

GOOD NEWS FROM RULE OF LAW

QUARTERLY REPORT 2

**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN**

**NATIONAL ACTION PLAN
FOR CHILD RIGHTS IN
NORTH MACEDONIA**

**ADOPTED DEVELOPMENTAL
STRATEGY FOR JUDICIARY
2024 – 2028**

**INTERVIEW: PROBATION IS
AN EFFECTIVE WAY TO
RESOCIALIZE CRIMINALS**



EU SUPPORT FOR
**RULE
OF
LAW**

FEBRUARY 2024



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FOREWORD



Dieter SCHINDLAUER

Team Leader, Eu Support for Rule of Law

"We use this publication to keep up a good spirit and uphold an ethic of belief in the good reason for change, reform, and a continuous improvement process. To do so, we will show steps forward and celebrate them so that they are not lost in the much more dominant noise of disheartening news."

Dear reader,

fortunately, our second quarterly report is again full of good news. The strive for achieving a better rule of law is multi-faceted, as is our project setup. In this edition, you will find highlights that are worth reading to feel the hope and good approaches that are manifest in them.

It is hard to pick my personal favourites, but I would highlight the very successful involvement of children in the strive for a good and useful National Action Plan on child rights. We saw how engaged and clearly to the point these children were in their demands, in their sharing of hopes and needs and in their expectations to be heard and taken seriously. Further to that, one centrepiece of this edition for me is the interview with judge Olja Ristova, who in very clear words advocates for more frequent use of alternative sanctions. She is not providing some mere lip service here, as she imposed the biggest number of alternative sanctions in the country. She is doing it, and she is doing it successfully. She follows up on her cases and proves the effectiveness directly from her practice. Her interview is a recommended read for everyone.





FOREWORD

Furthermore, we can report on the fruitful deliberations on the way forward for the justice system that were crowned by an adopted new strategy. We can further learn from an experienced expert on communication about successful workshops and useful techniques to communicate effectively. You can read about the Judicial Council implementing the recommendations from the Peer Review Mission and coming up with concrete action; about interested university students who learned about tackling corruption and about a successful celebration to mark the 25th anniversary of the Ombudsman institution. I hope that these stories of engagement, courage and creativity will have a refreshing and uplifting effect on you as they had on me.

Enjoy the good news!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read "Dieter Schindlauer", followed by a long horizontal flourish.

Dieter Schindlauer
Team Leader



THE DICTIONARY

Dictionary

Definitions from [Oxford Languages](#) · [Learn more](#)

rule of law

[/ˌruːl əv ˈlɔː/](#)

phrase of [rule](#)

the restriction of the [arbitrary](#) exercise of power by [subordinating](#) it to [well-defined](#) and established laws.

"when military dictators fall, the democrats who follow them must try to restore the rule of law"

THE DEFINITION

Rule of law is a principle under which all persons, institutions, and entities are accountable to laws that are: Publicly promulgated. Equally enforced. Independently adjudicated. And consistent with international human rights principles.





MAY WE PRESENT:

ADOPTED STRATEGY

The EU Support for Rule of Law Project supported the Ministry of Justice in finalizing the Developmental Strategy for Judiciary 2024 – 2028, adopted by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia.

STUDY VISIT

Police officers from the Section for Support and Documentation, Sector for Undercover Operations (DFSOSC), participated in a study visit to the Slovenian MoI on use of special investigate measures.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS CAMPAIGN

The campaign, spearheaded by 15 enthusiastic young participants, aimed to raise awareness of children's rights, marking the 30th anniversary of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by North Macedonia.



Let's talk about...

- Active participation of children in the process of preparation of the National Action Plan on Rights of the Child in North Macedonia
- Interview with judge Olja Ristova: Probation is the most effective way to resocialize criminals
- Sharpen your Communication with Susanne Hedin
- The government adopted the developmental strategy for judiciary 2024 – 2028
- Children take centre stage: Meet the young advocates for children's rights in North Macedonia
- Celebrating 25 years of the Ombudsman Institution (OI) of North Macedonia
- Fostering judicial progress by facilitating the implementation of EU recommendations within the competence of the Judicial Council



Active participation of children in the process of preparation of the National Action Plan on Rights of the Child in North Macedonia

In the past period, efforts to **develop the National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child (NAP)** have been ongoing. Understanding the importance of allowing children to voice their opinions on matters that affect them, additional initiatives have been launched to encourage their participation.



In addition to the regular meetings of the working group formed for the development of the NAP, something noteworthy took place on 16 November 2023. Experts from Component 4 of the project “EU Support for Rule of Law”, **Ketj Jandrijeska Jovanova and Karin Bischof**, organized a Children's Panel at the Europe House in Skopje. Children from various backgrounds—Macedonian, Albanian, Roma, and children with or without disabilities—participated, representing different institutions such as primary schools, high schools, small group homes, and Day Care Centers for Street Children.

What made this event special was that all of the children actively engaged and felt secure in expressing themselves, knowing that their contributions would be valued and integrated into the NAP.



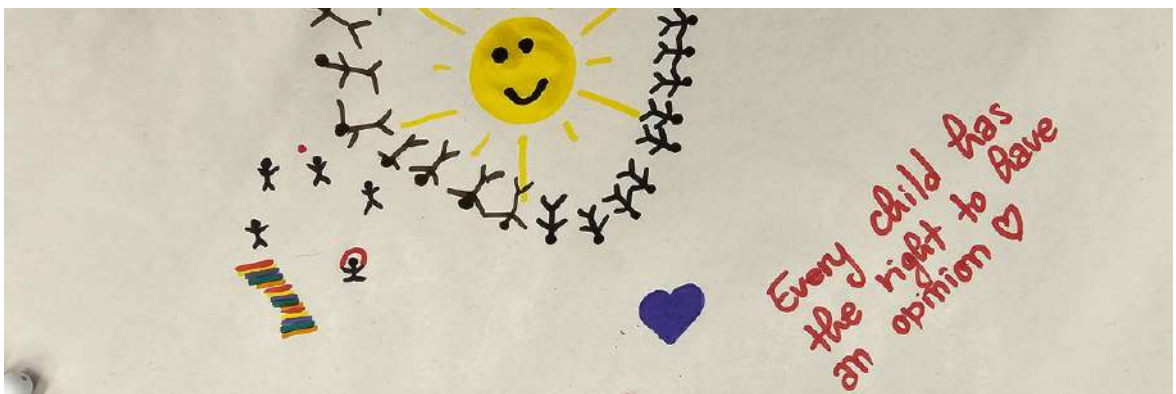
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“The participation of young people represents an appreciation of the level of voice, attitudes and experiences, highlights the importance of their cooperation, and directs policies towards certain reflection of the diverse needs of young people. Such an inclusive approach strengthens the confidence of young people in their community and has the potential to have prolonged and sustainable activities. In this way, the opportunities that enable the participation and contributions of young people in making the decisions that refer to them, contribute to the activities and make their active engagement in society”, stressed **Ivo Korunovski**, psychologist, present at the workshop.



”

The main goal of the Children's Panel was straightforward: to engage with and listen to a diverse group of children, aged 14-18, ensuring that their concerns, needs, and aspirations regarding the protection and fulfilment of their rights are acknowledged throughout the process of developing the National Action Plan on the Rights of the Child.





The problems identified by the children, presented to the working group and included in the NAP activities are:

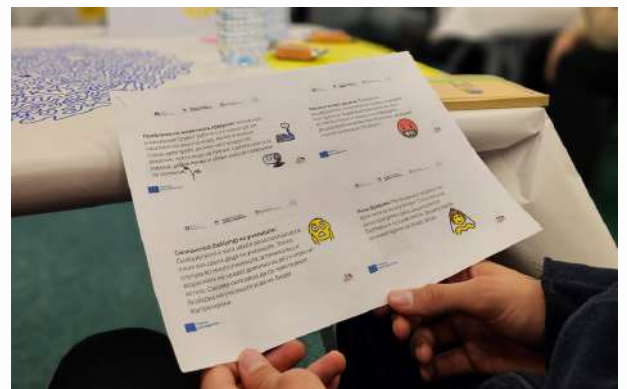
- There is no help for children who use drugs and alcohol. The wide availability of drugs and other substances and lack of awareness among children of the consequences.
- Greater protection of children from violence is needed
- Prohibition of child marriages
- Employment for parents for stability in the home
- Need for equal and free health care
- Bad (low-quality) education: 1. absence of communication between the 3 key parties: student - teacher - parent. 2. lack of conditions (old inventory, unhygienic, old schools)
- Lack of space for recreational activities for children (parks/playgrounds. Recreational centres, entertainment events)
- Absence of a healthy environment





Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration





Interview with judge Olja Ristova: Probation is the most effective way to resocialize criminals

“Alternative measures are punishments, sanctions or regimes that allow to completely or partially avoid imposing a prison sentence, whereby the convicted person undergoes treatment and supervision by professional and authorized persons in the community, at the same time fully respecting the rights of the offender”. That is one of many definitions explaining alternative measures in the justice system. But what is theory without practice?

On the subject of alternative measures, we spoke with judge Olja Ristova from the Basic Criminal Court in Skopje, **who holds the title of "judge with the most imposed alternative measures"**. Statistics say that since 2019, more than 150 alternative measures of conditional sentences with protective supervision and community service have been imposed, of which approximately 70% are successful and the perpetrators have corrected their behaviour.

Simply put, I proposed the first question as a reasonable point to start our discussion.





What is your secret for the effective application of alternative measures in our system?

I don't need to think to respond to this question. The secret to the effective application of alternative measures lies in the request for a risk assessment for the accused person. What does that mean? I submit a request for a risk assessment for the accused person to the probation service, immediately after receiving the case and then I schedule the first main hearing. It is a period of one to two months in which probation officers have time to contact the accused person, talk with him/her, assess all social and economic circumstances and detect where the problem of his/her criminal behaviour is. After receiving the risk assessment report, I can determine which alternative measures and which protective supervision measures the person needs to correct his/her behaviour. In the decision that I make after the conclusion of the main hearing, it is precisely stated which alternative measure is imposed and which obligations the convicted person has. The competent probation service supervises the execution of the obligations of the protective supervision. I want to emphasize that for the fifth year, I have had excellent cooperation with the probation service, and I recommend this method of work to all my colleagues who apply alternative sanctions because it is the best way to supervise the convicted person during the probation period.

What are the most common cases in which alternative measures are imposed, based on your experience?

I usually impose alternative measures for cases of domestic violence and narcotics and alcohol addicts. During the supervision period, these convicted individuals are typically sent to domestic violence counselling centres or psychology counselling centres, or supervision is conducted quickly to ensure that they obtain the necessary therapy and do not re-offend. I would like to emphasize that short-term prison sentences of up to one year should definitely not be applied because according to all previous research, they did not give a positive result due to the short period in which their resocialization cannot be achieved. My opinion is that judges, instead of short-term prison sentences, should more often impose alternative measures - probation with protective supervision or community service to achieve resocialization, re-education and correction of convicted persons in order not to appear again as perpetrators of new crime acts, as well as to reduce recidivism.



How can you be sure that alternative measures will have an effect?

I can never be completely sure that they will affect the perpetrator's behaviour, but I can say what is crucial in their implementation. For alternative measures to have an effect, both the offender and his/her behaviour must be corrected with measures of protective supervision. From 2019 onwards, I have been imposing alternative measures with protective supervision, and the inspection period ranges from 2 to 5 years. During that inspection period, there is enough time to be able to supervise and control the sentenced person, to re-educate him/her, in the sense of visiting a counselling centre, to educate him/her, to get a job, to quit his/her addictions and thus re-socialize into the community. At the same time, the person should have the will to respect the obligations given by the court at the time of inspection. If he/she does not respect the obligations, the conditional prison sentence can be implemented, it is called a suspended sentence, which for me is a motive for convicted persons to be exemplary during the inspection period and to respect their obligations.





What is your motive for applying this method, to impose alternative measures?

In my experience, I have observed that implementing alternative measures works effectively, and I am glad when young people who have violated the law change their behavior as a result. There are already positive results in my cases because we receive reports from the supervision over the execution of alternative measures from the probation service for each person individually. For example, I am very proud of the young people who were convicted of using and/or selling narcotics, who went through programs for addicts and are now rehabilitated, that is, the reaction of the state authorities was timely. I can freely say that things were done on time because these are young individuals who were treated for addiction and recovered during the process stopped using drugs and do not appear as perpetrators of the same or another crime.

Our interview today is actually a continuation of the discussions that took place during the round tables on the topic: "Enhancing the uptake of alternative measures", within the project "EU Support for Rule of Law". What is your impression of the round tables?

At the round tables in Skopje, Shtip, Gostivar and Bitola, I shared my experience regarding the implementation of alternative measures. I believe that we kept our colleagues' interest, who expressed a willingness to use these measures more in the future. I would like to highlight that I received information about the colleagues from Bitola that, immediately after the round table, turned to the competent probation service in the Basic Court of Bitola and requested two risk assessments.

At the round tables, you had the opportunity to exchange experiences with your colleagues from Croatia Dubravka Rukavina, President of the Municipal Court in Gospić, Croatia, and Goran Brkić, Head of the Probation Department, Ministry of Justice and Administration, Republic of Croatia and Jana Špero, Secretary General of the Confederation of European Probation. What could we apply from the Croatian model?

I think that the Croatian model should be followed as was pointed out at the round tables.



For example, according to our legislation, the perpetrator of the crime must agree to the alternative measure - community service, while in Croatian law, the perpetrator does not have to agree, and if the court considers that the goals of the punishment will be achieved in this way, it can impose community service. Also, according to Croatian judicial practice, community service is often imposed for more serious crimes, which is not the case in our courts.



The second point is that, according to Croatian legislation, there is a possibility to impose a partial conditional sentence, this means that the court can split the sentence, partly to impose a prison sentence, and partly to impose an alternative measure of conditional sentence with protective supervision. This is a really good solution and should be considered as an opportunity to be included in our Criminal Code, which is in the process of being amended.

At the very end, what is your message to colleagues, and the system on the subject of alternative measures?

I recommend to my colleagues to use alternative measures more often, instead of short-term prison sentences, because this is the best way to achieve re-education, correction and resocialization of perpetrators, with the sole aim of not committing crimes again and to be accepted in the community. Greater application of alternative measures leads to reducing the prison population and decreases financial costs of the state for persons serving prison sentences. At the same time, as judges, we should be aware that the person does not have the opportunity to resocialize in that environment.





Sharpen your Communication with Susanne Hedin

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“Everyone is born with the ability to communicate, but we have to acquire the skills ourselves” emphasizes Communication Expert, **Susanne Hedin**. “Everybody has the potential to become a better communicator. My role is just to help people become aware of the possibilities and provide tools to support their development”.



”

Susanne is supporting employees in the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and the Ombudsman Office. She has conducted several trainings, lectures and workshops with them and is aware of their profound interest in improving their communication skills. “I feel like people are starved of training on communication. The participants are very attentive, focused, eager to learn and keen to come together to share their experiences.”

Susanne demonstrates a straightforward yet effective approach in her trainings. She prioritizes a relaxed environment, using icebreakers and exercises to make the participants unwind and open up to each other at the beginning of the trainings. “It is very important for me to make the trainings playful and fun. This takes away the need to perform and the fear of making mistakes”, says Susanne.



One of the tools she provides in her trainings is the **"7-question method," which is a structured approach that helps people organize information logically and provide comprehensive and effective communication.**

The rhetorical tool "7 questions" is excellent when you want to present information or talk about something that has happened or is going to take place. By answering the questions, you logically organize the information and minimize the risk of leaving out something important and you increase the chances that your message will be understood.

THE 7 QUESTIONS METHOD

1. What? (What is your task/project?)
2. Why? (Why are you doing this? What is the purpose?)
3. Who? (Who is affected/involved?)
4. When? (The aspect of time)
5. Where? (Where will it take place/be implemented, etc.)
6. How? (In what way will you do/organize etc.)
7. With what? (With what resources?)

When you have the basic communication tools you are halfway there. "This makes me feel braver, I have courage, I have the tools to prepare", is the most common feedback that Susanne receives from the employees of the institutions participating in the trainings. Susanne stresses the importance of thorough preparation in building participants' confidence and readiness for effective communication. The feedback from the participants often highlights the newfound confidence and preparedness that has resulted from the acquisition of basic communication tools.

When discussing the sustainability of skills post-workshops, Susanne draws parallels to sports training, stressing the significance of constant practice and strategic preparation. "When you are delivering a presentation, it's like playing the final at the World Cup – you must win.



The difference is that football players are training all the time, they have strategy meetings, and they are playing matches as part of their preparation. On the other hand, when you are having your presentation, you just do it. When I meet people, sometime after the workshops, they tell me that they are in training now”, adds Susanne.

Practice active listening!

“Communication is not only about speaking but also about listening. It takes two to tango!” Susanne points out. You can improve your listening skills by practising active listening. Active listening means being focused on the speaker and not on your messages and replies. Show that you are listening, and ask questions to ensure that you have fully understood the other speaker. Don’t only listen to the words, non-verbal communication, for example, gestures and tone of voice, are also providing important information to you.





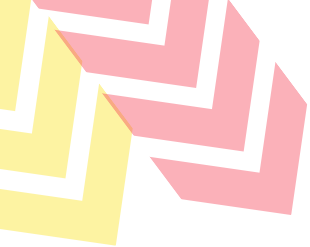
Susanne admits that active listening might sound easy, but it is often quite challenging to us since we are engaged in the topic and eager to get our messages through. But try to wait until the speaker is finished before deciding that you disagree or believe what is being said. Be aware of not making assumptions about what the speaker is thinking and for heaven's sake don't interrupt!

Based on over 25 years of experience as a communication trainer, Susanne offers some practical advice that everybody can use to become a better communicator:

SUSANNE'S BEST TIPS AND TRICKS

- Keep it simple! Be concrete, exemplify and use your words carefully
- Less is more! Focus on the most important points, the one with the most arguments doesn't always win
- Be brave! Dare to step outside your comfort zone and try new ways of communicating
- Adapt your way of communicating! Successful communication depends on the understanding of the receiver
- Don't be afraid of silence! Give yourself time to think before replying and don't be afraid of pauses.
- Keep on training! Ask friends and colleagues for feedback

One last piece of advice Susanne offers. **“Remember, improving your communication is not difficult, we all can do it. We just need to follow the tips and keep practicing”.**



The government adopted the developmental strategy for judiciary 2024 – 2028

The EU Support for Rule of Law project supported the **Ministry of Justice** in finalizing the **[Developmental Strategy for Judiciary 2024 – 2028](#)**. **The Strategy, adopted on 26 December 2023 by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia**, paves the way for reforms to develop the justice sector further. It contributes to the realization of the recommendations of the European Commission for the further development of the rule of law, the judicial system, and fundamental rights.

The Strategy was prepared by a working group established by the Minister of Justice. **The Project developed an expert opinion on the draft of the Developmental Sectoral Strategy for the Justice System 2023-2028**. In November and December 2023, in close cooperation with the Ministry of Justice and during several meetings with the working group, the expert team of the project provided advice on the overall restructuring of the document in line with Government guidelines and best practices on strategic planning. Specifically, the Project supported the development of a comprehensive situational analysis, setting up the strategic framework, including a vision of the Strategy and formulating priority areas, goals, and objectives. The project also assisted in developing a model for the implementation, reporting, coordination, and monitoring of the Strategy.



The Project will continue supporting the Ministry of Justice in implementing the Strategy. It will provide expert advice on implementing the specific measures and activities planned in the document and on strengthening the system for coordination and monitoring. Implementation of the Strategy should improve the judiciary's preparedness level to apply the EU law and address the key challenges in the justice sector.

Children take centre stage: Meet the young advocates for children’s rights in North Macedonia

The main office of the “EU Support for the Rule of Law” project was filled with a positive atmosphere as the impactful online campaign for children’s rights reached its conclusion. **The campaign, spearheaded by enthusiastic young participants, aimed to raise awareness of children’s rights, marking the 30th anniversary of the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by North Macedonia.**

In honour of their active involvement in promoting awareness of children’s rights, every child received a project badge and a personalized poster featuring their statement. These young advocates emerged as true champions for children’s rights, leaving a lasting impact on both their fellow youths and adults alike. Their messages served as a compelling reminder of our shared obligation to ensure a safe and carefree childhood, as guaranteed by the Convention.





ДАМЈАН МИШЕВСКИ, 14 ГОДИНИ

ООУ "Св. Кирил и Методиј" Скопје

Дејето е вечна инспирација за креативност и творештво.



ARIJON ISMAILI, IV-4 АРИЈОН ИСМАИЛИ, IV-4

БРПК "Насан Ризванов" Скопје

Скопје, Република Македонија



SARA AGUŠI, IV BERSH САРА АГУШ, IV ГОДИНА

МОО "Бата Јусуф" Скопје

СРПС "Училиште" Скопје

Нема компромис, административна гхарипа тај најте вакерепе НА, кана кереларе лај башо сестепе е Чхавеско!

Нема компромис, административни преки и нема изговор ако се работи за здравјето на детето!



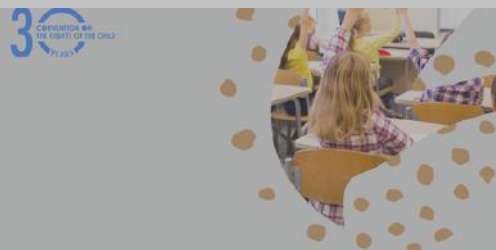
ДАРИЈА КОСТОВСКА, 14 ГОДИНИ

ООУ "Братислава Методиј" Скопје

Сите деца во светот треба да имаат исти права, без разлика каде живеат, како изгледаат, какви размислувања имаат.



ЕССБД



SUMEJA DZELADIN, III KLASI СУМЕЈА ДЖЕЛАДИН, III ГОДИНА

МОО "Бата Јусуф" Скопје

СРПС "Училиште" Скопје

О чхаве на трубин е сикјовобаскере арија те трампинен лен бутикерибаци, ни пајем г, ндиндој сар, хем ка Сај I те дзвдинен!

Дејцата не треба училишните часови да ги заменат со работни часови и мисли за нивно преживување.



URATA OSMANI, IV-4 УРАТА ОСМАНИ, IV-4

БРПК "Насан Ризванов" Скопје

ООУ "Насан Ризванов" Скопје



EDA KARISHIK, 9 GODINA ЕДА КАРИШИК, 9 ГОДИНИ

ООУ "Св. Кирил и Методиј" Скопје

ООУ "Св. Кирил и Методиј" Скопје

Улога детето у школи је да учи, да игра, да стекне нова знања и да ствара нова пријателства.

Детето во училиште треба да учи, да игра, да стекне нови знаења и да создава нови пријателства.



JOANIS KOVACIS, 14 GODINI ЈОАНИС КОВАЦИС, 14 ГОДИНИ

ООУ "Св. Кирил и Методиј" Скопје

Дејцата се најголемите борци за мир! Слушнете го нивниот глас!



НИКОЛИНА СТОЈЧЕВСКА, 14 ГОДИНИ

ООУ "Св. Кирил и Методиј" Скопје

Детските чехори се мали, но стапките кои ја градат нивната иднина имаат цврст темел! Среќен, безбеден живот без страв е наше право!



VASKA MUSTAFA, 9 BERSH ВАСКА МУСТАФА, 9 ГОДИНИ

МОО "Бата Јусуф" Скопје

ООУ "Св. Кирил и Методиј" Скопје

Скопје, Република Македонија

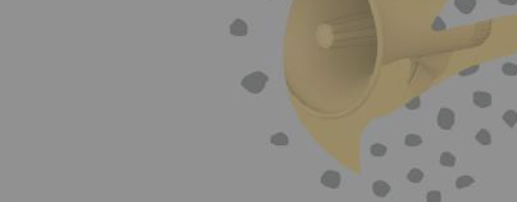


ALEXANDAR NINIĆ, IV-13 АЛЕКСАНДАР НИНИЌ, IV-13

БРПК "Насан Ризванов" Скопје

Скопје, Република Македонија

Детето има право да ги искаже своите ставови за сите прашања што влијаат врз него, и на сите ставови на детето треба да им се даде соодветна тежина.



VESA HAZIRI, 12 VJEC ВЕСА ХАЗИРИ, 12 ГОДИНИ

БРПК "Братислава Методиј" Скопје

ООУ "Братислава Методиј" Скопје

Фамиќ јајин пороси; сигурони куштеа қо лршхем та шхрхрим мандимин топај



AURORA AMETI, IV-3 АУРОРА АМЕТИ, IV-3

БРПК "Братислава Методиј" Скопје

ООУ "Братислава Методиј" Скопје

Чдо фамије I привуар nga liria të trajtohet në mënyrë njerëzore, duke respektuar djetetin e tij dhe duke pas





Rule of Law Project Component 2 Inspires Future Anti-Corruption Advocates at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University

The RoLaw Project lesson at the Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty marked a significant milestone in the pursuit of knowledge and the fight against corruption. On December 13, 2023, master's students met with much enthusiasm to delve into the complex topic of investigating corruption and sharing the best practices from the Republic of Slovenia.

The event was hosted by **Mr Boban Misoski**, PhD, a reputable Full Professor and Vice-Dean for Education whose experience and enthusiasm for teaching created the ideal atmosphere for an interesting lesson. Mr Misoski introduced the guest lecturers who would guide them through the complexities of a corruption investigation.





The spotlight was on **Ms Mojca Kuzmicki**, MSc, an international expert renowned for her commitment to combating corruption. Ms Kuzmicki provided a comprehensive overview of the RoLaw project, unveiling its main goals and illustrating how it would significantly contribute to the ongoing battle against corruption. Her presentation not only informed but inspired the students to see the potential impact they could make in the field.

Following Ms Kuzmicki's presentation, **Mr David Smolej**, PhD, an international expert on combating corruption, took the stage. His engaging discourse navigated the specifics of investigating corruption, offering an insight into the intricacies of the process. Drawing from real-world examples and case studies in the Republic of Slovenia, Mr Smolej highlighted best practices that have proven effective in combating corruption.





How do we detect corruption?

- Proactive work
- Field applications
- Anonymous e-reporting
- Applicants file a request at the police station
- When investigating other criminal acts



One of the key aspects emphasized during the session was the importance of trust in institutions when it comes to reporting corruption. Through discussions led by the experts, Ms Mojca Kuzmicki and Mr David Smolej, the students gained a deeper understanding of how integrity within institutions such as the police, prosecution offices, and courts significantly influences the reporting of corruption incidents. Real-life examples and case studies from Slovenia and North Macedonia showed how complex corruption investigations can be, emphasizing the importance of staying vigilant and following best practices. They were encouraged to uphold high standards of integrity and to actively advocate for anti-corruption measures within their professional spheres.

Why do people not report corruption and why is it hard to spot?

- People do not feel like victims
- Both the givers and receivers of bribes think that they benefit from corruption
- The possibility of protecting an accomplice



In summary, **the lesson helped master's students at the Iustinianus Primus Law Faculty learn and feel more empowered.** They gained practical tools, insights, and real-life examples that improved their understanding of corruption investigation. This session also encouraged them to take action and make a difference in fighting corruption.

The lesson was successful not only because it shared a lot of information but also because it left a strong impression on the students. The RoLaw Project had not just given out knowledge; **it inspired the students and encouraged them to fight against corruption**, thus paving the way for a new generation of advocates ready to make a difference in the world.

Celebrating 25 years of the Ombudsman Institution (OI) of North Macedonia

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"When it comes to the commemoration of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Ombudsman Institution, which I now manage, I would like to look back to its beginnings, but from another aspect - from the aspect of its foundation in the Constitution, and then the adoption of The Law on the Ombudsman. Abandoning the system of collective responsibility and putting the citizens first required the establishment of an institution that would protect their freedoms and rights, and I think that this was one of the main motives for the framers of the Constitution, which stipulated in Article 77 that it must function in the state independent national body for the protection of citizens' rights. The very fact that the Institution is based in the Constitution indicates its importance in and for the society as a whole", said the Ombudsman, **Mr Naser Ziberi**, in his address to the audience at the reception organized on the 12 December 2023, **on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of the establishment of the Institution.**



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Over the past 25 years, the Ombudsman has been a steadfast advocate for citizens' rights, handling approximately 50,000 complaints against public authorities. Their contributions to implementing the Ohrid Framework Agreement have been pivotal, fostering non-discrimination and equitable representation. Special reports and legislative initiatives have been submitted to enhance rights protection, with two proposals forwarded to the Constitutional Court. The Ombudsman's multifaceted efforts include issuing opinions on crucial human rights matters, conducting research, and collaborating with international bodies. Public awareness campaigns have informed citizens about their rights while pioneering work on climate change has led to vital recommendations. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the institution improved online education accessibility and established a free SOS line for children. Notably, they've facilitated registration for vulnerable citizens and ensured free document replacement during North Macedonia's name change, showcasing their commitment to advancing rights and fostering inclusivity.





Fostering judicial progress by facilitating the implementation of EU recommendations within the competence of the Judicial Council

In December 2023, the **EU Delegation in North Macedonia presented the EU Peer Review Mission Report to Judicial Council members, detailing 40 recommendations for the Council's operations.** The report suggests 23 constitutional and legislative changes, alongside 17 recommendations directly targeting the Council's practices. The recommendations target critical areas, including the selection, appointment, and accountability of judges and Council members, as well as enhancing the Council's transparency, communication, and resource management.

In line with one of the project's main goals – to support the Judicial Council in fulfilling its statutory role in accordance with European standards – **a three-day workshop was conducted in Veles this January. The event was attended by sixteen participants, including members and administrative staff of the Council.**





At the workshop, a comprehensive discussion of the recommendations took place, leading to the development of an Action Plan for implementation. The plan will outline a strategic approach to execute the recommendations, to bolster the judiciary's transparency, efficiency, and accountability.



To enhance its public presence and promote its and the courts' work, the Council, supported by our project, will create and execute a Judicial Communication Strategy, emphasizing modern and transparent communication. Through the project, media training will be provided to enhance the quality of the Council's interactions with the press. The Council agreed to increase news and content publication on its website and to start utilizing social media to enhance the visibility of its work.

In conclusion, the Council's diligent efforts, guided by the EU Peer Review Mission Report and the project, mark a significant advancement toward enhanced judicial transparency, efficiency, and accountability.



SCHINDLAUER
Dieter

INTERVIEW

**MEET THE
TEAM**

Team Leader

“We are not a project that just produces paper for the drawers or ticks boxes. We are here to support positive change”

Meet the team: The interview session is designed to introduce and familiarise you with the team members of the “EU Support for Rule of Law” project.”

Mr Dieter Schindlauer is a Human Rights Consultant with a strong focus on equality, non-discrimination, and law enforcement. He is known for his work in developing training programs and capacity-building initiatives, especially in areas such as anti-racism and tactical police communication. Mr Schindlauer is also experienced in managing EU projects, particularly in the Balkans region. Today, we get some insights on various important topics as the team leader to the project “EU Support for Rule of Law” within our series about the members of our project team.

Our conversation started with the most obvious. Taking into consideration your legal background, how do you define the rule of law?

Well, the rule of law seems to be a very simple thing when it functions, because it just refers to a system that builds up its own rules in a democratic way and sticks to it. The elements are really that there are good laws that are generally obeyed by everyone and that there is an effective system in place when these laws are violated. It is crucial how law-breakers are treated and how they are made to obey next time. In a more technical sense, it needs the functioning of the police, it needs the independent, impartial function of the judiciary, which includes public prosecutors. Justice needs to be done and it needs to be seen to be done. People need to trust that their issues are going to be fixed and that the system is responding to their rightful needs.

What measures are being taken to foster institutional trust and improve public perception of the rule of law?

We encourage people to believe that the system can be improved and we support them to become better and better every single day. It is a never-ending process of getting better and it is not a shameful thing to ask for improvement or to strive for reforms, on the contrary, it is a sign of taking yourself, your role and your institution seriously.

Talking about institutional trust, how is it to work with the public institutions and independent bodies in North Macedonia?

We encounter a lot of professionalism and what is most important to me - a commitment to change and good and open cooperation. The biggest threat for a project like ours is to run into a big cloud of indifference and blockages where nothing substantial can happen. I strongly believe that we were greeted with high expectations, and rewarded with good relationships, goodwill, and a serious wish for positive change.

As we conduct this interview for the second issue of the Quarterly Report for the project, could you share a success story that you find particularly noteworthy from our progress thus far?

Things are moving forward, and I think in the six months of implementation, we produced many important steps all of which are pointing to the future. They are not done yet, they need to be implemented and improved, but I think that the biggest success that I see in general from the project is that we create and maintain a collaboration with our national counterparts, with our partners here that allows us to support them in a way that it is meaningful and useful. We are not a project that just produces paper for the drawers or ticking boxes so we can say we did the job. We are working with our partners daily and that includes compromises and mutual understanding; that needs personal skills from both sides, and I think that is the biggest general success story.

What advice would you offer to the component leaders, and beneficiary institutions, embarking on the initiatives aimed at promoting the rule of law?

In the format of our quarterly report, we say something positive about the developments and compliment people for their reach, it is a very necessary step in every process of change. And that doesn't mean that you are overlooking the things that are missing, that are not going well or that need change. But the concentration on the things that are not well can be disheartening. Every process of change is something long term and you need the strength and self-confidence to go through all of that.

In conclusion, what are you looking forward to for the next 3 years of the Project?

I am looking forward to experiencing what we're producing in the project being used by our local partners. We are developing something useful because it is being used. A project that is promising support should do exactly that.



CALENDAR UPCOMING EVENTS

14
MAR 15
MAR

**Workshop on the Judicial
Communication Strategy**

Component 1

22
FEB

**Catalysts of Change: Law
Enforcement's Resolute Stand in
the Fight Against Corruption in
North Macedonia**

Component 2

03
MAR 07
MAR

**Training in the field of
criminal intelligence
activities**

Component 2

26
FEB 27
FEB

**Presentation and
demonstration of the
Slovenian ERAR system**

SCPC training center
Component 3

26
MAR

**Beneficiary Human
Rights Forum**

Hotel Panoramika
Component 4

18
APR 19
APR

**Training on Artificial
Intelligence and
Automated Decision
Making for CPPD**

Skopje

Component 4



Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration





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