft Law on Amending and Supplementing the Law on Donations and Sponsorships in Public Activities, Unique National Register of Regulations, 15 January, 2024 <a href="https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&amp;subitem=view_reg_detail&amp;itemid=73922">https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&amp;subitem=view_reg_detail&amp;itemid=73922</a>

## Analysis, journalists' texts and reports

Short ref	Full description and name
A1 ON, 2024	"The Ministry of Culture allocated 318 million denars for projects, lacking clearly defined selection criteria", A1 ON, Skopje, 15 October, 2024 <a href="https://a1on.mk/macedonia/ministerstvoto-za-kultura-isplatilo-318-milioni-denari-za-proekti-bez-jasno-definirani-kriteriumi/">https://a1on.mk/macedonia/ministerstvoto-za-kultura-isplatilo-318-milioni-denari-za-proekti-bez-jasno-definirani-kriteriumi/</a>
Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 2024	"Annual Non-Elective Assembly of Association of Journalists Macedonia Held: Preparing for New Challenges", Associations of Journalists Macedonia, Skopje, 6 December, 2024 <a href="https://znm.org.mk/одржано-годишно-неизборно-собрание-на/">https://znm.org.mk/одржано-годишно-неизборно-собрание-на/</a>
Associations of Journalists of Macedonia, 2024	Register of Violations of Journalists' Rights, Associations of Journalists of Macedonia <a href="https://znm.org.mk/povreda-na-novinari/">https://znm.org.mk/povreda-na-novinari/</a>
Balkan Public Barometer, 2024	Balkan Public Barometer 2024, Regional Cooperation Council <a href="https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/results/2/public">https://www.rcc.int/balkanbarometer/results/2/public</a>
BIRN, 2024	"North Macedonia Sees Surge in Online Hate Speech Around Elections", Kolovska Vesna, BIRN, Skopje, 6 June, 2024 <a href="https://balkaninsight.com/2024/06/06/north-macedonia-sees-surge-in-online-hate-speech-around-elections/?utm_source=chatgpt.com">https://balkaninsight.com/2024/06/06/north-macedonia-sees-surge-in-online-hate-speech-around-elections/?utm_source=chatgpt.com</a>
BIRN, 2024	"LGBT Pride and Euro 2024 Become Focus for Online Hate Speech", Ena Bavicic, BIRN, Brussels, 15 July, 2024 <a href="https://balkaninsight.com/2024/07/15/lgbt-prides-and-european-championship-hit-by-waves-of-digital-rights-violations/">https://balkaninsight.com/2024/07/15/lgbt-prides-and-european-championship-hit-by-waves-of-digital-rights-violations/</a>

Short ref	Full description and name
Civic Resource Centre, 2025	Implementation of the Government Strategy for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2022 – 2024 – Report on the implementation of the activities from the Action Plan <a href="https://rcgo.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/14-1-izvestaj-za-sproveduvanje-na-strategija-za-sorabotka-eng.pdf">https://rcgo.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/05/14-1-izvestaj-za-sproveduvanje-na-strategija-za-sorabotka-eng.pdf</a>
Civicus Monitor, 2024	Civicus Monitor 2024, North Macedonia <a href="https://monitor.civicus.org/data/">https://monitor.civicus.org/data/</a>
CRM	Tariff for the Fees for Using the Services of the Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia, Central Registry of Republic of North Macedonia, <a href="https://www.crm.com.mk/mk/za-tsrrsm/osnovni-informatsii-za-institutsijata/tarifa">https://www.crm.com.mk/mk/za-tsrrsm/osnovni-informatsii-za-institutsijata/tarifa</a>
EPI Skopje, 2025	Reform Agenda Monitor North Macedonia, Fikrija Tair-Selmani, European Policy Institute Skopje, Skopje, 25 February, 2025 <a href="https://epi.org.mk/post/30352?lang=en">https://epi.org.mk/post/30352?lang=en</a>
Freedom House, 2024	Freedom House 2024, North Macedonia <a href="https://freedomhouse.org/country/north-macedonia">https://freedomhouse.org/country/north-macedonia</a>
MCIC, 2024	“Municipal funding for civil society organisations is predominantly directed toward sports associations”, Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, Skopje, 22 August, 2024 <a href="https://mcms.mk/mk/vesti-i-javnost/vesti/2586-finansiranjeto-na-gragjanskite-organizacii-od-opshinski-budzheti-najmnogu-fokusirano-na-sportskite-zdruzenija.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawEOCy9leHRuA2FlbQlx-MAABHXiN-VPI94VUbouM55vrKws6wKtCOmCcsTR-gpf-B8mLZYU7ofodimOS-rQ_aem_ntb_1VzywUGXNtvQIKSFeg">https://mcms.mk/mk/vesti-i-javnost/vesti/2586-finansiranjeto-na-gragjanskite-organizacii-od-opshinski-budzheti-najmnogu-fokusirano-na-sportskite-zdruzenija.html?fbclid=IwY2xjawEOCy9leHRuA2FlbQlx-MAABHXiN-VPI94VUbouM55vrKws6wKtCOmCcsTR-gpf-B8mLZYU7ofodimOS-rQ_aem_ntb_1VzywUGXNtvQIKSFeg</a>
MCIC, 2024	“The Budget Rebalance of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2024 has de facto reduced the funds allocated to civil society organisations”, Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation, Skopje, 14 August, 2024 <a href="https://mcms.mk/mk/vesti-i-javnost/vesti/2582-rebalansot-na-budzhetot-na-republika-severna-makedonija-de-fakto-gi-namali-sredstvata-za-gragjanskite-organizacii.html">https://mcms.mk/mk/vesti-i-javnost/vesti/2582-rebalansot-na-budzhetot-na-republika-severna-makedonija-de-fakto-gi-namali-sredstvata-za-gragjanskite-organizacii.html</a>
Metamorphosis, 2023	“Assessment of the Good Governance of the Executive Branch in North Macedonia and the Region Through the Openness Index According to the Measurement for the Year 2023”, Accountability, Technology and Institutional Openness Network in Southeast Europe (ACTION SEE) <a href="https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/izdanija_arhiva/assessment-of-the-good-governance-of-the-executive-branch-in-north-macedonia-and-the-region-through-the-openness-index-according-to-the-measurement-for-the-year-2023/">https://metamorphosis.org.mk/en/izdanija_arhiva/assessment-of-the-good-governance-of-the-executive-branch-in-north-macedonia-and-the-region-through-the-openness-index-according-to-the-measurement-for-the-year-2023/</a>
Ministry of Culture, 2024	“Guide for Applying to the Annual Calls for Funding of Projects of National Interest in Specific Fields and Activities in Culture for 2025”, Published by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Skopje, 4 October, 2024 <a href="https://kultura.gov.mk/водич-за-аплицирање-на-годишните-конк-2/">https://kultura.gov.mk/водич-за-аплицирање-на-годишните-конк-2/</a>

Short ref	Full description and name
NVO Sorabotka, 2024	<p>Invitation to Online Consultations on the Amendment of the Decision for Establishing the Council for Cooperation Between the Government and Civil Society, Unit for Cooperation with Civil Society Organisations at the Government of Republic of North Macedonia</p> <p><a href="https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1014">https://www.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1014</a></p>
Radio Slobodna Evropa, 2024	<p>Association of Journalists of Macedonia: “Urgent Resolution Needed for Cases of Violence Against Journalists”, Radio Slobodna Evropa, Skopje, 4 November, 2024</p> <p><a href="https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/33187082.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3dDJlZL9ehtZL21jvrFAeX4Ks28yYj2FOiZ3UcF2Mz8ZZsyYj031yngYo_aem_hvR5cbocFJMn_etLOz9T7A">https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/33187082.html?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3dDJlZL9ehtZL21jvrFAeX4Ks28yYj2FOiZ3UcF2Mz8ZZsyYj031yngYo_aem_hvR5cbocFJMn_etLOz9T7A</a></p>
Reporters Without Borders 2024	<p>Reporters Without Borders 2024, North Macedonia</p> <p><a href="https://rsf.org/en/country/north-macedonia">https://rsf.org/en/country/north-macedonia</a></p>
OECD, 2025	<p>Public Administration in the Republic of North Macedonia 2024, SIGMA Monitoring Reports, OECD, 27 January, 2025</p> <p><a href="https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/public-administration-in-the-republic-of-north-macedonia-2024_071bad9d-en.html">https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/public-administration-in-the-republic-of-north-macedonia-2024_071bad9d-en.html</a></p>
PINA, 2025	<p>“Hate Speech – Recognised but Insufficiently Sanctioned”, Angela Petrovska, Platform for Investigative Journalism (PINA), Skopje, 31 January, 2025</p> <p><a href="https://pina.mk/9008-govorot-na-omraza-prepoznaen-no-nedovolno-kaznuvan/">https://pina.mk/9008-govorot-na-omraza-prepoznaen-no-nedovolno-kaznuvan/</a></p>
SDK, 2024a	<p>“Judge Jovanka Spirovska-Paneva received a public rebuke from the judicial council for kicking journalists out of the court room in the angjushev-irl dispute” Sakam da Kazam, Skopje, 22 October 2024</p> <p><a href="https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/sudijkata-jovanka-spirovska-paneva-dobi-javen-ukor-od-sudskiot-sovet-zashto-gi-istera-novinarite-od-sudnitsa-vo-sporot-angushev-irl/">https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/sudijkata-jovanka-spirovska-paneva-dobi-javen-ukor-od-sudskiot-sovet-zashto-gi-istera-novinarite-od-sudnitsa-vo-sporot-angushev-irl/</a></p>
SDK, 2024b	<p>“Journalist Miroslava Simonovska filed a complaint against Senior Prosecutor Mustafa Hajrulahi for unauthorised recording”, Sakam da Kazam, Skopje, 1 November, 2024</p> <p><a href="https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/novinarkata-miroslava-simonovska-go-prijavi-vishiot-obvinitel-mustafa-hajrulahi-za-neovlasteno-snimane/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR25xr18JLGWOj71d_GZUhrLyKyeev3_3ob3LBXQrXuDBN9Hyg9TkuPWkc_aem_7m-is337Lkip_37PhhXYRg">https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/novinarkata-miroslava-simonovska-go-prijavi-vishiot-obvinitel-mustafa-hajrulahi-za-neovlasteno-snimane/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR25xr18JLGWOj71d_GZUhrLyKyeev3_3ob3LBXQrXuDBN9Hyg9TkuPWkc_aem_7m-is337Lkip_37PhhXYRg</a></p>
Solucija, 2024	<p>“Over Five Million Euros Distributed by the Ministry of Culture Without Clear Criteria”, Igor Petrovski, Solucija, Skopje, 15 October, 2024</p> <p><a href="https://solucija.mk/анализи/преку-пет-милиони-евра-поделило-минис/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3wxv9e6sOUpSUMQ5IF_uuwVam9o0uqxuTgxJwWw5fb0jC8BFq_Ea5ZaU_aem_qPSNgijm-GuXpi6V45mosw">https://solucija.mk/анализи/преку-пет-милиони-евра-поделило-минис/?fbclid=IwZXh0bgNhZW0CMTEAAR3wxv9e6sOUpSUMQ5IF_uuwVam9o0uqxuTgxJwWw5fb0jC8BFq_Ea5ZaU_aem_qPSNgijm-GuXpi6V45mosw</a></p>
State Statistical Office	<p>Labour Market in North Macedonia, State Statistical Office of Republic of North Macedonia</p> <p><a href="https://www.stat.gov.mk/oblastopsto.aspx?id=14">https://www.stat.gov.mk/oblastopsto.aspx?id=14</a></p>

Short ref	Full description and name
Telma, 2024	<p>“The Higher Prosecutor of Skopje is sharing secretly recorded footage of a journalist who claims she is being followed”, TELMA TV Station, Skopje, 1 November, 2024</p> <p><a href="https://telma.com.mk/2024/11/01/vishiot-skopski-obvinitel-deli-skrieno-napraveni-snimki-od-novinarka-koja-se-zhali-deka-e-sledena/">https://telma.com.mk/2024/11/01/vishiot-skopski-obvinitel-deli-skrieno-napraveni-snimki-od-novinarka-koja-se-zhali-deka-e-sledena/</a></p>
Queer Centre, 2024	<p>“One-Year Prison Sentence Imposed in the First Convicting Verdict in North Macedonia for Hate Speech Based on Sexual Orientation”, Queer Centre, Skopje, 27 March, 2024</p> <p><a href="https://skc.mk/en/2024/03/27/one-year-prison-sentence-imposed-in-the-first-convicting-verdict-in-north-macedonia-for-hate-speech-based-on-sexual-orientation/">https://skc.mk/en/2024/03/27/one-year-prison-sentence-imposed-in-the-first-convicting-verdict-in-north-macedonia-for-hate-speech-based-on-sexual-orientation/</a></p>
Unique National Register of Regulations, 2025	<p>Analysis, Unique National Register of Regulations</p> <p><a href="https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=analysis">https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=analysis</a></p>
World Giving Index 2024	<p>World Giving Index 2024, Charities Aid Foundation</p> <p><a href="https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/inside-giving/wgi/wgi_2024_report.pdf">https://www.cafonline.org/docs/default-source/inside-giving/wgi/wgi_2024_report.pdf</a></p>

