

GOOD NEWS FROM RULE OF LAW

QUARTERLY REPORT 1

ADVANCED JUDICIARY
REFORMS

COMMUNICATION
TRAINING

NATIONAL ACTION PLAN
FOR CHILD RIGHTS IN
N.MACEDONIA

TRUST IS THE KEY

EU SUPPORT FOR
LAW OF RULE

THE PROJECT
LAUNCH

SAVE THE
DATE!

WHO ARE WE?



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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,

You are about to read the November edition of the quarterly reports of the project "EU support for Rule of Law" - and this paper is full of good news.

Our project constitutes an enormous commitment and investment by the European Union to the future of North Macedonia. The rule of law is so fundamental to democracies, economies and the freedom and safety of citizens that such vast efforts are justified to enhance the situation and produce tangible results over a period of more than three years. And yes, our project is committed to being successful and talking about it. This is why, every three months, produce this publication full of good news about the rule of law.

Many deplorable things could be said about our field of work and the media are full of bad news, scandals, rumours, and discouraging events. Make no mistake, our project is not uncritical, blind, or silent towards any negative occurrences or developments; on the contrary: these inspire us to work even harder and be more dedicated.

Continues...



FOREWORD



There must be a place and time, though, to communicate about the good things that are taking place as well, about efforts, reforms, commitment, and toil happening with and within public institutions, - about initiatives and steps taken in the right direction.

This is what our quarterly report is for. The media credo “bad news is good news” does not apply here. 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.

In this edition, you find stories and background information on our project and on the different areas our team has been working together with our national partners for the robust and reliable rule of law.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Dieter Schindlauer".

Dieter Schindlauer
Team Leader



THE RULE OF LAW

- The judiciary must be independent and impartial; procedures and decisions must be lawful and fair.
- Crime must be detected, prosecuted, and brought to trial; crime must not pay.
- There is no tolerance for corruption and integrity must be strengthened.
- Fundamental and human rights must be effectively protected.



Who are we?

The project "EU Support for Rule of Law" is all about making the rule of law in the Republic of North Macedonia **STRONGER.**

We are supporting the relevant institutions working in the fields of justice, law enforcement, fight against corruption and promotion and protection of fundamental and human rights. capacities, effectiveness and impact.

Our mission to ensure things are fair and just for everyone!

THE TEAM



THE IDENTITY



1

THE GOAL

The goal of the project is to strengthen the rule of law in the Republic of North Macedonia. The project is designed to support the relevant institutions working in the fields of justice, law enforcement, fight against corruption and promotion and protection of fundamental and human rights to improve their capacities, effectiveness, and impact.

2

THE COMPONENTS

C1: Judiciary

Improve the capacities of justice institutions to deliver justice in a transparent and accountable manner

C2: Police

Strengthen the capacities to effectively implement modern investigation techniques in fighting organised crime

C3: Anti-corruption

Improve the prevention and fight against corruption

C4: Fundamental and human rights

Enhance the protection of fundamental rights

Project figures

The Project "EU Support for Rule of Law" is fully funded by the European Union. The project duration will be 36 months with an envisaged extension for 6 further months with a budget of 10,25 million Euros. The team of the Project is currently composed of 28 team members: component leaders, experts, assistants, etc.



10,25 MILLION EUROS



36+ MONTHS



28+ TEAM MEMBERS



MAY WE PRESENT:

24

RESULTS

Specific objectives with tangible and measurable impact in the field of judiciary, law enforcement, prevention of corruption and promotion and protection of fundamental and human rights.

+54

ACTIVITIES

Coordinating initiatives to enhance awareness, strengthening the capabilities of beneficiary institutions in North Macedonia, providing assistance to their operations, facilitating networking, collaborative working groups, and similar endeavors.

31

BENEFICIARIES

The Project has established professional collaboration with the Macedonian beneficiary institutions to promote accountability and to encourage and support these institutions to take a proactive role in their professional sphere.

+82

MEETINGS

In a period of three months, the Component representatives actively engaged in over +82 meetings, fostering productive collaboration with beneficiary institutions.



Let's talk about...

- “EU Support for Rule of Law” kicks off with unwavering commitment and a focus on reform
- Trust is the key: Slovenian police shared insights on international policing and witness protection
- EU Support for Rule of Law project empowers human rights advocates with training on discrimination prevention and equality promotion
- North Macedonia advances judiciary reforms through expert guidance and stakeholder collaborating
- Daniela Stefanovska, Advisor - State Labour Inspectorate: The importance of continuous training, cooperation among institutions, and clear communication in combating trafficking in human beings
- Joint communication training for independent institutions
- Working towards a comprehensive National Action Plan for Child Rights in North Macedonia
- Strengthening awareness and communication in the probation service



“EU Support for Rule of Law” kicks off with unwavering commitment and a focus on reform

Our journey begins with a vision – a vision to empower North Macedonia with a renewed commitment to the rule of law. On 21 September 2023, we celebrated the official launch of the project "EU Support for Rule of Law". And what a project it is! The European Union clearly shows its care and bold support to the people of the country by fully funding this endeavour with more than 10 million Euros, dedicated to the improvement of the rule of law on multiple levels.

This project is more than another initiative; it is a milestone in North Macedonia's journey towards EU membership. The rule of law and the respective guarantees, checks and balances as well as the integrity and transparency of the respective systems are of utmost importance at this stage.



Ambassador David Geer, the head of the EU Delegation in North Macedonia, with his speech, left an indelible mark at the kick-off event: "This is an enormous opportunity to advance decisively on reforms and in especially in the area of the Rule of Law. And I call all of you working in the area of the rule of law to familiarise yourself with the standards and practices in the European Union and to use that as a leveraged push for change from within. I call on you all to seize this opportunity now in the interest of citizens and the European future of this country". These words resound as a guiding principle for our path ahead.



The kick-off event was further graced by three distinguished ministers: **Oliver Spasovski** (Minister of Internal Affairs of North Macedonia), **Krenar Loga** (Minister of Justice of North Macedonia) and **Jovanka Trenchevska** (Minister of Labour and Social Policy of North Macedonia). Their presence underscores the Project's significance and their unwavering commitment to its success, infusing our mission with determination.



Our approach is deeply rooted in collaboration and partnership, as highlighted by **Patricia Mussi-Mailer**, LBI-GMR's Administrative Director. She eloquently stated, "This project will be effective and sustainable because we will truly work together with our Macedonian partners: in a close relationship, on a daily basis, on an equal footing." This commitment to equality and unity is the cornerstone of our journey.

Guiding our multifaceted team is Project Team Leader, **Dieter Schindlauer**, who presented the project's core components at the launch event, charting the course for the transformation that lies ahead.



Over the next three years, we have set ambitious goals for ourselves. We are unwavering in our commitment to support our partners in North Macedonia to fortify the judicial sector, instill trust in law enforcement, confront corruption with steady determination, and safeguard the fundamental and human rights of every citizen. These are not just objectives; they are the promises we intend to fulfill.

As we embark on this journey, we are propelled by a sense of purpose, a vision for positive change, and a commitment to success. The years ahead are full of potential for transformation and progress, and we are privileged to be a part of it, working to reinforce the rule of law and empower the people of North Macedonia. Our project is not merely the beginning; it is the promise of a support for a better future for all.





Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration





Trust is the key: Slovenian police shared insights on international policing and witness protection

In a rare insight into the world of international police cooperation, we plunged into a conversation with **Mr. Matjaz Jerkic**, the Assistant Director of the Criminal Police in Slovenia. With a wealth of experience in the criminal investigation service, he brings a strong commitment to combating organized crime and oversees the central coordination of operations within the Slovenian Criminal Police. Our discussion took place after the Witness Protection Training, collaboration with his Macedonian colleagues of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and the Prosecutor's office, organised by Component 1 and Component 2.

Considering the sensitivity and confidentiality of the topics covered, these kind of working meetings are often labeled as confidential and limited information is disclosed. Nevertheless, during the discussion with Mr. Jerkic, we scratched the surface of these intriguing topics and discovered what is the essence thereof.

“

When representatives from different police structures and the state prosecutor's office organize these kind of meetings, the conversation is straightforward and very open. The discussions are based on practical experiences and we cannot reveal details and particularities to the broader audience. We are sharing experiences which can lead to an improvement of the practices and learning new techniques in combating organised crime. In my opinion, an honest conversation is of great importance. Trust is the key, explained Mr.Jerkic.

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The main goal of the training was to introduce the Slovenian Witness Protection Program and to discuss Witness Protection Program and Unit in MoI in North Macedonia and what can be done to improve its performance. The Witness Protection Program was presented to the prosecutors using practical examples from Slovenia, providing a new perspective on the topic.



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We are aware of the meaning of unified standards in the fight against international organized crime. Applying the same standards is of great importance, so that there is no difference in the detection and investigation of crimes between several countries. Therefore, I estimate that today's meeting was extremely important because we presented the positive experiences in the implementation of the witness protection program, concluded Mr. Jerkic

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EU Support for Rule of Law project empowers human rights advocates with training on discrimination prevention and equality promotion

In October, Component 4: Fundamental & Human Rights of the project „EU Support for Rule of Law“ kicked-off the **training of trainers’ programme “The Art of Training and Participatory Facilitation for the Prevention of Discrimination and Promotion of Equality”**. The programme consists of four three-day modules, targets the staff of key institutions with human rights competences - the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD), Ministry of Labour & Social Policy (MLSP) and Ombudsman Office (OO). They are given the opportunity to gain knowledge and skills for raising awareness of equality and non-discrimination issues. **Irina Aceska**, participant in the training and representative of the OO, had a strong feeling that the participants’ “awareness about discrimination has been raised and that they are ready to raise the awareness of others”.

The participants are supported in developing skills for becoming strong allies of people who have experienced discrimination and to advocate for their rights. Aceska, who works on the protection of the rights of sentenced prisoners, said that the participants “have gained experience and practice in how to approach a group that feels discriminated against, for whom the participants were previously not aware that they were encountering discrimination”.





The programme also equips its participants with a practice oriented tool-kit of methodologies to raise awareness for discrimination. Aceska implements trainings targeting different kinds of employees of prison facilities, and appreciated the methodologies experienced: “I train all different kinds of employees of prison facilities. I will transpose some of the exercises into my work context or will directly apply exercises used in the training of the trainers. The exercises will be valuable to convey values the employees of prison facilities should adhere to”.

The methodology of the training of trainers follows the standards of human rights education and focuses on an experiential and participatory learning approach to ensure engagement, commitment, and sustainability. The trainers Karin Bischof, Biljana Kotevska and Dieter Schindlauer applied training and facilitation methods that have been internationally field-tested. “The capabilities and skills of the trainers to deliver the training in a simple, relaxed and at the same time very focused way of conveying knowledge” were appreciated by Irina Aceska. She emphasised that she would like to have more trainings like this one and that she is very much looking forward to the next modules.

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MASSIVA



North Macedonia advances judiciary reforms through expert guidance and stakeholder collaboration

In a significant collaboration, the Ministry of Justice sought the expertise of the "EU Support for Rule of Law" project to provide insights on the draft Developmental Sectoral Strategy for the Justice System 2023-2027.

A dedicated team of experts analysed the draft document from three critical perspectives: ensuring it aligns with national rules and standards on strategic planning, addressing key challenges identified by the European Commission, and establishing an effective implementation and monitoring framework.

The experts pinpointed the areas crucial for strategy improvement. They highlighted the importance of conducting a comprehensive situational analysis to uncover the root causes of issues as well as called for a clear hierarchy within the strategic framework and emphasized the need for a transparent monitoring system.



“
The Project will support the Ministry of Justice in finalization of the draft Developmental Sectoral Strategy for the Justice System 2023-2027. We believe that sound and well-crafted Strategy with clear, feasible and measurable objectives is of utmost importance for ensuring independent and impartial judiciary”, stated, **Goce Kocevski**, project expert.

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A significant milestone was achieved in advancing the Developmental Strategy for Reforms of the Judiciary 2023-2027 during a pivotal meeting on October 19, 2023, held at the Hotel Holiday Inn Skopje. Members of the working group responsible for this strategy convened to deliberate on the preliminary insights provided by the expert team. A diverse range of stakeholders, including judicial institutions, legal professional organizations, and civil society groups actively contributed their perspectives.

Judge Gjorgi Andonov, President of the Basic Court in Stip, representing the Association of Judges, emphasized the importance of this strategy in advancing the justice sector in the Republic of North Macedonia.

“The strategy is of particular importance for the development and promotion of the justice sector, a roadmap that clearly defines achievable goals and will be a "homework" for all stakeholders in the process. This is a challenge that we must respond to in order to get closer to the EU”.

During this collaborative gathering, participants underscored the urgent need for a practical and attainable strategy that directly tackles the challenges confronting North Macedonia's judiciary. The atmosphere was characterized by dynamic discussions and cooperative decision-making.

This collaborative endeavor highlights the power of expert guidance and collective effort in forging a better path for North Macedonia's justice system.





Daniela Stefanovska, Advisor - State Labour Inspector: The importance of continuous training, cooperation among institutions, and clear communication in combating trafficking in human beings

I am **Daniela Stefanovska**, an Advisor - State Labour Inspectorate (SLI) with expertise in labour relations. I've been a part of the State Labour Inspectorate since 2010, and since 2016, I've been primarily focused on issues related to trafficking in human beings (THB) for labor exploitation. Additionally, I serve as a trainer in this field.



Following the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding between the State Labor Inspectorate and the Ministry of Internal Affairs, we've streamlined our efforts. I'm now designated as the point of contact for SLI in exchanging information and coordinating activities, particularly risk assessments, with the Ministry of Interior. My primary objective is to raise awareness among state labor inspectors about the existence of THB for labor exploitation. This includes the timely recognition, identification, and referral of potential victims, as well as fostering collaboration among all relevant stakeholders.

Given the evolving nature of THB, it's crucial for me, as an experienced inspector, to stay updated and well-informed. Practices related to THB change over time, influenced by shifts in society.



This constant evolution demands that we, as inspectors, remain current and equipped to identify and assist potential victims of labour exploitation through our inspections. Knowing how to cooperate effectively with other relevant institutions is vital for both personal and professional development and our collective efforts to combat this crime. It's essential to be able to guide fellow inspectors on how to conduct inspections that may lead to the discovery of potential victims and the necessary cooperation with other institutions.

I'm immensely grateful for the opportunity to participate in the Workshop on collecting data on THB, an activity of the "EU Support for Rule of Law" project, organised by the Ombudsman Office and held by Sasa Jankovic, expert in fields of Ombudsman Tasks & Human Rights Oversight. Workshops like these are instrumental in familiarising us with the various institutions and personnel engaged in addressing THB.



It helps clarify roles and facilitates swift action when encountering potential victims of THB in our daily work. Learning about the international legal framework concerning THB, as expertly presented during the workshop, simplifies the work of all institutions, particularly in cases where certain actions aren't explicitly covered in national legislation.



In terms of collaboration with the National Rapporteur on Trafficking in Human Beings and Illegal Migration, it's crucial to establish a clear communication channel among institutions to avoid redundancy in information collection and to streamline data gathering. This harmonization will enhance the efficiency of both the National Rapporteur's work and that of the relevant institutions.

The workshop was a valuable opportunity to become acquainted with the National Rapporteur's responsibilities and improve collaboration. Such improved coordination, both at the state and institutional levels, is essential for achieving more significant results in our fight against THB.

At the State Labour Inspectorate, our goal is to ensure that no violations of the law go unnoticed by our inspectors. We aim to take appropriate actions, particularly when addressing more serious violations such as human trafficking. Additionally, understanding the roles and responsibilities of relevant authorities is essential to facilitate timely interventions, apprehend wrongdoers, and protect potential victims. To achieve these goals, we continuously train our inspectors and implement rigorous inspection procedures.





Joint Communication Training for Independent institutions



In the end of October twenty professionals from three independent institutions gathered in Leunovo to improve their communication skills. Susanne Hedin, a Swedish Communication Expert with over 20 years of experience, worked with participants from Ombudsman, CPPD and SCPC for 2,5 days covering basic rhetoric methods and practical exercises.

The training was evaluated by the participants as excellent, providing them with many new insights and tips and evaluating the training as “... significantly relevant for me and my colleagues” and “... an excellent experience and an example of a professional trainer who can keep the audience attention and that I can learn a lot from”. Many of the participants expressed a need for and wish to participate in further training with the expert. When asked what was most useful in the training many of the participants mentioned the guide for preparing and delivering clear and concise information with little preparation time they were provided with.

Applying this structured approach in practical exercises during the training made it easier to continue using this technique in their everyday work. Moreover, the fact that the training brought together professionals from institutions that have a great deal in common was positively commented on by several persons who evaluated that “the networking was on a very high level” and “the interaction and collaboration with other participants was excellent”.

The networking that started during the days in Leunovo will be encouraged and sustained through the Component’s Anti-Corruption After Work activities. Also, follow-up trainings on External, Internal Communication and Storytelling are planned with the same institutions.



Working Towards a Comprehensive National Action Plan for Child Rights in North Macedonia

Currently, there are several different action plans in force that cover children's rights in different segments.

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“However, North Macedonia is lacking a national action plan which brings into focus the promotion of children’s rights in one single document”, as **Elka Todorova**, head of the department for social family and legal protection of children and family at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, analysed.

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The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy with the support of the experts Keti Jandrijeska Jovanova, Karin Bischof and Helmut Sax established a working group, which encompasses all relevant institutions and organisations for developing a National Action Plan (NAP) for Child Rights.

The working group consists of representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education and Science, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the State Statistics Office, the Ombudsman, the Institute for Social Activities, the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, UNICEF and representatives of NGOs. According to Lidija Shterjov, head of the department for social inclusion at the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, the composition of the working group guarantees “a multidisciplinary approach” as well as the inclusion of “all relevant factors and available resources from the governmental and non-governmental sectors” to take measures aimed “at improving the overall position of children in the Republic of North Macedonia”.

The members of the working group share their experiences and identify challenges with the realisation of children’s rights in a series of meetings.



Vesna Mitrevska, a member of the working group and state adviser for general and organisational affairs in the General Secretariat of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, appreciated the “clarity of the process through which the National Action Plan is created”.

The moderators established a “concise concept with a clear purpose” and provided “concise and clear materials” for the development of the plan. She “really liked the reception of the participants by the moderators, their mutual involvement and the good energy”.

The moderators/experts, **Keti Jandrijeska Jovanova**, **Karin Bischof** and **Helmut Sax** ensured a participatory way of developing the action plan. Lidija Shterjov very much appreciated the “participatory method of work, which contributes to the exchange of experiences from all different institutions and the collection of numerous challenges”. This method also allows for commitment and ownership facilitating the implementation of the plan. Vesna Mitrevska is convinced that “the participative approach and the active participation of both the moderators/experts and the participants will contribute to the creation of a quality NAP for child rights that – when implemented – can significantly improve the rights of children in North Macedonia”.

Issues identified as most pressing by the WG developing the NAP for Child Rights:

1. Maltreatment of and violence against children
2. Incidents of bullying in schools
3. Children facing sub-standard residential conditions
4. Impact of environmental challenges on children
5. Inadequate participation rate of children in early and primary education
6. Children in educational correctional facilities have no access to education
7. Limited access to adequate healthcare services for children
8. Insufficient support for children dealing with drugs and substance abuse
9. Inadequate assistance for children facing mental health challenges

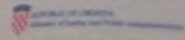


So far two working group meetings have taken place, which resulted in identifying the major challenges faced when realising children’s rights, as well as the development of aims and measures. Elka Todorova from the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is optimistic that the working group meetings will contribute to “the adoption of a comprehensive National Action Plan for the protection of children’s rights, which aims to strengthen the role of children and give absolute priority to their rights and interests”. The next step is to organise a Children’s Panel to integrate the perspective of children and young people of diverse backgrounds into the action plan. Vesna Mitrevska assessed the proposal of the experts “to consult children who will be directly affected by the implementation of the action plan as positive”.





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Strengthening awareness and communication in probation services

The awareness of the benefits of alternative sanctions has to be enhanced and strengthened. Alternative sanctions contribute to the rehabilitation and reintegration of persons who have been convicted, it reduces recidivism and increases the safety of the community. By supporting the establishment of a public relations working group of probation officers the project supports the Directorate for the Execution of Sanctions at the Ministry of Justice in strengthening their awareness-raising measures.

The first training with the public relations working group aimed at enhancing the probation officers' communication skills by equipping them with practical tools for successful communication. The trainer, Meri Bakalova, introduced methods and tools progressively, allowing participants to test and apply their newly acquired knowledge in smaller, collaborative groups. By providing techniques for effective relations with the media and preparing media products, the training contributed to strengthening the self-confidence of the participants when communicating with the media. The participants got to know different communication techniques which they applied through exercises on "giving an interview", "developing a press release" and "developing a media plan".





Participants perceived the environment created by the trainer as supportive, which „made them feel comfortable and encouraged them to actively participate in discussions and activities“. „The ambience of the training“ as well as „the expert guidance“ further contributed to a „positive atmosphere“.

After the training, the participants were ready to apply their skills and knowledge in their respective roles as probation officers. The skills strengthened by the training will enhance the effectiveness of their communication efforts and will contribute to raising awareness for the benefits of alternative sanctions and can contribute to increasing the number of cases for which alternative measures are imposed.



The long-term impact of this training extends beyond immediate outcomes. By strengthening probation officers' media relations skills and nurturing their ability to develop essential media products, including press releases, media briefings, interviews, press conferences, and other communication materials, we empower them to sustain effective communication efforts. This will enable the continuous promotion of the application of alternative measures, which will increase the awareness of society regarding this topic.



The training also emphasised the significance of a well-structured Communication and Visibility Strategy. The expert Mary Bakalova received additional guidelines for the development of the Strategy during the training. Such strategy supports the creation of comprehensive messaging strategies, designing communication activities, identifying optimal communication channels, and implementing monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

The project will continue supporting the public relations working group of probation officers by offering further training activities. The participants expressed a keen interest in pursuing further training opportunities on related subjects. Furthermore, the expert Meri Bakalova will continue establishing an environment for enhancing the cooperation and exchange of experiences among the group of probation officers when implementing the Communication and Visibility Strategy.



CALENDAR UPCOMING EVENTS

27
NOV

29
DEC

Round table
Judges of North Macedonia and the
members of the Judicial Council
Component 1

07
NOV

09
NOV

Study visit to Slovenia
Representatives of the Section for
support and documentation
Component 2

13
NOV

17
NOV

Human intelligence training
Component 2

14
DEC

**Internal communication
training for independent
institutions**
Component 3 + component 4

16
NOV

**Children on Children's
Rights Panel**
Europe House Skopje
Component 4

12
DEC

**International
conference on the 25th
anniversary of the
Ombudsman institution**
Skopje
Component 4

20
SEP





Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration

