



**ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON THE  
FRAMEWORK CONVENTION FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**



ACFC/SR/VI(2025)005

## **Sixth Report submitted by North Macedonia**

**Pursuant to Article 25, paragraph 2 of the  
Framework Convention for the Protection of  
National Minorities – received on 28 October 2025**

## **Sixth Report of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia on the Implementation of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**

The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia highly appreciates the role of the Advisory Committee in advancing the position of persons belonging to minorities in State Parties to the Convention. The Republic of North Macedonia continuously raises initiatives and pursues substantial legislative and other measures and policies aimed at the implementation of the Advisory Committee recommendations under the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

### **Measures Undertaken with a View to Raising Awareness about the Outcomes of the Fifth Monitoring Cycle and of the Framework Convention**

With respect to the fifth monitoring cycle, it should be emphasized that there was a follow-up dialogue at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a representative of the Advisory Committee under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, which took place on 22 May 2023, in Skopje. The meeting was an excellent opportunity for representatives of civil society organisations working on issues pertaining to the promotion of rights of various ethnic communities, as well as for several in-line institutions in North Macedonia, to discuss with the representative of the Advisory Committee the measures undertaken for the implementation of the main recommendations contained in the Opinion, with a special focus on recommendations requiring immediate action.

Documents pertaining to the fifth monitoring cycle (the Opinion, the Comments, and the Resolution) were duly presented in the course of follow-up activities and were disseminated on multiple occasions to in-line institutions, both after their adoption and during the preparation of the Sixth Report of the country.

The Assembly Committee on Inter-Community Relations marked the 25 anniversary of the entry into force of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe with a ceremonial session held in the Assembly on 7 June 2023. On this occasion, addresses were delivered by the President of the country, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Ambassador of the European Union to North Macedonia.

Since May 2022, when the Fifth Opinion of the Advisory Committee was adopted, a total of five Participatory Forums of Communities have been convened, addressing the following thematic areas:

- Prevention of and protection against discrimination on the grounds of ethnic affiliation;
- Verification session of the preliminary findings of the analysis of the functionality of the Participatory Forum;
- Political participation of women in the Republic of North Macedonia – opportunities and challenges;
- Results of the 2021 Census and its impact on numerically smaller communities and social cohesion;
- Analysis of the situation regarding education in the languages of numerically smaller communities;
- The rights of numerically smaller communities and the National Strategy on Interculturalism.

### **Measures Undertaken with a View to Enhancing the Implementation of the Framework Convention and the Recommendations under the Fifth Monitoring Cycle**

### Recommendations for immediate action

1. **The following is presented with respect to the first recommendation for promotion of an integrated society that is based on respect and trust between the various communities and implementation of an intercultural approach to education:**

The Decision amending the Decision on the Strategic Priorities of the Government for the period 2024–2028, adopted on 20 August 2024, reaffirmed that the full implementation of the Ohrid Framework Agreement, the strengthening of multicultural cohesion, and the promotion of multicultural values remain strategic priorities.

On 29 May 2025, in Skopje, the Agency for Community Rights Realisation, in cooperation with the joint EU–Council of Europe Project on Combating Hate Speech and Intolerance in North Macedonia, convened a Participatory Forum on the topic of “The Role of Non-Majority Communities in Strengthening Social Cohesion”.

The Forum was intended to serve as an informal and consultative platform aimed at fostering cooperation, communication, and trust between less represented ethnic communities and in-line public institutions. It provided an open space for dialogue on key challenges faced by these communities, bringing together representatives of various public institutions, civil society organisations representing different ethnic communities in North Macedonia, as well as representatives of the international community. The event was addressed by the Director of the Agency for Community Rights Realisation, the State Secretary at the Ministry for Inter-Community Relations, the National Coordinator for Interculturalism, Cultural Development and Interdepartmental Cooperation, and the National Coordinator for the Development and Monitoring of National Strategies and Policies concerning Non-Majority Communities. In their addresses, the speakers underscored the importance of continued efforts to reinforce social cohesion, intercultural cooperation, and the cultivation of multicultural and multi-ethnic composition within a diverse society. Furthermore, developments relating to the Strategy for development of the ‘One society for all’ concept and interculturalism (2024–2026) were discussed, and key recommendations and positions were shared concerning the continuation of its implementation.

The Government has undertaken several initiatives and programmes aimed at ensuring culturally relevant and adapted education at the primary and secondary levels, in accordance with the multicultural character of the local context. The means for achieving the aforementioned objectives are as follows:

- Multi-ethnic and Inclusive Curriculum (The curriculum is structured in a manner that embraces and promotes cultural diversity and tolerance. It incorporates elements that reflect specific characteristics of various ethnic and cultural groups in the country, with the aim of fostering mutual understanding and respect among pupils coming from diverse backgrounds.)
- Provision of Instruction in Different Languages (Instruction is delivered in the languages of the respective ethnic communities. This practice upholds the right of pupils to have education in their mother tongue, including but not limited to Albanian, Turkish, Serbian, and Bosnian.)
- Intercultural Education (Projects aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue and joint activities among pupils from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds are frequently implemented. Pursuant to specific provisions in the Law on Primary Education and the Law on Secondary Education, schools that participate in such activities are eligible to receive grants for their implementation. Under the proposed amendments to the Law on Primary Education and the new Law on Secondary Education, currently in government endorsement procedure, the amount of the grant is to be increased more than twofold, i.e., from MKD 30,000 per school to a sum equivalent to two average monthly salaries per school.)

- Support for Teachers and Their Professional Training (The Ministry, through the Bureau for the Development of Education, provides training to teachers aimed at equipping them with pedagogical methods that respect and incorporate diverse cultural values and perspectives. This training includes tools for addressing potential conflicts and for fostering a positive and inclusive climate at schools.)
- Involvement of the Community in the Educational Process (Local communities play a pivotal role in the educational process. The Government continually encourages parents and representatives of local communities to participate in school life and to engage in decision-making processes related to teaching and school-related activities.)
- Promotion of the Values of Tolerance and Solidarity (Through the educational process, pupils are encouraged to respect diverse cultures, religions, and traditions of their fellow students. These values are embedded in all aspects of school life, with the aim of creating an environment that fosters solidarity, mutual respect, and cooperation.)

**2. The authorities to increase efforts to prevent human rights violations against the Roma by the police. Furthermore, they should ensure that the oversight mechanisms within the Ministry of the Interior, the Public Prosecutor's Office and in the Ombudsperson's, Office are effective and that alleged cases of police misconduct are investigated and adequately sanctioned.**

With regard to prior allegations concerning the profiling of persons belonging to the Roma community in the context of exit procedures from the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia at border crossing points, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, in the course of its actions vis-à-vis all individuals, strictly adheres to both the national legal framework and international conventions to which the Republic of North Macedonia is a State Party and which are binding for the country.

Article 8 of the Law on Border Control governs the principle of non-discriminatory conduct towards any individual belonging to a particular ethnic group, and reads as follows: "In the performance of border control, police offices shall be obliged to fully respect human dignity. All powers exercised by police officers during the conduct of border control must be proportionate to the objective for which they are undertaken. While conducting border control, police officers shall not engage in any form of discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic affiliation, skin colour, age, national origin, social background, religious belief, disability, sexual orientation, or financial and social status."

Police officers of the Border Police, in accordance with the annual training programme, undergo continuous training on the relevant subject matter. In addition, such training is also delivered annually by international organisations.

With regard to the section pertaining to human rights of the Roma, particularly in the context of hate crime and hate speech, the Ministry of the Interior its Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards (DICCIPS), as an organisational unit within the Ministry competent for examining cases of unlawful, unprofessional, or unethical conduct by employees of the Ministry, conducts oversight activities aimed at ensuring the respect and protection of human rights and freedoms during the exercise of police powers. In organizational terms, this Department is structurally independent from the police and performs control and supervisory functions over the work of the Ministry's personnel, including control of the observance of the corpus of human rights and fundamental freedoms. The Ministry, through this Department, undertakes procedures based on submissions, complaints, or objections lodged by citizens, non-governmental organisations, anonymous sources, legal persons and other entities; then based on requests submitted or presented by employees of the Ministry; and based data, information and intelligence independently gathered by the Department; as well as upon the instruction of the Minister.

In all cases wherein the Ministry of the Interior, or the Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards (DICCIPS), has been notified of any instance of police brutality or discrimination against citizens on any grounds by police officers, including discrimination on the grounds of belonging to a particular national minority, the Ministry and the Department, without exception, undertake appropriate proceedings and examine all allegations contained in the submissions. Such proceedings are conducted without any form of selective approach, ensuring equal treatment for all citizens regardless of their ethnic, religious, gender, sexual, or any other form of identity. Upon completion of the verification procedure, a timely response is submitted to the complainant.

When submitting complaints, the complainant is under no obligation to disclose data pertaining to any of above referred to identity forms, i.e., characteristics. However, in the official records, belonging to a specific marginalized community is noted only if the complainant explicitly states that such belonging constitutes the reason, or ground for the alleged unlawful, unprofessional, or unethical conduct of the employees of the Ministry.

Table containing data on submitted complaints regarding against police brutality and discrimination against persons belonging to the Roma community. No data are available concerning complaints submitted by persons belonging to other national minorities/ethnic communities, as the complainants have not indicated their belonging to a national minority/ethnic community at the time of submission.

Submissions against discriminatory conduct by Ministry employees against persons belonging to the Roma community

	T o t a l submissions	Founded	Partially founded	Unfounded	L a c k o f e v i d e n c e
2020	1	/	1	/	/
2021	/	/	/	/	/
2022	1	/	/	/	1
2023	2	1	/	/	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>2</b>

In the period from 2020 to November 2023, the Ministry of the Interior, through its Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards (DICCIPS), received a total of four (4) complaints submitted by individuals who alleged that they had been subjected to discriminatory treatment by police officers or other employees of the Ministry on account of their belonging to the Roma community. Following the execution of the necessary investigative procedures by the Ministry, acting through the Department, the following was established: One complaint was well-founded, resulting in the submission of a proposal for the institution of disciplinary proceedings for violation of work discipline against two authorized official persons. As of the date of this report, the proceedings remain pending; One complaint was partially founded, for which a general warning measure was issued. Two complaints were determined to be unsubstantiated, due to lack of evidence.

Submissions Alleging Police Brutality Against Persons Belonging to the Roma Community

	Total submissions	Founded	Partially founded	Unfounded	Lack of evidence
2020	3	1	/	1	1
2021	1	/	/	/	1
2022	/	/	/	/	/
2023	1	1	/	/	/

<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>/</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
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In the period from 2020 to November 2023, the Ministry of the Interior, through the Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards (DICCIPS), received a total of five (5) complaints, i.e., reports concerning the use of physical force against persons belonging to the Roma community. Following the execution of the necessary verifications, it was established that two complaints were well-founded: In the first case, criminal charges were filed against one police officer for the crime of *Ill-treatment in the performance of duty* pursuant to Article 143 of the Criminal Code. A proposal was also submitted for the institution of disciplinary proceedings for violation of work discipline. The police officer in question was removed from their duty station, disarmed, and referred for psychological and psychiatric evaluation. Upon completion of the disciplinary procedure, a fine was imposed. The individual was found guilty and sentenced to one (1) year of imprisonment. (There is no official confirmation available as to whether the criminal proceedings have been concluded with a final verdict.) In the second case, criminal charges were filed against three police officers, also for the crime of *Ill-treatment in the performance of duty* under Article 143 of the Criminal Code. For each of these officers, a proposal was submitted to institute disciplinary proceedings for breach of work discipline, they were removed from their duty stations, disarmed, and referred for psychological and psychiatric evaluation. No final outcomes have been reported for the instituted proceedings. As regards the remaining three complaints, one was established to be unfounded, and in two cases, there was no evidence.

The Ministry of the Interior continuously undertakes measures aimed at monitoring the situation concerning the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, with a view to identifying irregularities, issuing directives for their rectification, and establishing accountability for police officers who have abused their powers and violated fundamental rights and freedoms of individuals during police procedures. To this end, regular inspections are conducted in police stations, including the review of the daily logbook, examination of the documentation pertaining to apprehended and persons in police custody, and inspection of premises designated for keeping individuals in police custody.

Under the Programme for Reforms in the Intelligence and Security Sector in North Macedonia (2021–2026), jointly implemented by the Ministry of the Interior and the Geneva Centre for Security Sector Governance - DCAF, an Integrity Plan of the Ministry of the Interior 2023–2025 and an Action Plan for the Implementation of the Integrity Plan 2023–2025 have been developed.

On the basis of a previously conducted comprehensive analysis of statistics and analytical data available to the Ministry of the Interior and its Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards (DICCIPS), areas of the Ministry's operations exposed to unlawful conduct have been identified. As a result, the Integrity Plan encompasses, *inter alia*, the risk of excessive use of force in the exercise of police powers, as one of the priority risk areas for intervention.

The Action Plan for the Implementation of the Integrity Plan envisages measures and activities to be undertaken by in-*lien* organisational units over the course of the next three years, with a view to mitigating or eliminating the identified risk. The Integrity Plan for Job Posts at the Ministry of the Interior 2023–2025 and the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Integrity Plan 2023–2025 have been published on the official website of the Ministry of the Interior.

Under the Programme "Promotion of Integrity and Good Governance in the Western Balkan Countries, in 2023, the Ministry of the Interior and the Department for Internal Control, Criminal Investigations and Professional Standards, in cooperation with the Centre for Integrity in the Defence Sector of the Kingdom of Norway (CIDS), organized four training sessions, each for approximately 25 participants, on the topic of "Use of Police Force". The purpose of the training sessions was to facilitate the exchange of experiences and to provide detailed information about the fundamental

principles, standards, and certain best practices in the area of safeguarding the integrity, in the course of use of force by the police.

In 2023, the Assembly elected three representatives from civil society organisations, thereby completing the composition of the external oversight mechanism over the work of the police, including the prison police.

#### **Article 4 - Access to rights – risk of statelessness**

**The Advisory Committee strongly encourages the authorities to strengthen their efforts to resolve the problem of statelessness and lack of documentation among Roma and remove administrative and technical barriers in the implementation of the respective legislation. The authorities should ensure the immediate registration for all children born on the territory irrespective of the documentation status of parents**

Legislative amendments have been adopted with the aim of facilitating the acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons, as well as ensuring birth registration for all children born in the country, irrespective of whether their parents are undocumented or stateless. Significant progress has been achieved in the area of international cooperation, particularly with regard to statelessness. The country's efforts towards the eradication of statelessness have been welcomed, with particular emphasis placed on the multidisciplinary approach adopted in addressing the issue, as well as the joint and coordinated efforts undertaken by multiple institutions and civil society organisations in effectively overcoming the problem.

The Law on Citizenship was adopted in November 1992, with subsequent amendments and supplements adopted in 2004, 2008, 2011, 2016, 2021, and 2022.

The amendments and supplements to the Law were adopted in alignment with provisions of the European Convention on Nationality, which was ratified by the Assembly in 2002. In October 2019, the Law on the Ratification of the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness was adopted. Pursuant to the 2004 amendments to the Law on Citizenship, a legal basis was established for the acquisition of citizenship by stateless persons or individuals with recognized refugee status.

According to Article 7a of the Law on Citizenship, “Citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia by naturalization can be acquired by a person without a citizenship or a person with a recognized refugee status, provided that within the period from the determination that he/she has no citizenship, that is the recognition of refugee status to the submission of the application for admission to citizenship, he/she legally and permanently resides on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia for at least six years, has not been sentenced to imprisoned for at least one year in the Republic of North Macedonia, for crimes prosecuted *ex officio* and are punishable in accordance with the regulations in the Republic of North Macedonia, a criminal procedure is not initiated against him/her in the Republic of North Macedonia and he/she meets the requirements referred to in Article 7 paragraph 1 item 1, 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 of this Law.”

According to Article 7 of the Law Amending and Supplementing the Law on Citizenship (Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 174/2021 dated 30 July 2021): “Within three years from this Law’s day of entry into force, a citizen of another Republic of the former SFRY and a citizen of the former SFRY, who lived on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia until 8 September 1991, i.e. until the declaration of independence of the Republic of Macedonia, shall acquire citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia by virtue of this Law, if they submit a request to the competent authority and attach to the request at least one of the following documents in original or a notarized copy issued by a body or legal entity in the Republic of Macedonia in the

period specified in this paragraph as follows:

1) birth certificate; 2) proof of completed school year (certificate or diploma); 3) proof of established employment with M1/M2 form; 4) workbook; 5) proof of paid tax in accordance with the legal regulations valid in the Republic of Macedonia at that time, i.e. proof of paid: - personal income tax of workers, - personal income tax from performing agricultural activity, - personal income tax from independent performance of economic and professional activity, - tax on royalties, patents and technical innovation, - property income and property rights tax, - property tax and - inheritance and gift tax, 6) the decision of the taxpayer by the Public Revenue Office; 7) proof of paid bill for the following services: - electric energy, - heating, - water, - telephone services; 8) passport issued by the former SFRY or the Republic of Macedonia; 9) ID card issued by the former SFRY or the Republic of Macedonia; 10) ID card for foreigners; 11) medical book; 12) report, confirmation, discharge letter or other document proving performed treatment in public health institutions in the Republic of Macedonia; 13) possession or property deed in the name of the applicant; 14) savings book for depositing savings in a bank (legal entity) established by the Republic of Macedonia in accordance with law; 15) other evidence issued by competent state bodies which confirm permanent residence on the territory of the Republic of Macedonia and 16) certificates issued from 1991 to 1998 for persons born between 1984 and 1991.”

According to the records of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, a total of 97 individuals belonging to the Roma ethnic community have acquired citizenship of the Republic of North Macedonia pursuant to Article 7 of the Law on Citizenship.

At present, there are no pending applications for acquisition of citizenship submitted by persons of Roma ethnicity with stateless status under the aforementioned Article 7.

On 4 November 2023, UNHCR reported on its official website about progress achieved in addressing statelessness, stating that North Macedonia has amended its legislation to enable stateless persons to acquire citizenship and to ensure birth registration for all children born within its territory, regardless of whether their parents are undocumented or stateless.

On 21 June 2023, the Assembly adopted the Law Amending the Law on Civil Registers. The Law Amending the Law on Identity Cards and the Law Amending the Law on Reporting Permanent and Temporary Residences of Nationals were adopted in 2023, aiming to enable this category of nationals who will acquire the status of nationals to more easily obtain a personal document.

The Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth and the Ministry of Justice supported and coordinated the process for systemic and permanent solution of the decades-long problem of about 700 persons, mostly Roma, in North Macedonia who were not registered and recorded in the birth register. The problem of these persons infringed the exercise of the human rights because they did not have access to healthcare, social protection, education and justice. The Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth continues working with these persons in the process of their inclusion under the Roma Strategy 2022-2030.

The Law on Persons Unregistered in the Birth Register was adopted in 2020. The law created a possibility to obtain a birth certificate from the special birth register and an identity document for the purpose of exercising the rights to education, healthcare, social protection and employment with mandatory social insurance until further registration in the birth register and obtaining the first certificate from the birth register. In spite of the numerous benefits offered by this law, certain shortcomings have impeded the attainment of the true goal of the law.

A supervisory discussion about the application of the legal provisions of the Law on Unregistered Persons in the Birth Register was organised by the Committee on Political System and Relations among the Communities at the Assembly and it was decided that the Law on the Civil Registry should be amended.

In order to fulfil our commitment that there be no persons who are not registered in the birth register in the Republic of North Macedonia by the end of 2023, the working group formed by the Minister of Justice, in coordination with MPs from the Committee for Political System and Relations among the Communities, prepared a Law Amending the Law on Civil Registry in a fast-track procedure.

A draft law amending this law was submitted by a group of MPs at the Assembly and it was adopted on 14 June 2023.

In addition to the legal provisions to register approximately 700 unregistered persons by the end of 2023, this law also meets the internationally assumed obligations for civil registration and issuing documents under:

- the Convention of the Rights of the Child,
- the Zagreb Declaration on Access to Civil Documentation and Registration in South Eastern Europe of 2011 and
- the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, ratified in 2019.

In compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child, this law guarantees the right to registration in the birth register of every child born on the territory of the Republic of North Macedonia immediately or within 45 days from the day of birth of the child regardless of the nationality or personal status of his or her parents.

The Ministry of Justice also adopted, by the set deadline, the secondary legislation envisaged by this law that defines the content and form of the forms based on which these persons, in the procedure defined by this law, are enabled in a swift and efficient manner to obtain a birth certificate.

Since the adoption of this law, the Ministry of Justice holds regular coordination meetings with the Civil Registry, the Committee for Political System and Relations among the Communities, the Ministry of the Interior and nongovernmental organisations to consider the challenges faced by the institutions in the application of this law.

According to data from the Civil Registry:

Procedures are ongoing for a total of 526 persons for registration in the civil register under the last amendments to the Law on Civil Registry. Of those persons, 409 persons have been registered in the birth register since the adoption of the amendments. As of 31 December 2023, procedures were pending for a total of 117 persons.

Thus far, all regional units of the Registry have also continuously issued birth certificates on reception days for issuing birth certificates. Furthermore, it has been envisaged to organize a reception day for issuing birth certificates to 30 persons who have already been registered in the birth register, as well as reception days for issuing the remaining birth certificates in accordance with the dynamic of the registration in the birth register of the remaining 156 persons.

**3. The Advisory Committee urges the authorities to improve access of Roma children to quality education by strengthening good practices such as education mediators, scholarships and education allowances and making these known to Roma parents. The authorities should also increase the enrolment in preschools, and resolutely address de facto segregated education.**

**Furthermore, the authorities are urged to ensure Roma have in practice access to the legally guaranteed free health care services, including to diagnosis, treatment and vaccination related to Covid-19. Particular attention should be paid to access to reproductive health services and information for Roma women. The authorities should invest more in recruiting and training Roma health mediators and medical practitioners, especially from among women.**

The total number of Roma children enrolled in kindergartens at the national level, as of June 2024, was 454 Roma children. This number included 260 Roma children from families at social risk who were exempted from paying participation fees at kindergartens by a decision of the Council of Municipalities in compliance with a Conclusion of the Government. In the 2024-2025 schoolyear, it is planned to include 350 Roma children from families at social risk in a total of 21 municipalities in public children's institutions, i.e. kindergartens, in accordance with a Conclusion of the Government.

Education mediators engaged by the Ministry of Education and Science worked on the ground to inform and support families and parents/guardians for enrolment of Roma pupils in the first grade. On 30 August 2023, a Public Call was published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science for engagement of 40 Roma education mediators for supporting the primary education of the Roma in the 2023/2024 schoolyear. The procedure was completed and the mediators were selected. Primary schools continued using the instruments for testing the knowledge of over-age pupils in order to include them in the proper grade of primary education.

Aiming to support the primary education of the Roma, in the 2024/2025 schoolyear the Ministry increased the scholarships and the number of engaged Roma education mediators from 40 to 50, which increased the number of municipalities where they act and are engaged from 26 to 30. The public call for engaging Roma education mediators was published on the website of the Ministry on 23 September 2024. The results for engagement of Roma education mediators under the Public Call were published on 24 October and the officially engaged Roma education mediators signed contracts in the presence of the Minister of Education and Science on 8 November. At its 180 session, held on 22 August 2023, the Government adopted the Programme Amending the Programme for Exercising and Developing the Activity in the Pupils' Standard for 2023, increasing the amounts of the scholarships for Roma pupils as follows: for the first category from MKD 2200 to MKD 3000, for the second category from MKD 1500 to MKD 2300, for the third category from MKD 1200 to MKD 1700 and for the fourth category from MKD 800 to MKD 1200 per month.

On 9 October 2023, a competition was published for granting scholarships in four categories for first-, second-, third- and fourth-year Roma students at public and private secondary schools in the Republic of North Macedonia for the 2023/2024 schoolyear, with an application deadline of 23 October 2023. The results were published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science on 16 November 2023. A total of 894 scholarships were granted (212 in the first category, 279 in the second category, 166 in the third category and 237 in the fourth category).

In order to increase the number of Roma students in secondary education in the 2024/2025 schoolyear, under the Competition for Enrolment in Public Secondary Schools in Republic of North Macedonia, to which 580-600 Roma students usually apply, the Ministry of Education and Science increased the number of scholarships for Roma high-school students for the 2024/2025 schoolyear to 1200 from 920 in the previous schoolyear. The competition for granting scholarships to Roma students at public and private secondary schools was published on 23 September 2024. The results from the Competition were published on 11 November 2024, following which the students signed contracts in compliance with the procedures.

A new draft Law on Secondary Education was prepared and is pending governmental procedure. The new law includes a provision on exemption from certificate validation fees for the vulnerable groups of citizens and a provision on engaging education mediators for Roma students.

The Ministry of Education and Science has implemented additional measures for fight against the discrimination of Roma students in secondary education. One such mechanism is the inclusion of specific criteria for enrolment in public secondary schools, which are listed in the Competition for enrolment in public secondary schools. By these criteria, Roma students are entitled to enrol in a secondary school with a 10 % reduction of the minimum points required for enrolment. This long-term measure has been in force since 2009 and is aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for access to secondary education for Roma students.

The competition for scholarships for Roma students was published on 26 October 2023, with an application deadline of 12 November 2023. The results were published on the website of the Ministry of Education and Science on 13 December 2023. Scholarships were granted to 122 Roma students (55 first-year students, new scholars and 67 in higher years of studies).

For the 2024/2025 schoolyear. The Ministry also published a Competition for granting scholarships to Roma students at public and private higher-education institutions and, as for all previous public policies, the Ministry of Education and Science increased the number of scholarships from 135 to 150. The candidates' applications are being processed.

Concerning healthcare, the Ministry of Health underlines that in accordance with the national legislation "each and every citizen of the Republic of North Macedonia has a right to healthcare".

Under the Law on Healthcare, the Law on Public Health, the remaining legislation governing healthcare, the preventive and curative programmes of the Ministry of Health, free healthcare services are provided to all citizens, especially with regard to the reproductive health of all persons belonging to the female gender in the state, including Roma women. In this respect, under the National Annual Programme for Public Health, services are provided by 10 counselling offices for sexual and reproductive health at the Public Health Centres (PHCs).

Under the Programme for Early Detection of Malignant Neoplasms, Roma women have an opportunity for free screening examinations for breast, cervical and colorectal carcinoma.

Furthermore, since 2022 the Public Health Institute has organised trainings for healthcare professionals related to trafficking in human beings and assisting and supporting victims, who are generally women and children.

In the Republic of North Macedonia, mandatory immunization is legally regulated by the Law on Protection of the Population from Infectious Diseases. Immunisation is mandatory for all persons up to 18 years of age, in accordance with the Immunisation Calendar. The Programme for Mandatory Immunisation of the Population in the Republic of North Macedonia, and vaccination is conducted continuously in accordance with the Programme in the course of the entire year and is free for all who are subject to vaccination. Vaccination is provided by the preventive services at the healthcare centres and the hospitals with expanded activity and is free of charge, regardless of health insurance.

Vaccination against COVID-19 was introduced in 2021, but it is not mandatory, i.e. it is conducted if there are epidemiological and clinical indications, and is free of charge for all citizens.

Through the Strategic Framework for Improving the Health and Social Status of the Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia, the Project for Roma Health Mediators is carried out. With funds from the budget of the Ministry of Health, 17 Roma Health Mediators have been engaged with contractual services at the national level, of which 4 Roma health mediators were permanently employed in 2022. There is a noticeable increase of the immunization of vaccinated preschool- and

school-aged children to 95 %. Access to primary healthcare has been increased among Roma patients.

In November 2022, a modern gynaecology practice was opened in the Municipality of Šuto Orizari. At present, there are 2215 patients who have selected a personal gynaecologist. A Covid centre was also opened within the Šuto Orizari Health Centre in 2022 in order to facilitate the access to vaccination for Roma patients. Roma health mediators shared information for the Covid centre on the ground. Covid vaccination coverage and prevention was at a satisfactory level and over a hundred patients were covered.

**Further recommendations:**

**- The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to provide the necessary resources for the Commission on Protection and Prevention against Discrimination and the Ombudsperson so they can independently and effectively fulfil their mandates.**

In 2024, the Commission for Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination operated at full capacity. In addition to the Secretary General, the Commission also employs 15 persons divided into 3 sectors of the professional service. Aiming to strengthen the capacities and fulfil the obligations under their mandate, in the course of 2023 and 2024 Commission members and professional service employees participated in 16 trainings and workshops on various topics and one study visit to Austria. Furthermore, one of the goals of the project “**Project: The EU for Rule of Law 2**”, financed under the IPA III, is strengthening the capacities of human rights bodies for effective implementation of their mandates and a set of activities are conducted under it with the Commission for Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination and of the Ombudsman.

The project “[Promotion of Diversity and Equality in North Macedonia](#)” within the Council of Europe/[European Union](#) Programme “[Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye II](#)” is aimed at strengthening the capacities of relevant institutions, i.e. the Ombudsman and the Commission for Prevention of and Protection against Discrimination, as well as the Ministry of Social Policy, Demographics and Youth.

**- The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to provide earmarked and sustainable funding at a level that meets the cultural needs of persons belonging to national minorities and continue to pursue efforts to strengthen an inclusive approach to cultural policy.**

Funds are allocated from the budget of the Agency for Safeguarding the Rights of the Smaller Communities to finance project activities of the citizens’ associations that work on improving and protecting the rights of persons belonging to communities that constitute less than 20 % of the population in North Macedonia. 2 000000.00 denars were earmarked for 2022 and 3 000000.00 million denars for 2023. In 2024, the activity was not implemented because of the electoral process. 24 project activities were supported for that period.

The Ministry for Intercommunity Relations, in coordination with the Directorate for Promotion of the Cultures of the Communities, plans to celebrate culture days for all communities in the future. In 2025, the Ministry for Intercommunity Relations adopted the programme for celebrating the national days of the ethnic communities and 12 million denars were earmarked from the budget of the Ministry, with each community receiving 2 million denars. In the interest of honouring its commitments to equality and non-discrimination in all areas of social life in order to improve interethnic relations, the Ministry for Intercommunity Relations has financed programme activities of associations and foundations, including: 15 million denars were granted in 2022 and 20 million denars each in 2023 and 2025.

**- The Advisory Committee calls on the authorities to ensure that incidents of hate crime and hate**

speech are promptly identified, recorded and effectively investigated and that those responsible are brought to justice. Existing initiatives against online hate speech such as the Council on Media Ethics and the Registry of Professional and Ethical Online Media should be given all necessary support.

In June 2024, based on conclusions from the meeting held on 20 May 2024 with representatives of the nongovernmental sector, one public prosecutor was nominated at the Skopje Basic Public Prosecutor's Office to monitor the processing of cases of hate crime and discrimination. The nominated prosecutor is tasked with following the processing of cases and establishing contact with complainants and the NGOs that represent the interests of the injured parties in such cases.

In the period January-November 2023, 39 crimes with elements of hate were registered and criminal prosecution was initiated against 37 perpetrators.

By type, the most frequent crime are as follows:

- Dissemination of racist or xenophobic material by means of a computer system** (Article 394-D of the Criminal Code) - 30 crimes registered and 28 perpetrators criminally charged;
- Endangering security** (Article 144 of the Criminal Code) 5 crimes registered and 4 perpetrators criminally charged;
- Causing hate, discord or intolerance on national, racial, religious or other discriminatory grounds** (Article 319 of the Criminal Code) – 2 crimes registered and 2 perpetrators criminally charged;
- Violence** (Article 386 of the Criminal Code) - 1 crime registered and 2 perpetrators criminally charged;
- Racial or other discrimination** (Article 417 of the Criminal Code) - 1 crime registered and 1 perpetrator criminally charged;

Of the total number of registered crimes, 35 crimes were committed through an information system, while the other 4 cases concern incriminated acts committed in a public space, 2 of which were on the grounds of nationality and 1 case each on the grounds of ethnic background and religion or belief.

The aforesaid crimes were committed from the following motives:

- most of the crimes were committed on the grounds of political belief;
- 5 crimes committed on the grounds of national affiliation;
- 4 crimes committed on the grounds of sexual orientation;
- 2 crimes committed on the grounds of religion or belief;
- 1 crime committed on the grounds of mental or physical disability.

Concerning the dealing with hate speech, members of the Network for Fight against Hate Speech in the Media and on the Internet produced a Memorandum with support from the OSCE, which was harmonised and endorsed by all members of the Network at the beginning of 2024. This Memorandum represents a coordinated action for addressing this problem and it is envisaged that it be signed by all stakeholders soon. The Media Ethics Council (MECM), in cooperation with the Secretariat-General of the Government, will be responsible for the coordination of its implementation and specific steps are envisaged for acting by relevant institutions and other stakeholders.

Measures implemented in the period from 18 May 2022 to the end of the reporting period.

The Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAAMS) did not register hate speech in radio and television programmes in that period. The media regulatory body has an established practice of publicly presenting the analysed content of programmes and publicly responding to the

complaints received, even when they are ungrounded or incomplete. The complaint, the response to the complainant and the notification of the media about the complaint filed are published on the AAAMS website, with compulsory protection of personal data.

The Law Amending the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (LAAMS), which established alignment with the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, was adopted on 20 July 2023. The amendments to the LAAMS introduced, among other things, a prohibition of inciting terrorism and special provisions for video-sharing platforms, which also include a prohibition of hate speech, discrimination and inciting terrorism. The amendments were drafted based on recommendations offered within the project "The EU for Freedom of Expression: Aligning National Media Legislation with the EU Acquis and European Media Standards", which was carried out in 2023.

The Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services prohibits programmes which: threaten national security, incite violent dismantling of the constitutional order, urge military aggression or armed conflict, encourage or spread discrimination, intolerance or hate on 26 prohibited discriminatory grounds (and the list of grounds is open-ended). The special prohibitions and their application are in line with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights.

In order to operationalise the application of the legal amendments, the existent Guidelines for Monitoring Hate Speech, which has been applied since 2014, was updated in 2023/2024. The amendments to the 2 supplemented and revised edition of the Guidelines are related to the changes in the European regulations, Recommendation CM/Rec (2022)16 of the Council of Europe on Combating Hate Speech, the amendments to the LAAMS, a new section was added concerning hate speech on the internet, and the Guidelines were also supplemented with new relevant cases from the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, which the Agency is legally obliged to follow. The revisions and supplements were made with the support from German experts under the twinning project "Strengthening the Capacities of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and the Public Broadcasting Service", which was funded by the European Union. The Agency has established cooperation with the Media Ethics Council of Macedonia (MECM) and the Registry of Professional and Ethical Online Media and lends them support since their formation. The MECM is an active member of the Media Literacy Network, whose work is facilitated and coordinated by the Agency and ensures the implementation of some of their activities within the network.

The Agency does not have the ability to provide continuous financial assistance for the work of the MECM, but it has given financial assistance, a donation to enable the unimpeded operation of the Executive Office of the MECM and the Complaint Commission, amounting to MKD 300,000.00 (three hundred thousand) denars. By a Decision of the Council of the Agency of 26 June 2023, the donation was made upon a financial assistance request submitted by the MECM in order to ensure its unimpeded operation as the only self-regulatory body for the media in the country.

On 12 October 2023, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AVMU), with the support of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), promoted a Code of Conduct in the Online Space during Electoral Processes and Referendums. The Code was initiated by AVMU, and it was created in cooperation with SEMM, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia, the Institute for Communication Studies, the Macedonian Media Institute and the Metamorphosis Foundation. The purpose of the Code is to serve as a guideline for good conduct of political parties, their candidates, independent candidates, online editions of broadcasters, online media, fact-checkers, influencers, but also of all other entities that may have an influence on the public in the function of a campaign during electoral processes or referenda. This is necessary in order to ensure the integrity of information placed in the online space and prevent the spread of disinformation, as well as hate speech and discrimination on any grounds. The principles and standards as prescribed under the Code are of an ethical nature, therefore its observance is voluntary, and the Code can be joined by signing a Joining Form. It was first applied during the Presidential and Parliamentary Elections in 2024, when a Coordinating Body was established,

comprised of representatives of all entities that drafted the Code, i.e. the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Journalists' Association of Macedonia, the Council for Media Ethics of Macedonia, the Macedonian Media Institute, the Institute for Communication Studies and the Metamorphosis Foundation. During the election processes, three complaints were received, on which the body decided in keeping with the competences of its members. The Agency established a special website [www.izborenkodeksonline.mk](http://www.izborenkodeksonline.mk), purpose-built to familiarize the public with the Code and the work of the Coordinating Body. The website is available in Macedonian, Albanian, and English and is adapted for persons with sensory disabilities.

AVMU has been a member of the Network for Combating Hate Speech in the Media and the Internet since its inception in 2019. The Media Ethics Council of Macedonia, at the end of 2023, as the coordinator of the Network for Combating Hate Speech in the Media and the Internet, with the support of the OSCE Mission in Skopje, organized meetings of the working group for a coordinated approach in dealing with hate speech in which AVMU participates. At this meeting, the working group worked on finalizing the text of the Memorandum of Cooperation of the Members of the Network, on clarifying the role of individual institutions and non-governmental organizations in its operations, as well as on agreeing on mutual cooperation between the members for effective prevention or dealing with hate speech in the public sphere.

In 2023, a Law Amending the Criminal Code and a new Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation were adopted.

Under these amendments to the Criminal Code, journalistic teams will receive increased protection when discharging their professional duties. The protection will be provided in keeping with international and European standards and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, which has in several of its decisions underscored the "positive obligation" of the government, under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, (for) ensuring a safe environment for the enjoyment of freedom of expression (*Özgür Gündem v. Turkey*, 2000 *Dink v. Turkey*, 2010). These amendments set out crime qualifying forms if the crime is committed against a journalist, and in those cases it sets out harsher penalties. The newly qualified forms of crimes under these amendments include the following: murder, obstructing officials in discharging official duties, endangering security and coercion.

The Law on Civil Liability for Insult and Defamation was adopted in November 2022. This law eliminates the shortcomings identified in its application after its adoption in 2010, when insult and defamation were decriminalized and civil liability only was introduced for engaging in such actions. The law significantly reduces the maximum amounts that the court can award as compensation for non-pecuniary damage caused by insult or defamation by a journalist in the exercise of the journalistic profession, by an editor or deputy editor, or by a legal entity. The Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM) was part of the process of drafting these legal amendments and all their proposals were accepted.

The Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors, in cooperation with the AJM, continued to conduct trainings with journalists and representatives of the judiciary in 2021, and in addition, topics related to freedom of expression are also part of the Academy's regular training curriculum for new judges and prosecutors.

**- Authorities should allocate sufficient resources to the minority language newsrooms in the public broadcaster. They should also ensure that public broadcasting consistently promotes intercultural respect and understanding, thereby contributing to the integration of society. The authorities should consider providing support to print or online media outlets for numerically smaller minorities.**

The General Secretariat of the Government has been implementing a **Program for Support for Printing and Distribution of Printed Media** for 7 years, aimed at protecting pluralism in the field of media. The goal of the program is to implement activities to support printed media of a general informative nature. This program was converted into a law in March 2024 when the Law Amending the Law on Media

was adopted. Within the framework of this legal solution, and in order to stimulate cultural diversity, printed media published in the Macedonian language are allocated funds to the amount of 50% of the printing costs incurred and to the amount of 50% of the distribution costs incurred, while printed media published in the languages of minority communities are allocated funds to the amount of 70% of the printing costs and 70% of distribution costs incurred.

In May 2025, the Law Amending the Law on Media entered into force, recognizing publishers of online media - internet portals as media. These media can voluntarily be registered in the Register of Publishers of Online Media - Internet Portals, which is maintained by the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.

Under paragraph 1 of Article 105 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, "funds for financing the broadcasting activity, for the operation and development of the Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT), the Macedonian Broadcasting Public Enterprise, and the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services are allocated by the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia to the amount of 1% of the tax revenues collected as established under the final account of the Budget adopted last."

The funds referred to in paragraph 1 are allocated as follows:

- 80% for MRT to cover costs for producing and broadcasting programs and for technical and technological development;
- 15% for Macedonian Broadcasting PE for maintenance, use, and development of the public broadcasting network;
- 5% for the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services.

Under paragraph 10 of Article 105, these funds are allocated from the Budget of the Ministry of Digital Transformation.

The method for funding program services and financial management is regulated by the Rules of Procedure and bylaws adopted by the Program Council of the Public Broadcasting Service (Article 105, paragraph 11).

According to Article 110 of the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, the Macedonian Radio and Television Public Broadcasting Enterprise has an obligation to produce programs that contribute to the nurturing and promotion of knowledge and understanding of the cultural identity of the communities, to respect cultural and religious differences, and to encourage the culture of public dialogue, all with a view to strengthening mutual understanding and tolerance, promoting relations between different communities in a multiethnic and multicultural environment, as well as nurturing and developing the speech and language standards of all communities in the Republic of North Macedonia and dialects spoken in it.

**- The authorities should improve the implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages through increasing considerably their investment in the training and recruitment of translators and interpreters and to continuously evaluate its impact. The law's provisions on the language rights of numerically smaller national minorities should be clarified.**

The Ministry of Inter-Community Relations has hired 82 translators, proofreaders, and editorial staff, as well as 83 tasked with promoting community languages since 2021. The Agency for the Application of Languages organized training for translators and proofreaders from 2020 to 2024, which means that 250 translators have been trained in the agency during this period.

Amendment V of the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia guarantees the linguistic rights of citizens who use the language spoken by at least 20% of the country's citizens.

In keeping with Article 19 of the Law on the Use of Languages (Official Gazette of the Republic of

Macedonia 7/19), the Agency for the Use of Language provides support to institutions in fulfilling the obligations of this law, including translation and proofreading of documents; proofreading of all legislation published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia; promoting and undertaking measures to promote the use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia; preparing reports to inform the Government on the exercise of its competencies; preparing expert-analytical materials for the needs of the Government within its competence; providing expert opinions on materials aimed at implementing and promoting the use of the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens of the Republic of North Macedonia; and other matters related to the implementation of the objectives as set out under this law. The law regulates the use of official languages at central and local levels. The 2021 population census conducted by the State Statistical Office established that, at local level, an official language other than the Macedonian language (i.e. the Albanian language) is spoken by at least 20% of the citizens in the following municipalities and as follows:

1. Arachinovo	97.45%
2. Bogovinje	89.39%
3. Brvenica	54.06%
4. Vrapchishte	76.15%
5. Gostivar	55.34%
6. Debar	54.75%
7. Dolneni	33.84%
8. Zhelino	95.80%
9. Jegunovce	39.15%
10. Kichevo	41.27%
11. Krushevo	29.38%
12. Kumanovo	25.99%
13. Lipkovo	96.65%
14. Sopishte	25.21%
15. Struga	50.58%
16. Studenichani	68.19%
17. Tearce	83.01%
18. Tetovo	71.32%
19. Chashka	50.76%
20. Butel	37.12%
21. Saraj	90.07%
22. Chair	67.40%
23. Shuto Orizari	34.32%
24. Gazi Baba	20.03%
25. City of Skopje	22.85%

From 20 May to 11 June 2024, the Language Implementation Agency (LIA) organized trainings for 46 administrative officers from 37 institutions, including 6 municipalities, through the experiences of linguists and lawyers renowned in the country, engaged by the LIA, during which they had the opportunity, for the most part, to become familiar with the features of the Albanian language, comparing them with other languages, identifying as well a need for further activities to that end.

In 2023, the Language Implementation Agency trained 60 translators and proofreaders from various institutions divided into 6 groups, helping them to improve their professional capacities for translation and proofreading, as well as adopt a unified administrative terminology, all in cooperation with eminent

linguists and language experts.

The Language Implementation Agency in 2022 conducted training for 72 translators from 43 public authorities, with the participation of lecturers from the Republic of North Macedonia, the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Kosovo. During the training, the participants had the opportunity to address a number of problems arising from the use of the Albanian language in public administration. The topics of discussion were the problem of terminology and its unification as a need, the influences of other languages, lexicography, semantics, syntactic influences, and a number of other problems.

In the course of 2021, the Language Implementation Agency conducted a two-month training for 65 translators and proofreaders from 31 public institutions, helping them to improve their professional capacities for translation and proofreading.

In 2020, a Manual for Administrative Officers for the Implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages (Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia 7/19) was prepared, with the aim of promoting the Albanian language in official use. It lists all the forms that administrative officials need in administrative communication regulating issues such as how to write complaints, requests, applications, agreements, appeals, etc., and special explanations are provided for the official use of the language in the judiciary, in management, etc.

Also, within the framework of the Language Implementation Agency, the electronic interpretative contextual dictionary VERBIS ( [www.verbis.gov.mk](http://www.verbis.gov.mk) ) has been operating since 2021 in the form of a bilingual descriptive dictionary, in Macedonian and Albanian. It lists lexical explanations of the vernacular most used in both languages. The dictionary contains modules in the areas of administrative-legal, economic-financial, health and general terminology, however, only the administrative-legal module is operational as of the date of reporting. The module in the administrative-legal area contains over 10,000 words, while a dictionary has also been prepared for the module in the health area and economic-financial terminology, but due to financial constraints, they have not been put into operation as of the date of reporting.

The Language Implementation Agency (LIA) always strives and will continue with activities to improve and perfect the professional skills and capacities of its staff and in that context, in 2022, despite the limitations owing to budgetary restrictions caused by the economic and energy crisis, it implemented trainings to strengthen the work competencies and skills of its staff in order to achieve its operative goals in an efficient, economical, and effective manner.

In June, a Training on Simultaneous Interpretation was held at the Parliamentary Institute of the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, spread over 7 (seven) days, in which a total of 12 (twelve) staff from the Language Implementation Agency participated. The Training was supported by the OSCE Mission in Skopje in accordance with the Annual Action Plan accompanying the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Language Implementation Agency and the OSCE Mission in Skopje for the implementation of joint activities for the 2021-2024 period.

In addition to funding the activities related to the implementation of the Training, the OSCE Mission in Skopje also provided the necessary expertise by engaging two certified trainers and EU accredited interpreters and, in cooperation with the LIA, coordinated the necessary activities related to the successful holding of the Training.

The training included a series of lectures and practical exercises aimed at improving the simultaneous interpretation skills and techniques of the professional staff at the LIA.

**- The authorities should improve conditions for the teaching in and of minority languages. The minimum number of pupils for opening a minority language class should be lowered and awareness**

**raising and surveys on requests conducted regularly and well ahead of each school year. The authorities should look into possibilities of fostering knowledge of minority languages, particularly Albanian, among children from the majority.**

The Ministry of Education and Science is undertaking efforts to reform the education system to reflect the multicultural nature of the population, in particular through the Law on Primary Education and the Concept for Primary Education, which aim to recognize the diverse ethnic backgrounds of pupils. Multilingual education is part of this framework, with instruction conducted in Macedonian, Albanian, Turkish, Serbian and Bosnian. Specific public policies and measures, such as Roma Educational Mediators (Article 37, Law on Primary Education), also support educational inclusion for Roma children, ensuring that the content is culturally relevant to local contexts. Through the elective course Language and Culture of Ethnic Communities, Vlach, Bosniak, Serb, Roma and Turkish pupils from grades 3 to 9 in primary education can study their mother tongue and culture, as well as develop a sense of belonging.

In keeping with the Concept for Primary Education and Curriculum, students can select the Albanian Language elective course (as non-native language), as well as Community Language as an elective course.

Starting from the 2022/2023 school year, new Macedonian language curricula began to be implemented for pupils from other communities in the fourth and fifth grades, and starting from the 2023/2024 school year for pupils in the sixth grade.

In keeping with this new curriculum (in force since 2021), schools located in municipalities in which, in addition to Macedonian, a second official language is also in use, may, in agreement with parents, offer pupils who follow instruction in another language to study the second official language through the elective course Community Language from grades 4 to 9 as an additional course.

On 13 June 2023, a new curriculum for the Albanian Language (Community Language) course for Grade 4 was adopted, in force as of the 2023/2024 academic year.

On 25 October 2023, a new curriculum for the Albanian Language (Community Language) course for Grade 5 was also adopted, in force as of the 2023/2024 academic year.

On 1 April 2024, a new curriculum for the Albanian Language (Community Language) course for Grade 6 was adopted, in force as of the 2023/2024 academic year.

The preparation of new curricula for grades 7, 8, and 9 is underway.

In reply the recommendation to reduce the minimum number of pupils for opening a minority language class, and to conduct awareness-raising and surveys on the requirements regularly before each school year, we inform that this has been stipulated in the new 2024-2026 Strategy for Interculturalism and Social Cohesion and in the amendments to the Law on Primary Education in order to reduce the threshold of pupils in one class for introducing the elective course in the language and culture of the communities (Roma, Vlach, Turk, Bosniak and Serb). Namely, as an exception to paragraph (8) of Article 53, for pupils belonging to the Bosniak, Turkish, Serbian, Roma and Vlach communities, a group of less than 15 pupils from the same grade, from the same or different classes, may be formed for the purpose of studying the language and culture of the community. The method of forming these groups is set out by the Minister and upon the proposal of the Bureau for the Development of Education.

**- Authorities should, in close cooperation with Roma representatives, increase the participation of Roma in the labour market through programmes that are specifically tailored towards the respective target groups, including Roma women, and to ensure that the Covid-19 pandemic does not disproportionately affect the socio-economic participation of Roma.**

Roma, as one of the most vulnerable categories of people, are included in active employment measures as prescribed under the annual operational employment plans. Under several of these employment measures, Roma are provided more advantages compared to the rest of the vulnerable groups of unemployed with the aim of their greater inclusion and easier access to the labour market. In the last few years, the percentage of Roma taking covered by these employment measures has amounted to 5-6%.