

GOOD NEWS FROM

# RULE OF LAW

QUARTERLY REPORT 3

**HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM  
THROUGH WORLD CAFÉ  
METHODOLOGY**

**IT TAKES A NETWORK TO  
FIGHT A NETWORK – ANTI-  
CORRUPTION AFTERWORK**



**IMPROVING DISCIPLINARY  
PROCEEDINGS FOR PUBLIC  
PROSECUTORS**

**ADDRESSING STREET  
CHILDREN AND BEGGING  
THROUGH FAMILY SUPPORT**



MAY 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,

our third quarterly report is again collecting good news from the various fields of the rule of law that our project is engaged with. In this edition, you will find highlights worth reading to feel the hope and good approaches manifested.

You can read about steps forward in dealing with disciplinary proceedings for prosecutors; further steps to implement the recommendations of the EU Peer Review Mission within the Judicial Council and an interview with our Component Leader Grzegorz Borkowski, who also shares his very personal experience with standing up for the impartiality and independence of the judiciary in Poland. Further, you will find the account of a successful transfer of knowledge from Slovenia regarding the fight against corruption from the police side and in cross-border operations and get an inspiration from learning about the informal after work anti-corruption meetings organised by our dedicated anti/corruption component.

The reporting period saw the first Human Rights Forum, an event for collecting insights about necessary amendments to the human rights protection system held in a truly participatory manner through the use of the 'World Cafe' method.





# FOREWORD

The project also held an event on the issues of intersectional discrimination of Roma women and girls and, together with the Ombudsman Office, marked the International day for Street Children with a lively discussion in a day care center for children on the street about the daily struggles of the affected children and their parents.

Finally, you can also read about our successful second Steering Committee Meeting, which fostered the communication and commitment with our local partners and gave a green light to another very challenging but definitely worthwhile work-plan for our project.

Enjoy the good news!

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Dieter Schindlauer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Dieter Schindlauer  
Team Leader



# MAY WE PRESENT:

## **HUMAN RIGHTS FORUM**

The first Human Rights Forum, held on 26 March 2024, marked the beginning of a yearly tradition – participatory events facilitated by the EU Support for Rule of Law project, exclusively tailored for Beneficiary Institutions in Human Rights Advocacy.

## **INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR STREET CHILDREN**

The Project used the occasion to emphasize the importance of healthy family environments and quality parental care in preventing and addressing the issue of street children.

## **JUDICIAL COUNCIL: BY-LAWS REVISION**

The Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia with the support of the project took another pivotal step towards reinforcing judicial integrity and operational transparency by amending its by-laws.



## Let's talk about...

- EU Support for Rule of Law: Key achievements and future plans presented at the second Steering Committee Meeting
- SCPC strengthens digital infrastructure and security through user access management policy
- Transparency and education as key elements in fighting systemic corruption in North Macedonia
- Innovative World Café methodology facilitates collaborative dialogue on human rights advocacy
- Catalysts of Change - Law enforcement's resolute stand in the fight against corruption in North Macedonia
- Addressing street children and begging through family support
- Strengthening accountability by improving disciplinary proceedings for public prosecutors
- It takes a network to fight a network – Anti-corruption afterwork
- Advancing the EU Peer Review Mission Report recommendations: By-law revisions to enhance the efficiency of the Judicial Council
- Dialogue on intersectional discrimination and access to justice for Roma women and girls



## EU Support for Rule of Law: Key achievements and future plans presented at the second Steering Committee Meeting

The “EU Support for Rule of Law” project recently organised its second steering committee meeting, a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to advance justice, and human rights, and combat organised crime and corruption in North Macedonia. Held on 21 March 2024, at the premises of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), the meeting served as a platform for the Project team to present the highlights of the Progress Report covering the period from September 2023 to February 2024, while also outlining the forthcoming activities.

The task manager, **Ms Marzia Palotta**, Delegation of the European Union to North Macedonia, extended a warm welcome to the participants, emphasizing the considerable opportunity for North Macedonia to make progress in the areas of justice, human rights, fight against organised crime and anti-corruption endeavours through the Project’s activities.

**Ms. Agnes Taibl**, the Project Director said that she was proud of what has been achieved together, as could be seen from the results and achievements documented in the First Narrative Report.



In this regard, Ms. Taibl highlighted the professional cooperation between the project experts and the local partner institutions as being central to the project’s success, across all four components. From the very start of the project, the experts worked closely with the local partners, building strong relationships and cooperating daily, allowing the project team to tailor the project interventions to the needs and the local reality of North Macedonia, thus ensuring that the efforts would be effective and sustainable.



The presentations of the Component Leaders sparked constructive discussions with representatives from beneficiary institutions, who expressed their appreciation for the Project's assistance and its valuable contributions to the field of the rule of law.

**Ms. Vesna Dameva**, President of the Judicial Council, highlighted the significant progress made in recent months due to the dedication of experts from Component 1, anticipating forthcoming results.

**Mr. Sasho Jovanovski**, Head of the Corruption Unit at the Ministry of Interior, extends gratitude to Robert Splajt, Component Leader, and the project for their leadership in crime prevention investigations, foreseeing continued success in the remaining three-year period.

Addressing the need for support, **Mr. Besnik Xhemaili** from the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, stressed the importance of cooperation among institutions to enhance system improvements in the fields of anti-corruption.

**Ms. Gordana Trenkoska**, Deputy Head of Department from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, emphasizes the National Action Plan for Children's Rights as the foundation for implementing child grants activities aimed at advancing children's rights, while also highlighting the critical significance of strengthening discrimination frameworks to enable the analysis of discrimination cases in specific areas. **Ms. Dijana Gjerovska**, Head of the Unit for supervision over the execution of probation measures at Directorate for Execution of Sanctions, highlights the tangible outcomes of round table discussions on alternative sanctions, pointing out a notable increase in active probation cases and positive changes in implementation, signalling the positive impact of effective collaboration.

The meeting, attended by 42 representatives from the EU delegation, consortium partners, beneficiary institutions, and experts, underscored the collaborative effort toward fostering a more just and transparent society in North Macedonia.

Looking ahead, the Project will continue its support to institutions through the drafting of strategies, conducting awareness campaigns, workshops, trainings, and capacity-building initiatives over the next six months.





# Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration



## SCPC strengthens digital infrastructure and security through user access management policy

In recent years, SCPC has undergone significant transformative changes expanding the complexity of its activities and operations. In 2021, SCPC marked a milestone by relocating to a new building, a transition that provided opportunities to increase staff and establish a server hall allowing improved IT infrastructure.

SCPC embarked on a digitalization journey to stay up to date with an evolving environment in a digital era. With support of EU, over the years, a significant number of ICT tools and solutions were developed and implemented to strengthen operational efficiency. These IT solutions played an essential role in improving the work of SCPC.



Since the beginning of the project, it was clear that there was a need for a closer look at the management and maintenance of software and hardware. Therefore, Component 3, has been focusing on supporting SCPC in ensuring proper management of internal controls of ICT tools and solutions to enhance the security of information.



Starting in November, Component 3 collaborated closely with the SCPC IT team to ensure proper management of access rights to all ICT solutions by providing a methodology and on-the-job support conducting a comprehensive review concerning access rights for all SCPC employees. This diligent review brought to light gaps and significant issues which were immediately addressed through corrective actions during the process.

An important outcome of this work was the need to develop a “User Access Management Policy” to ensure the sustainability of the progress achieved through the work conducted with the Component’s support. This policy will serve as an internal regulatory framework for granting and revoking access rights to employees across all ICT tools and solutions for all SCPC employees in the future. This proactive approach ensures a more secure and efficient digital environment for SCPC's ongoing and future operations.

In the end of April, the Commission adopted the policy, and the component will support SCPC with its implementation.





## Transparency and education as key elements in fighting systemic corruption in North Macedonia

An important lecture titled "Facing the Economy with Systemic Corruption" took place, on 23 April 2024 on the premises of NLB Bank in Skopje. This event was organized as part of the EU Support for Rule of Law project, in collaboration with the Embassy of Slovenia and the Association of Slovenian and Macedonian Entrepreneurs.

**MSc Mojca Kuzmicki**, who specializes in fighting corruption and money laundering, and **Phd David Smolej**, an expert in anti-corruption measures, shared their practical experiences in combating corruption with the representatives of the business sector in North Macedonia.



The lecture highlighted several key points. Firstly, it stressed the significance of fighting corruption to maintain transparency and fairness, both in the government and private sectors. It was discussed how corruption can harm democratic institutions and impede economic progress.

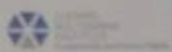


Effective strategies in the fight against corruption were also presented. These strategies include strengthening the legal framework, establishing independent supervisory bodies, and engaging civil society in the process. Moreover, the importance of international cooperation was emphasized. Implementing agreements and conventions that facilitate cross-border judicial cooperation and the exchange of vital information were highlighted as essential steps in preventing corruption from spreading across borders.

Last but not least, the role of education in raising awareness about the negative impacts of corruption and promoting ethical behaviour was discussed. Educating the public about the detrimental effects of corruption is seen as crucial in garnering support for anti-corruption efforts.

Overall, the lecture provided valuable insights into the complexities of combating systemic corruption and underscored the importance of collaborative efforts at both national and international levels.





REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR



REPUBLIC OF SLOVENIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION



DEPARTMENT FOR

JUDICIARY

POLICE

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## Innovative World Café methodology facilitates collaborative dialogue on human rights advocacy

The first Human Rights Forum, held on 26 March 2021, marked the beginning of a yearly tradition – participatory events facilitated by the EU Support for Rule of Law project, exclusively tailored for Beneficiary Institutions in Human Rights Advocacy.

**The forum's aim was clear:** to collaboratively identify challenges and necessary improvements within the human rights protection system in North Macedonia. Approximately thirty stakeholders, each with their own experiences and expertise, came together to share insights and knowledge, fostering a rich exchange of ideas.



Central to this gathering was the utilization of the participatory World Café methodology. This approach, chosen for its capacity to foster open dialogue and collaboration, provided a platform for stakeholders to engage deeply with one another.

The gathering was facilitated by **Karin Bischof**, Expert in the field of monitoring, evaluation and participatory training methods and **Natasha Boshkova**, Expert on human rights education, both part of the project: EU Support for rule of law.



## What makes the World Café methodology special?

It is about inclusivity. This collaborative approach ensured that every voice present in the room had the opportunity to be heard and valued. Multiple rounds of table discussions guided by a common set of questions made the collective knowledge accessible. While there was time for exchanging thoughts in small groups, the method also included swapping tables. This rotation of participants from one working group table to another ensured that insights from one table were connected with ideas from other working group sessions.

A collectively identified need among current stakeholders for enhancing the Human Rights protection system is the creation of practical guidelines to strengthen strategic cooperation among institutions. Consequently, additional networking events such as the World Café are planned.

All the recommendations gathered from the rounds of discussions during the forum are being consolidated into a comprehensive report.







## THE WORLD CAFÉ METHODOLOGY:

***“Most fruitful discussions happen during a coffee break!”***

The World Café is built on the experience that the most fruitful conversations - for example at conferences - take place during coffee breaks.

The World Café method simply tries to imitate a prolonged (but structured) conference coffee break.

### **The benefit of the World Café is that stakeholders get time and space to:**

- interact with each other and to network,
- engage in a topic and contribute their experience/knowledge/ concerns,
- discuss something that truly matters to them in detail,
- come up with solutions/ideas/ actions,
- find answers for rather complicated and complex questions, topics, or problems one (!) cannot solve by her-/himself as it needs the experience, knowledge and collective wisdom of a group.





**A World Café needs a moderator, participants, a room with plenty of tables and chairs, some coffee and (most crucial of all):**

- a clear purpose
- a topic that genuinely matters to the audience (their life and/or work)
- a set of questions that are interesting, engaging, and complex to initiate conversations that matter. Good questions need not imply immediate action steps or problem-solving. They should invite inquiry and discovery.



**For more information and a how-to-guide, see:**  
<https://theworldcafe.com/key-concepts-resources/world-cafe-method/>



## Catalysts of change - Law enforcement's resolute stand in the fight against corruption in North Macedonia

The EU Support for Rule of Law project held an event in North Macedonia, titled "Catalysts of Change," to strengthen law enforcement's commitment to combat corruption. The event shared best practices and innovative strategies from Slovenia police practice, aiming to initiate changes within North Macedonia's anti-corruption policies. Participants analyzed successful models from other EU countries, enabling them to develop robust anti-corruption mechanisms tailored to their legal and social frameworks. The event also highlighted the importance of cross-border cooperation in combating corruption, emphasizing the need for a coordinated approach across national boundaries.

The event began with a welcome speech from **Ms Kuzmicki, MSc**, which set the agenda for the day but also highlighted the collective resolve to combat corruption. This was followed by a compelling presentation from **Mr David Smolej, PhD**, who outlined the "Legal and Organizational Aspects of Fighting Corruption in Slovenia and the EU." His insights provided a comparative framework, demonstrating how Slovenia has advanced its legal mechanisms to tackle corruption effectively, offering valuable lessons for North Macedonia.





Continuing the momentum, **Mr Matjaz Jerkic, MSc**, gave an informative talk on "How to Effectively Use Covert Investigative Measures in Investigating Corruption Criminal Offenses in Slovenia." His session, divided into two parts, delved into the intricacies of covert operations, enhancing the attendees' understanding of sophisticated investigative techniques crucial for anti-corruption efforts.

### **Afternoon Insights:**

After the second break, **Ms Lidija Raicevic, PhD**, a Public Prosecutor from Skopje, addressed the legislative frame in North Macedonia concerning corruption. Her discourse, titled "Legislation Covering the Field of Corruption in North Macedonia – What Changes Would Be Welcome," outlined both the achievements and gaps within the current legal framework. She advocated for specific reforms inspired by successful EU models, prompting a thoughtful discussion on practical steps forward.

### **Conclusions and Networking:**

The day concluded with a summary session where key insights and actionable findings were reiterated. During the networking segment stakeholders had the opportunity to connect, discuss potential collaborations, and share strategies for a corruption-free future.

### **Impact and Future Steps:**

The "Catalysts of Change" event was a significant milestone in North Macedonia's efforts to improve governance and transparency. With continued support from the EU, North Macedonia is better equipped to develop an effective anti-corruption framework.

This successful event highlighted the importance of collaboration in eradicating corruption. As North Macedonia continues to implement the recommendations and insights gained, a future where integrity and justice prevail.





## Addressing street children and begging through family support

Every year on **12 April, International Day for Street Children** provides a voice for children present on the street so their rights cannot be ignored. This year, the EU Support for Rule of Law project used the occasion to emphasize the importance of healthy family environments and quality parental care in preventing and addressing the issue of street children.

Over 40 representatives of relevant public authorities, day care centres for street children run by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), and parents and guardians of children at risk participated in the awareness-raising gathering.



**Their mission?** To shed light on the vital role of nurturing family environments in addressing the pressing issue of street children and begging.



Organized in collaboration with the Ombudsman Office (OO), the event aimed to equip parents and guardians with knowledge about available support resources while addressing their challenges head-on. Set against the backdrop of the Day Care Centre, participants engaged in open discussions, sharing stories and seeking solutions.

### **PLACES WHERE PARENTS AND GUARDIANS CAN GET SUPPORT AND ADVICE**

- National network against violence against women and domestic violence

The free Line for parents 075 230 530, a team of trained experts offers support and advice to parents and guardians, every working day, from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.

- Children's Embassy MEGJASHI  
SOS line 02/2 465 316
- Mobile application "Bebbo" intended for parents and everyone who looks after children aged 0 to 6 years.
- Introduction to positive parenting (informative videos) - [LINK](#)
- Counselling on marriage and family at the Centers for Social Work
- Professional service in educational institutions

As the discussions unfolded, it became evident that many parents and guardians faced specific challenges. Some voiced concerns about bureaucratic roadblocks, while others sought assistance for their families' immediate needs.



Additionally, some requested support from the project to help with the lengthy registration procedures for children lacking personal identification numbers and not yet entered into the birth registry. The project's legal experts quickly contacted the relevant institutions to address these concerns. They identified and resolved specific obstacles causing delays, allowing progress to continue. The experts will continue to oversee the case until it is resolved, ensuring the provision of a personal identification number and child registration in the birth registry.

The journey continues. Our dedication to helping families only grows stronger. By working together, showing kindness, and taking action as one, we move closer to our goal of building a brighter future for all.







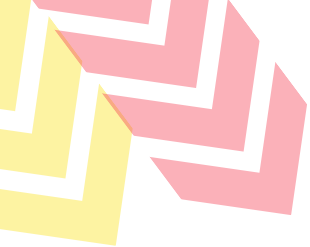
## Strengthening accountability by improving disciplinary proceedings for public prosecutors

The conduct of public prosecutors, like that of judges, cannot be left to their sole discretion, be it within or outside their work. This is particularly important when assessing the activities of prosecutors and taking disciplinary proceedings against them.

It is important to ensure that prosecutors are held accountable for their actions, but this should not interfere with their independence. To achieve this balance, there should be clear mechanisms in place for disciplining prosecutors who have committed serious breaches of duty. These mechanisms must be based on a law, conducted in a transparent manner and overseen by an independent body, separate from the executive.

Over the past few years, the Republic of North Macedonia has taken significant steps to strengthen its disciplinary system for public prosecutors. One of these steps was the adoption of a new Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office (PPO), which addressed recommendations made by international bodies. According to the European Commission's 2022 report for the Republic of North Macedonia, judicial institutions have consistently implemented new rules for the appointment, promotion, discipline, and dismissal of judges and prosecutors. The implementation of the new provisions of the Law on PPO and the Rulebook on Disciplinary Proceedings has revealed the necessity of strengthening the review process to bring the existing regulation and practice of disciplinary proceedings in line with European standards.





Component 1 conducted a legal assessment and prepared a report on disciplinary proceedings in line with European standards. During the assessment meetings, it was observed that there is a lack of day-to-day communication between the key stakeholders apart from formal communication. As a result, Component 1 organized a roundtable, which was the first meeting of its kind, with the Prosecutor General, members of the Disciplinary Commission, and members of the Council of Public Prosecutors.



During the meeting, the experts from Component 1 presented the Report on Disciplinary Proceedings. This led to a discussion on how to incorporate the recommendations. The Prosecutor General, members of the Disciplinary Commission, and members of the Council of Public Prosecutors shared the challenges they face while conducting disciplinary proceedings, based on their respective legal positions and capacities.

As a common conclusion, it was decided to begin a process for amending the Rulebook on the disciplinary proceedings. The purpose of this amendment is to ensure that legal certainty is established and the proceedings are conducted in a timely manner. Additionally, it aims to offer legal protection to public prosecutors who are undergoing such proceedings.





## It Takes a Network to Fight a Network – Anti-Corruption Afterwork

Corruption is frequently associated with money alone and the behaviours of a few individual “bad apples” operating in otherwise healthy governance systems. This is too simplistic. As the latest research shows, corruption is a networked phenomenon that operates through connections between various players, across countries, beliefs, and sectors.

In May 2023 the European Commission with the EU anti-corruption package established the EU network against corruption that met for the first time in September last year recognising active networking among anti-corruption professionals as one important measure in the fight against corruption.



This network aims to foster collaboration, identify trends and build more effective anti-corruption policies across the EU. Bringing together all stakeholders in the fight against corruption, from national authorities and experts to international organisations and relevant EU bodies in one network. “It takes a network to fight a network” as the Swedish Commissioner Ylva Johansson said in her opening speech of the first network meeting.



“

“We want to offer an informal platform where people who share an interest in fighting corruption in different ways can meet and exchange ideas, plans and projects. Or simply to tell each other what they are doing and to ultimately build strong and lasting relations between professionals”, says **Ms Lena Andersson** when asked why the component is hosting these Anti-Corruption After-Works. Also, personal relationships can help cultivate constructive engagement between anti-corruption authorities and non-governmental organisations and we are happy to see that both of these actors attend.

”

However, the idea was brought to the component from the SCPC that has had employees attending all of the after-work gatherings and sees it as one way of expanding the network of the institution and building a common culture of integrity against corruption. That the component regularly hosts after-work is one of many manifestations of the strong professional cooperation the component and SCPC have established.

Darko Dachevski, an Advisor in the SCPC who has worked on many cases reported to and initiated by the SCPC recognises the need to join forces to improve the fight against corruption.

“

“Attending these informal Anti-Corruption After-Works is providing me with an opportunity to exchange experience with professionals from similar bodies, especially on their operational procedures and initiate improvement of our procedures,” says Darko.

”

When your networking is driven by shared interests, it will feel more authentic says Lena. When you think more about what you can give to others than what you can get from them, networking will seem less self-promotional and more selfless - and therefore more worthy of your time. This is what we aim for, and we think this is why we have experienced quite an interest in attending these After-Works. So far professionals from a dozen organisations have participated in the Anti-Corruption After-work spanning from the Ministry of Interior to the Internal Audit Association.

Everybody interested in joining the next Anti-Corruption After-Work on Wednesday the 5th of June from 15.30 in Bistro Komedija is warmly welcome.





## Advancing the EU Peer Review Mission Report recommendations: By-law revisions to enhance the efficiency of the Judicial Council

The Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia with the support of the project took another pivotal step towards reinforcing judicial integrity and operational transparency by amending its by-laws. This initiative, part of a series of reforms initiated by the 2023 EU Peer Review Mission Report, marked the culmination of efforts from multiple workshops aimed at refining the judicial framework according to European standards.

The workshop, held in Mavrovo from April 15-17, was attended by fifteen members and administrative staff from the Judicial Council. This series of workshops, the third following successful gatherings in Veles and Skopje in January and March respectively, focused on the complex details of judicial operations, specifically targeting the enhancement of procedural guidelines, evaluation and ranking of judges, and strategic communication. One of the workshop's significant achievements was the revision of the Council's Rules of Procedure and the Rulebook on Ranking Candidates for an Election to a Higher Court. The workshop focused on fine-tuning how judicial appointments and evaluations are handled, as well as enhancing the Council's operational guidelines.





These updates are expected to elevate the transparency and efficiency of the operations and lead to the implementation of the 2023 EU Peer Review Mission recommendations addressed to the Council. The amendments are set to improve the way the Judicial Council operates, making its actions more transparent and its decision-making process more rigorous and accountable. The amendments were aligned with several European standards, particularly those aimed at speeding up the judicial performance evaluation process and increasing the Council's transparency.

### **AMENDED BY-LAWS BY THE JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF THE REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA**

- **Revision of the Council's Rules of Procedure**
- **Revision of the Rulebook on Ranking Candidates for an Election to a Higher Court**
- **Enhancement of Operational Guidelines**



The diligent efforts of the Judicial Council, driven by the objectives outlined in the EU Peer Review Mission Report and supported by our project's expertise, symbolise a significant stride towards a more transparent, efficient, and accountable management of the judiciary in North Macedonia. With these reforms, the Council is not only enhancing its operational standards but also fostering a robust environment of trust and integrity, contributing to a future where the rule of law is steadily upheld and respected.





# Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration





## Dialogue on intersectional discrimination and access to justice for Roma women and girls

The EU Support for Rule of Law (RoLaw) project supported the organisation of the public discussion on multiple and intersectional discrimination and access to justice with a special focus on Roma women and girls. This is the first joint event of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD) and the Ombudsperson, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP).

The public discussion was a pivotal gathering of activists, lawyers, and experts, working on the equality of Roma women and girls' rights, as well as on the equality of other marginalised groups. The participants dissected the complexities behind the sources of inequality and the discriminatory obstacles in access to justice for Roma women and girls in all their diversity, as well as finding ways and concrete proposals for the removal of these obstacles.





The lively and very active discussion, skilfully moderated by **Dragana Drndarevska (CPPD)**, demonstrated the need for more public events where key stakeholders will be given the chance to share their opinions and experiences on key issues of equality and non-discrimination, as is the access to justice for Roma women and girls. The interventions of **Vaska Bajramovska Mustafa (Ombudsperson Institution)** and **Mabera Kameri (MLSP)** – exceptional Romani women who have worked for decades on the equality and rights of Roma and women and girls, additionally enriched the discussion, as did **Igor Jadrovski’s (CPPD)** introductory remarks reaffirming CPPD’s unequivocal commitment to this burning issue.



This event reflects the RoLaw project’s ongoing pledge to contribute as much as possible to the successful implementation of the National Action Plan for the Protection, Promotion, and Fulfilment of the Human Rights of Roma Women and Girls (2022-2024). It represents a significant step forward in our collective efforts to promote intersectional justice—an aspiration centred on ensuring equitable access to rights, opportunities, resources, and societal power for all, including Roma women and girls.

The results of the discussion will be published in a separate public event report, as well as used in the process of drafting the first joint report of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination and the Ombudsperson on the topic of multiple and intersectional discrimination and access to justice with a special focus on Roma women and girls. The report will be published in 2024.



**BORKOWSKI**  
**Grzegorz**

*INTERVIEW*

**MEET THE  
TEAM**

**COMPONENT LEADER**

## **“Building the trust as an element of building the Rule of Law”**

***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.***

**Dr. Grzegorz Borkowski**, has more than 17 years of professional experience as a judge in Poland, adjudicating in both first and second-instance courts. Since 2018 he has worked in EURALIUS V, the EU-funded Project in Albania, as a component leader supporting the newly-established High Judicial Council, High Prosecutorial Council and other governance institutions. Between 2015 and 2018 he held the function of the Head of Office of the National Council of Judiciary in the rank of Undersecretary of State, and before that, he worked for five years in the National School of Judiciary and Public Prosecution as the Head of the International Cooperation Department. Also, he was elected as the first Head of the Consultative Board of the Council of Europe HELP Programme and as a seconded Polish judge worked for one year as a processing lawyer in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. He has longstanding experience working as an expert on the judiciary in international projects, as well as with international organisations such as OSCE-ODIHR, EJTN, CCJE, ENCJ, CoE, CEELI, ERA, USAID, UNICRI, UNODP etc. and authored many publications on issues concerning the rule of law.

**As the leader of Component 1 focusing on the Judiciary in North Macedonia within the EU Support for Rule of Law project, how do you define the rule of law?**

As a judge, I am a practitioner, not a theoretician. I can quote the definition of another practitioner, a judge of the Supreme Court of the USA who, when they were discussing obscenity and the definition of pornography in the 60s of the twentieth century, said: “I cannot give you a definition of it but I know it when I see it.” This intuitive way of defining works also for the rule of law. Namely, when everybody obeys the law, not just common people but also the authorities, judges, prosecutors and whoever has power, then we see that we deal with the rule of law. But for me that’s not all - what is important is the trust of the people in the state and its authorities.

## MEET THE TEAM

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If people obey the constitution and the laws, not merely because of potential sanctions but because they trust in those rules, that's where we have the rule of law. What we are trying to aim at is to have a judiciary which is performing its duties in a proper and transparent way as this way the trust of the people can be won. At the end of the day, people need justice and justice needs to be delivered quickly and in a transparent way.

**In your view, what are the key objectives or priorities of Component 1 in North Macedonia to strengthen the rule of law within the judiciary in the next three years, and how do you measure the impact of these efforts?**

Success may be won in many fields and there are many challenges. Improving the transparency of the nomination and promotion system of judges and prosecutors in line with European standards, improving the usage of IT in the judiciary, and strengthening the independence of the judicial bodies and the judges themselves as the key issues. And we are talking about the independence not only of the judiciary towards other state powers but also the independence of individual judges towards their colleagues, towards the presidents of courts and paradoxically also independence from the society in the terms that in a high-profile case, the judge needs to be strong enough to stay impartial and independent from outside pressure, which is a big challenge.



Regarding IT in the judiciary, the priorities would be introducing a new electronic case management system in prosecution offices, IT capacity building and drafting and adopting the IT strategy for the Justice Sector for the years 2025-2029.

Another priority is also the relations between the judiciary, the prosecution office and the media. We are trying to reach that goal, among others by supporting the judicial council in working on the communication strategy for the Council and courts. Currently, the document is basically ready and after consultations with presidents of courts, it should be adopted within two months. Similarly, we are working on the communication strategy for the Council of Public Prosecutors and the prosecution offices.

In general, we are focusing on the following areas that we consider key objectives: improving the skills of judges, prosecutors and candidates for those professions, as well as judicial and prosecutorial council members, implementing better technology in the judiciary, strengthening the independence and transparency of all judiciary bodies and supporting the Ministry of Justice in implementing the Judicial Strategy. To measure our impact, we will closely monitor improvements, get feedback from the legal community, and pay particular attention to the perception of the public's trust in the judiciary. In other words, we will achieve success if, after the implementation of our project, the surveys show that trust in the judiciary has risen.

**Could you share examples of successful initiatives or reforms implemented by Component 1 that have contributed to improving the effectiveness of the judiciary?**

I would say that the main success was our support in drafting and adopting the Developmental Justice Strategy by the Ministry of Justice. From the very beginning of the project, we supported the working group led by Prof. Kambovski in drafting the justice strategy which would reflect the EU standards, together with the impact assessment and monitoring tools. It was a great challenge to gather the relevant data from all our beneficiaries and the whole team was actively involved in this task. The great success was that we managed to have the document ready by the end of the last year and the Developmental Justice Strategy for 2024-2028 was adopted in December 2023.

Now, we are supporting the Ministry of Justice in monitoring the Strategy's implementation, which, once it is done in accordance with European standards, will raise the effectiveness of functioning of the whole justice system.

Another example of the success regarding the judiciary would be the support of the Judicial Council in drafting an action plan for implementing the recommendations of the Peer Review mission. This action plan was adopted as an official document by the Judicial Council.

Also, during a three-day retreat with the members of the Judicial Council, we were working on the by-laws including the rules of procedure and performance evaluation of judges who apply for promotion; those are all elements of the recommendation of the Peer Review mission.

A roundtable for disciplinary proceedings in the Public Prosecution Office where the report on the disciplinary procedures drafted by our experts was presented and the need for amendments to the Rulebook on Disciplinary Proceedings was opened.



**With your professional experience as a judge in Poland, and in light of the recent successful efforts to safeguard judicial independence, could you please share some practical insights and recommendations based on your experience that could benefit judges and enhance the overall legal system in our country?**

When the so-called “reform” of the judiciary in Poland started (unfortunately it was not what one can expect when hearing the word “reform”), we as judges realized that the most important issue for keeping the judicial independence was to win the public support, i.e. the support from the society as well as from the European counterparts. I am a judge in Poland and a member of the Association of Judges Iustitia but also, I was the Head of Office of the National Council of Judiciary when it all started, so I was involved directly in the efforts to keep the judicial independence. What we have learned as judges is that you have to reach out to people, you cannot rely only on explaining yourself in the reasoning of judgements - as we were always told during the initial training. In Poland, we have learned that this approach is wrong.

The society's trust is crucial for the judiciary to maintain judicial independence and protect democracy and the rule of law. Judges must understand their role as servants to society and communicate with it effectively. According to the European standards developed not only in the European Court of Human Rights judgments but also Venice Commission's and CCJE opinions, judges not only have the right to speak out when it comes to the public debate on the reforms of justice - they have a duty to do so.



And this is exactly what Iustitia did, because it not only supported the judges who were attacked by other state powers, got suspended or were subjects of disciplinary proceedings; Iustitia was also very active in the public debate on judiciary and education programs. Lots of Polish judges, prosecutors and advocates were going to schools (both primary and secondary) and having classes on the Constitution, the importance of obeying the law, and what the role of judges and prosecutors should be, and most importantly, the importance of the Constitution.. One may say that this is a kind of investment in young people, in future generations. I think that this experience may be very useful for the judicial and prosecutorial associations in North Macedonia.

We had lots of people in Poland going out to the streets to protest in front of court buildings to defend judicial independence. Also, we had support from European judges, not only from institutions such as CCJE, ENCJ or EAJ, which were issuing numerous declarations but also by attending the “March of 1000 robes” in January 2020, which gathered over 30.000 people in Warsaw.

In the freezing cold, judges from basically all European countries marched the streets of Warsaw wearing their judicial robes (which is completely unusual outside of the courtroom), thus protesting against the attempts to breach judicial independence.

There was a moment, when I felt very emotional, at another protest in front of the Supreme Court, when the authorities tried to lower the pensioners’ age of the judges of the Supreme Court of Poland, thus getting rid of most of them. I was there with my friends and saw that someone put a big banner on the building of the Court saying: “This is our court”. That was a great moment and I was very proud of my fellow citizens in Poland because I realized that as a society, we reached the stage at which we truly have the Rule of Law in our hearts. I firmly believe that the experience of both me and my colleagues from Component 1 and the work we are doing here will help in building and keeping the Rule of Law in North Macedonia.

# CALENDAR UPCOMING EVENTS

20  
MAY

23  
MAY

**Workshop on drafting amendments to the Rulebook on the disciplinary proceedings for public prosecutors**  
Component 1

05  
JUNE

**Anti-Corruption After-Work**  
Bistro Komedija  
Component 3

30  
MAY

31  
MAY

**Training on interview techniques and crisis communication targeting the PR working group of the probation service**  
Veles  
Component 4

29  
MAY

**Unveiling Shadows: Investigating Money Laundering and Presenting Best Practices in the Republic of Slovenia**  
Component 2

03  
JULY

**Equality Talks on inclusive education organised with the CPPD**  
Skopje  
Component 4



# Capturing Success:

A Visual Celebration





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