NATIONAL
PAR MONITOR
NORTH MACEDONIA

2021/2022

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT WeBER 2.0

The Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration (WeBER 2.0) is a three-and-a-half-year project primarily funded by the European Union implemented from December 2019 to June 2023.

Activities related to the development, preparation, printing, and publishing of the Western Balkan PAR Monitor 2021/2022 were implemented with the support of the "SMART Balkans – Civil Society for Shared Society in the Western Balkans" regional project implemented by Centar za promociju civilnog društva (CPCD), Center for Research and Policy Making (CRPM) and Institute for Democracy and Mediation (IDM) and financially supported by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (NMFA). Other activities of the WeBER 2.0 project were co-funded by the "Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub" project financed by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and implemented by the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN); Royal Norwegian Embassy in Belgrade and German Marshall Fund of the U.S. through Balkan Trust for Democracy; Open Society Foundation in Serbia; Swedish International Development Agency in Albania; Ministry of Public Administration of Montenegro; Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

WeBER 2.0 project is a direct continuation of the Western Balkans Enabling Project for Civil Society Monitoring of Public Administration Reform (WeBER), a project implemented from 2015 to 2018 and funded by the European Union and co-funded by the Kingdom of Netherlands. Moreover, the third cycle of funding for the WeBER continuation has been approved by the European Commission in December 2022, and the Western Balkan Enablers for Reforming Public Administrations WeBER 3.0 project has begun in February 2023.

The initial WeBER project played a significant role in increasing the relevance, participation, and capacities of CSOs and the media in the Western Balkans to advocate for and influence design and implementation of public administration reform (PAR). WeBER 2.0 builds upon the previous WeBER's accomplishments and further enhances the engagement of CSOs in PAR by conducting evidence-based monitoring of PAR in line with EU requirements. It also aims to promote dialogue between CSOs and government at the regional, national, and local levels, strengthening participatory democracy and exerting pressure on governments to continue to implement administrative reforms and bring administrations closer to citizens.

WeBER 2.0 encompasses a diverse range of activities that have collectively contributed to the fulfilment of the project's objective:

- Through the Regional WeBER Platform and its National PAR Working Groups, which gather more than 170 CSOs, WeBER facilitates dialogue on PAR for creating and implementing inclusive and transparent policy and contributes to the sustainability of administrative reforms to the benefit of the citizens.
- Through its research and monitoring work and production of PAR Monitor reports, WeBER 2.0 has created and gathered evidence for a meaningful dialogue.
- Through the "Mind (y)our reform!" online regional citizens' campaign and platform for collecting and sharing citizens' views on PAR and their experience with administrations (https://citizens.par-monitor.org/), WeBER 2.0 has collected citizens' input to influence authorities, thus contributing to the creation of more citizen-oriented public administrations.
- By piloting the monitoring approach to the mainstreaming of PAR in sectoral policies and equipping CSOs with the capacities to do it, WeBER 2.0 helped improve the embeddedness of PAR across the region's administrative systems, thus increasing the sustainability of these reforms.
- Through a small grants scheme, WeBER 2.0 increased the capacity of 31 CSOs in the Western Balkans to participate in PAR.
- Through the CSO PAR Knowledge Centre, WeBER 2.0 provides a searchable database of analyses and reports on PAR produced by the region's civil society.

WeBER2.0 products and further information about them are available on the project's website, at www.parmonitor.org.

WeBER2.0 is implemented by the Think for Europe Network (TEN), composed of six EU policy-oriented think-tanks in the Western Balkans:

EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE
Project Coordinator

European Policy Institute. Skopje

FOREIGN POLICY INITIATIVE BH

GROUP FOR LEGAL AND POLITICAL STUDIES

institut alternativa

Institute for Democracy and Mediation
Instituti për Demokraci dhe Ndërmjetësim
IDM

By partnering with the European Policy Centre (EPC) from Brussels, WeBER2.0 has ensured EU-level visibility.

EPC
EUROPEAN POLICY CENTRE

WHO DO WE COOPERATE WITH?

Under the previous WeBER project, cooperation with a multitude of stakeholders in the region and beyond has been established in the effort to ensure a sustainable course of administrative reforms in the WB. This cooperation has continued under WeBER2.0. At the national level, in each of the WB countries, we have coordinated our work with PAR ministries and/or offices which have had an associate role on the project. At the regional level, WeBER2.0 is cooperating with the Regional School of Public Administration (ReSPA), Southeast Europe Leadership for Development and Integrity (SELDI) coalition, and the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management initiative (SIGMA, a joint initiative of the EU and the OECD), which performs regular assessments of the WB countries' progress in the implementation of the Principles of Public Administration in the period leading up to the EU accession.

Furthermore, within the regional WeBER Platform and National PAR Working Groups (NWGs), we have continued to cooperate with over a 130 CSOs operating at the local and regional level.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The PAR Monitor 2021/2022 is the result of monitoring work performed in 2021/2022 by the members of the Think for Europe Network, and it represents a compilation report of key findings from across the Western Balkans in the six areas of PAR defined by the Principles of Public Administration (SIGMA principles). As the second systematic PAR monitoring done in the region by civil society, this report offers not only comparisons between Western Balkan (WB) administrations, but also comparison with the baseline PAR Monitor findings of the 2017/2018 monitoring cycle.

PAR Monitor reports are based on a comprehensive methodological framework designed by the WeBER research team that combines quantitative and qualitative sources of evidence. With the SIGMA principles as the building blocks of monitoring work, PAR Monitor reports are complementary to similar work by SIGMA/OECD and the European Commission, differing in that they offer citizen and civil society perspectives on these principles. Together with this comparative regional report, the PAR Monitor package consists of six national reports, each including findings on a total of 23 compound indicators to monitor a selection of SIGMA Principles.

In line with the mission of the WeBER initiative, these monitoring exercises are driven by the necessity to strengthen domestic, bottom-up pressure for PAR from civil society in the region, especially from the view of keeping demand for this reform ongoing in the event of the loosening of the EU's conditionality which may come with membership in the Union. All findings from this report and from the baseline PAR Monitor 2017/2018 can be accessed and compared on the Regional PAR Scoreboard at www.par-monitor.org.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM

In 2020, a Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy 2018-2022 was made. Consultations with CSOs during the revision took place late in the process. As a result, this process has been assessed to be less transparent and open than the process of development of the PAR Strategy and its previous AP. In addition, there is no practice of preparing minutes from the consultation processes and stakeholders are not given any feedback whether their comments and remarks have been taken into consideration. The same conclusion applies to the 2020 Action Plan for the 2018 2021 Public Financial Management (PFM) Programme.

The PAR Strategy does not foresee involvement of CSOs in the PAR coordination and monitoring structures. In addition, the PFM Reform Programme does not mention the civil society and it does not define the framework under which cooperation with CSOs will be pursued.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND COORDINATION

As regards annual reports, the Government has published two reports on the implementation of the GAWP - one for the June 2017 - June 2018 period and the other one for the June 2018 - June 2019 period. The reports contain information about the achievement of results, on a more general level and are not published in an open data format, and they do not contain gender segregated data.

Regarding CSOs' perception of the government reporting, not much has been changed in the past two and a half years from the previous monitoring cycle. In this monitoring cycle, CSOs have a slightly more negative view and disagree that the Government regularly reports to the public about the progress against the set objectives and are not confident that the official strategies determine Governments' or Ministries' actions in specific policy areas.

Same as in the previous 2017/2018 PAR Monitor, the Government kept the transparency of the Government's decision-making process in terms of publishing agendas, minutes, and press releases from the Government sessions for the entire monitoring period, making them available to the public.

Based on the documentation analysis, evidence-based findings produced by CSOs are rarely referenced in the sample of adopted government policy documents. Regarding referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and ex-ante impact assessments, only one document, out of 21 analysed documents, had a reference to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs.

The process of public consultations in North Macedonia is very much open to the public, with legislation stipulating that every policy document or legislation should be open for public consultations in the early stage. However, reporting by the central administration about public consultations conducted about legislation and policy documents is lacking.

There is no evidence of early consultations in the practice, in a form of minutes, or reports, which would refer to comments, proposals, and suggestions given in this stage, as well as whether they have been accepted or not. The impact of the public consultations cannot be measured since there have been no reports identified.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

The LPSE introduces and defines the competence of the MISA to establish and maintain a single Register of all employees in public sector institutions, as part of the HRMIS. Data contained in the Report are a result of the exchange of data among the MISA, the Employment Agency, the Public Revenue Office, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the Health Insurance Fund.

Even though there is quite comprehensive reporting about the public service there are no publicly available reports about the entire public service policy, including for 2019. Moreover, reports do not include substantiated information concerning the quality and/or outcomes of the public service.

The head of the public institution may fill a position by concluding a contract for employment on a fixed term basis. However, the overall system is not transparent. There is no single limit at the level of the administration, but only at the institutional level, and the criterion allows this limit to change every year ("more than 1% of the total number of employees at the end of the previous year"). The Law on Transformation into Regular Employment allows the authority to engage more people temporarily, including for longer periods when approved by the Ministry of Finance. The utilisation of agencies for temporary employments can be assessed as a deviation from the LPSE, considering that employees are not obliged to meet criteria and enter the public service without an announcement, which is a breach of the merit-based principle.

Public announcements for administrative servants are published on the website of the AA, as well as in at least three daily newspapers, one of which a newspaper published in the language spoken by at least 20% of citizens, who speak an official language other than the Macedonian language. The public announcements are written using a clear and understandable language. The selection procedure is organised in three stages, but more than 5 documents are requested to be attached to the online application (before the first stage - administrative selection procedure). The procedure is cumbersome at the very beginning and it discourages the interest of external candidates.

Senior civil service positions are under a highly discretionary system, based on political appointment and dismissal. The MISA is working on a new Law on Senior Civil Service, which will introduce the merit-based principle and open competition in the recruitment and dismissal from top management positions.

The remuneration system is simply structured since it consists of a table with clearly allocated points for degrees of education, position supplement and working experience supplement, with tables for relevant categories, as well as a clear and limited set of rules and formulas for calculating supplements.

Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are formally established in the central administration under the LPCCI, the Law on Protection of Whistle Blowers, the LAS, the Ethical Code for Administrative Servants, and the Criminal Code. The scope of the integrity policy encompasses the entire public service, and the policy contains clear objectives based on the analysis of the current situation under the LPPCCI. A new State Program for the Prevention of Corruption is developed, considering that the last one expired in 2019.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability and proactivity of public authorities have significantly advanced since the last monitoring. The new Law on Free Access to Public Information has significantly improved the legal grounds for the implementation of this right. The majority of CSOs do not believe that public authorities record sufficient information to enable the public to fulfil their right to free access to information. Nevertheless, it is encouraging to see that most of surveyed CSOs have stated that the public information has been provided in the requested format, free of charge and within the prescribed deadlines.

The findings from this cycle of monitoring also indicate an improvement in terms of proactive informing of the public. Five out of the total of seven monitored institutions have easily accessible and citizen-friendly information about their scope of work, but they do not state to whom they are accountable. All of the institutions have a list of documents and legislative materials relevant to policies, which are easily accessible, but these are not presented in a citizen-friendly manner. Most of the institutions publish policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under their competence. Only the Ministry of Interior has published its annual work report. The Ministry of Interior is also the only institution that has published both the 2019 financial report and its 2020 financial plan. None of the budgets published by sampled institutions are citizen-friendly. On a more positive note, the Ministry of Finance has started publishing the Annual State Budget, as a Citizen Budget.

As far as contact information is concerned, four out of seven institutions have updated contact information on their websites. Most of the institutions have their organizational charts uploaded on their websites, as well as media contacts and officers for requests for free access to public information. However, no contacts or information on cooperation with the civil society and other stakeholders has been found on websites of any of the ministries, except for the MEPP.

The public consultation process in North Macedonia is conducted on the ENER website, but none of the institutions monitored provides information about this opportunity on its own website. Publishing documents in open data formats is a practice of sampled ministries, but this is not the practice of subordinate institutions.

SERVICE DELIVERY

Even though some crucial steps have been taken to improve service delivery in the country, the score of the country in this area remains identical as in the 2017/2018 PAR Monitor. While citizens' perception regarding the Government's efforts to improve service delivery has worsened since 2018, more citizens are aware and know how to use e-services and 66.4% think that the administration is moving towards a digital government. The percentage of citizens who believe they have the possibility of providing an opinion about the quality of services through administrative channels has increased, but the percentage of citizens that find these channels easy to use has decreased. When it comes to citizens' feedback, almost half of surveyed citizens think that the administration has sought citizen's proposals on how to improve administrative services and almost 60% believe that the administration has used their feedback.

However, citizen feedback with advanced information is not made publicly available for any of the monitored services. Limited information on citizens feedback regarding two specific services is available on the website of the Ministry of Interior where two surveys have been published: one measuring citizens' satisfaction with services provided and one survey about the mobile system traffic control recording.

The civil society perception of accessibility of administrative services, same as in 2017/2018, remains largely negative. CSOs believe that administrative services are not adequately distributed across the country and that existing one-stop-shops are not easily accessible. Perceptions are also very negative regarding the adaptation of services to vulnerable groups; the majority of CSOs think that e-channels are not easily accessible to vulnerable groups, service provision is not adapted to their needs and that staff delivering administrative services is not sufficiently trained on how to treat vulnerable groups.

Service providers generally publish basic contact information, description, and prices of the services, where and how to obtain them, and provide original forms on their websites. Citizens can easily find out about their rights and obligations on websites of service providers, considering the general tendency of providing this information. On the other hand, simple and user-friendly guidance is scarce, considering that out of all sampled services, only two of them offer such information. Even though the provision of e-services is encouraged and a portal for e-services has been established, this option is not available for crucial services, such as vehicle registration and issuance of ID cards and passports. As for the latter, the only e-service available is the one for scheduling an appointment. Publication of information about services in an open data format also seems to be the exception rather than the rule, as none of the sampled services have published information in this format.

PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT

The findings under this WeBER monitoring demonstrate that significant steps have been taken to improve the PFM in the country. Key budget documents were analysed, as well as availability of information about public internal financial control and parliamentary scrutiny, as well as the Supreme Audit Institution's communication and cooperation with the public.

The annual budget, in-year, mid-year budget execution reports and quarterly economic reports are available on the website of the Ministry of Finance. Most of the documents are easily accessible, but since the Ministry of Finance has launched a new website, some of the documents have not been uploaded, which is the case with the 2020 mid-year report.

In order to check the quality of reports, it was examined whether budget execution reports contain expenditure data, according to three classifications: Organisational; Economic; and Functional. The 2019 year-end report is the only report that contains data on expenditures, according to all three classifications, while monthly reports and the 2020 Mid-year report contain data on two types of classification: organizational and economic. The year-end report does not contain sufficient non-financial information about the performance of the Government, but it offers information on gender budget initiatives and government programmes and development sub-programs.

The most significant change from the previous monitoring cycle is the newly created Citizens' budget. The application offers an overview of the budget through an interactive interface created for citizens.

The newly launched Open Finance portal public debt webpage, and the COVID-19 financial transparency webpage provide insightful information related to budget transactions, payments, public debt trends and procurements.

The Ministry of Finance published consolidated annual reports on PIFC for 2019 and 2018 but there is no evidence that quality reviews of internal audit reports are regularly produced. It is worrying that the CHU does not engage proactively with the public, as is the fact that there is no evidence of booklets, leaflets and other info material designated for the public.

The Public Procurement Bureau regularly publishes citizen-friendly annual reports about the implementation of the overall public procurement policy. On the other hand, the State Commission for Public Procurement Appeals has not published their annual report and the report on procedures for protection of rights of bidders in public procurement since 2018.

The Electronic System for Public Procurement (ESPP) enables the implementation of public procurements in an electronic form and anyone on the website can access and look, free of charge, through published contract notices, latest award decisions, assigned contracts, e-procurement, and e-complaints. User guides and manuals can also be found on this webpage. Annual public procurement plans are available on the ESPP website for 2019 and 2020 for all Ministries (and other state institutions), and most of the public procurement plans are published on the Ministries' websites, with few exceptions. However, no public procurement reports were found about any of the sample central-level contracting authorities for the last two calendar years.

The main method of public procurement is open and competitive. According to the 2019 Report of the Public Procurement Bureau, a total of 32,065 contract were concluded in 2019. The gross majority of contracts (99%) were concluded applying one of the open and competitive procedures.

The findings also show that the State Audit Office (SAO), which has also adopted a standalone Communication Strategy for the period from 2020 to 2023, has improved its standards and external communication. A positive novelty the SAO has introduced is the production of citizen-friendly summaries of audit reports, which they send to CSOs, media and key stakeholders via mail. Another positive step towards external communication is the development of a channel for submitting complaints or initiatives to the SAO by external stakeholders.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

AA	Agency of Administration
APRFAPI	Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information
CHU	Central Harmonization Unit
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
ERP	Economic Reform Programme
EDB	Education Development Bureau
ESPP	Electronic System for Public Procurement
EC	European Commission
FMC	Financial Management and Control
FOI request	Freedom of Information request
GAWP	Government Annual Work Plan
HRMIS	Human resource management information system
LAS	Law on Administrative Servants
LPSE	Law on Public Sector Employees
LPCCI	Law on the Prevention of Corruption and Conflicts of Interest
LSGUs	Local self-government units
MC	Ministry of Culture
MEPP	Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning
MF	Ministry of Finance
MI	Ministry of Interior
MISA	Ministry of Information Society and Administration
NAP	National Action Plan
NPAA	National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis
ENER	National Public Consultations Portal/National Single Electronic Register
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PIFC	Public Internal Financial Control
PP	Public Procurement
PPB	Public Procurement Bureau
PFM	Public Finance Management
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
SAO	State Audit Office
SCPPA	State Commission for Public Procurement Appeals

I.

INTRODUCTION

I.1 PAR Monitor three cycles in – continuing relevance of public administration reform monitoring for the Western Balkans' EU integration

The WeBER initiative embarked on monitoring of public administration reforms (PAR) in the Western Balkans (WB) in 2016, publishing the first, baseline PAR Monitor in 2018. Since then, the PAR Monitor has become an increasingly important source of credible and evidence-based findings on the region's administrations' successes and challenges, particularly concerning their openness, transparency, and accountability to the citizens. The PAR Monitor has thus helped strengthen the role of civil society in monitoring and informing PAR policies in the region, as well as the Commission's annual reports on each candidate and potential candidate country in the WB. This new edition – PAR Monitor 2021/2022 – is the result of the third consecutive biennial monitoring cycle implemented by the WeBER research team, using the state-of-the-art methodology developed by the civil society for the civil society, relying on the EU principles of good administration.

With each new step in the enlargement policy, the Commission has reaffirmed PAR as an essential area for achieving EU membership. In its communication *Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkan* from February 2020, which calls for more credibility, political steering, and predictability of the enlargement process, it has proposed clustering of negotiating chapters and reform areas, placing PAR in Cluster 1 – *Fundamentals*, together with rule of law, economic governance, and the functioning of democratic institutions.[1] TThus, PAR found its place within the key group of reform areas whose assessment determines the overall progress in the EU integration process.

The EU's framework for defining, guiding, and assessing administrative reforms in the context of enlargement remains embedded in the *Principles of Public Administration*, first published in 2014. Also known as the "SIGMA principles" (since they are assessed regularly by the OECD's SIGMA programme),[2] they offer a roadmap for EU candidates and potential candidates to follow and comply with in PAR while working to become successful EU member states. The European Commission (EC) and SIGMA worked together to define the scope of these principles of public administration,[3] structured around six key areas::

1. strategic framework for public administration reform
2. policy development and coordination
3. public service and human resource management
4. accountability
5. service delivery
6. public financial management.

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1 "Fundamentals" cluster includes Chapter 23 - Judiciary and fundamental rights, 24 - Justice, Freedom and Security, economic criteria, functioning of democratic institutions, public administration reform, as well as chapters 5 - Public procurement, 18 – Statistics, and 32 - Financial control. In: European Commission, Enhancing the accession process - A credible EU perspective for the Western Balkans, February 2020, available at: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/IP_20_181.
2 SIGMA (Support for Improvement in Governance and Management) is a joint initiative of the OECD and the EU, principally funded by the EU. Its key objective is to strengthen the foundations for improved public governance, hence supporting socioeconomic development in the regions close to the EU by building capacities in the public sector, enhancing horizontal governance, and improving the design and implementation of public administration reforms, including proper prioritisation, sequencing, and budgeting. More information is available at: http://www.sigmaweb.org/.
3 Principles of Public Administration for EU candidates and potential candidates: https://bit.ly/395diWq. A separate document entitled The Principles of Public Administration: A Framework for ENP Countries has been developed for the countries falling under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): http://bit.ly/2fsCaZM.

Nine years since the publication of the Principles, SIGMA and DG NEAR initiated their review, reflecting on the implementation feedback and introducing significant novelties. For example, principles addressing elements of multi-level governance have been introduced, whereas in the past the framework mainly concerned central governance level. At the time of the finalisation of this report, the revised Principles were still being finalised, following an online consultation process with external stakeholders that closed in February 2023. PAR Monitor 2021/2022 entirely relies on the 2014 framework of Principles, also valid during the past cycles of WeBER monitoring.[4]

Since its inception, WeBER[5] adopted the Principles of Public Administration as the main building block of its PAR Monitor. The main reasons for such a decision remain the same to date. First, the Principles are a common denominator for PAR in the region, allowing for regional comparisons, peer learning and peer pressure among the WB administrations. Second, they guide the reforms in the region towards the fulfilment of EU membership conditionalities, thus helping their transformation into capable future EU member states.

That said, WeBER's monitoring approach lies from the onset in the understanding that until the EU accessions of the WB, SIGMA/OECD will be engaged in the region, relying also on the hard EU conditionalities as an external driving force of reforms. Until that time, local civil society can deliver complementary findings in their focus areas, but also gradually expand the scope of its monitoring and seek ways to continue with this process in a more holistic way in the post-accession period, when SIGMA will no longer have the mandate to perform external assessments of PAR. By that time, local civil society actors should have a developed approach in identifying critical areas of intervention on which to focus their monitoring efforts. As previous enlargement rounds have demonstrated, without the EU conditionality, and regular external monitoring and assessment of reforms, countries can easily backslide in their reforms post-accession, effectively moving away from good governance standards.

To that end, WeBER's rationale remains as relevant as when WeBER was initiated - that only by empowering local non-governmental actors and strengthening participatory democracy at the national and local levels can put pressure on governments to implement often painful and inconvenient administrative reforms in the post-accession period. WeBER team has continually worked over the years on preparations for such a scenario, in which local civil societies, as domestic accountability seekers, lead and initiate PAR demand, and closely and credibly observe PAR in WB. Range of WeBER support to regional civil society in the previous period is broad and it included multiple awareness raising and capacity building initiatives. Additionally, this support meant the involvement of CSOs in the PAR monitoring process and the creation of the PAR monitor reports, mentoring of local CSOs who monitor local governments and regular consultations with CSOs on the implementation of the PAR Monitor and national and regional PAR developments. Also, we have introduced novel civil society approaches to PAR such as piloting monitoring of mainstreaming PAR in different policy sectors,[6] and the creation of online portals through which citizens are invited to share their experiences in interacting with public administrations.[7]

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, still ongoing during the third monitoring cycle, was again an additional reminder of the importance of well-functioning public administrations able to exercise primary functions of serving the needs of citizens. This global, outstanding circumstance has brought to the fore the issue of public administrations' ability to adapt and go the extra mile in delivering services digitally, enabling contactless, yet unhampered communication with citizens, and providing teleworking options for civil service employees.

However, unlike the previous round for 2019/2020, PAR monitoring work for 2021/2022 was less affected by the measures for mitigating coronavirus spread in the region, meaning that communication and coordination within the WeBER research team as well as research work (team meetings, focus groups, interviews) were conducted both in virtual space and in person. Effects that the COVID-19 pandemic had on the operations of public administrations, for the better or worse, are highlighted in the research findings, where applicable.

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4 For more information on the process of revision of SIGMA Principles of Public Administration please visit: https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/principles-public-administration-consultation.htm.
5 Starting from December 2019, WeBER is being implemented under the title "WeBER2.0 - Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration".
6 Regional and national reports on mainstreaming the Principles of Public Administration into policy sectors available at:: https://www.par-monitor.org/mainstreaming-principles-of-public-administration-into-policy-sectors/.
7 The citizens portals for the six administrations are available at: https://citizens.par-monitor.org/.

The methodological approach of the PAR Monitor is given in the methodology appendix of this report, that provides details on the OECD/SIGMA principles of PA as regional framework for monitoring, rationale behind selecting principles, WeBER indicator design, the PAR Monitor package, quality assurance procedures applied, monitoring timeframe and limitations of WeBER's scope and approach. The WeBER team did not make methodological changes in the 2021/2022 monitoring cycle, the last, notable methodology revisions being from the PAR Monitor 2019/2020 (see Methodology Appendix for details). The 2021/2022 monitoring was conducted between January and November 2022 and, for the most part, focused on practices of administrations in the region implemented in 2021 and the first half of 2022.

This report follows a standard outline established for the two previous PAR Monitors and is divided into six chapters: 1) strategic framework for public administration reform, 2) policy development and coordination, 3) public service and human resource management, 4) accountability, 5) service delivery, and 6) public financial management. Each chapter follows an identical structure.

In each chapter introduction, the reader is briefly introduced to the WeBER indicators used in the observed PAR area and their values on a scale from 0 to 5. Immediately after, a brief state of play in North Macedonia is given to contextualize the analysis for the observed area, based on existing secondary sources. The state of play sections largely rely on the latest European Commission report for 2022 and the SIGMA assessment from 2021, but also refer to other relevant sources. State of play is followed by the WeBER monitoring focus, describing the methodological steps in more detail, illustrating the structure of each principle and indicator, including data collection and analysis methods.

The key section of each chapter is the presentation of WeBER monitoring results, stemming from thorough and methodologically robust research conducted in North Macedonia. For each PAR area, indicator values, and scores of their elements, are presented for all completed WeBER monitoring cycles to date allowing easy insight and comparison of monitoring results for the three PAR monitoring exercises. A summary of results that follows for each area presents key, succinct one-page findings and trends.

Finally, section on recommendations consists of implementation status of recommendations proposed in PAR Monitors 2019/2020 and 2017/2018. For each recommendation colour codes are assigned, and explanations given as to why recommendation was assessed in certain way (e.g., fully, or partially implemented, initiated, or no action taken). Secondly, based on the detailed elaboration of findings for North Macedonia in this monitoring cycle, the report either repeats past recommendations that were assessed as not implemented or proposes new ones for the responsible government authorities. As certain recommendations from the previous PAR Monitors are still relevant, a few of them is repeated and some slightly modified.

II.

PAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

II.1 WeBER indicators used in PAR Strategic Framework and country values for North Macedonia

SFPAR P1 I1: Use of participatory approaches in the development of key strategic PAR documents					
0	**1**	2	3	4	5
SFPAR P2_P4 I1: Civil society involvement in the PAR monitoring and coordination structures					
0	1	2	3	4	5

■ State of Play in the PAR Strategic Framework and main developments since 2020

The current strategic framework in North Macedonia consists of two documents, which set out the PAR agenda: the 2018-2022 Public Administration Reform (PAR) Strategy and the 2018-2021 Public Finance Management (PFM) Reform Programme. The PAR Strategy is coordinated by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) and covers four priority areas, in line with the SIGMA principles, while the PFM Programme guides the application of the SIGMA designed PFM principles and is coordinated by the Ministry of Finance (MoF). The MISA reports on the PAR implementation on a six-month basis to the PAR Council, submitting an annual report as well to the Government. Following the publication of reports on the MISA website, and prior to discussions at the PAR Council, there are consultations with CSOs representatives. The Strategy also foresees inviting stakeholders to public debates twice a year and that reports on the Strategy implementation are to be made public. In 2020, a Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy was made.

The present PAR Strategy does not foresee involvement of CSOs in the PAR coordination and monitoring structures. Furthermore, the PFM Programme does not mention the civil society and it does not define the framework under which cooperation with CSOs will be pursued.

In April 2022, the MISA published a public call for interested CSOs to get involved in thematic working groups for preparation of the new PAR Strategy 2023-2030.[8] Preparations for the process began in May 2022, when in cooperation with SIGMA, the MISA organized a preparatory workshop for the new PAR Strategy, at which the SIGMA 2021 Monitoring Report for North Macedonia was presented. This preparatory workshop was an announcement for the opening of a comprehensive and transparent process, inclusive dialogue and cooperation between the MISA and stakeholders regarding the vision, priority areas, objectives, and the overall plan for public administration reforms. The draft Strategy is in governmental procedure.

■ What does WeBER monitor and how?

Monitoring the Strategic Framework of Public Administration Reform is based on three SIGMA Principles in this area, focusing on the existence of effective PAR agendas, the implementation and monitoring of PAR, as well as on the existence of PAR management and coordination structures at the political and administrative levels.

> **Principle 1**: The government has developed and enacted an effective public administration reform agenda that addresses key challenges;
>
> **Principle 2**: Public administration reform is purposefully implemented; reform outcome targets are set and regularly monitored;
>
> **Principle 4**: Public administration reform has robust and functioning management coordination structures at both the political and administrative levels to steer the reform design and implementation process.

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8 Call for participation in thematic working groups, https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/rja/povik.pdf

The selected principles are assessed entirely from the view of the quality of involvement of civil society and the public in the processes of developing PAR strategic documents, and in participation in the monitoring and coordination structures that should ensure their purposeful implementation. A focus on inclusiveness and participation aims to determine the extent to which relevant stakeholders' needs and views are consulted and taken into consideration when developing and implementing reform agendas.

For this purpose, two WeBER indicators were developed. The first one focuses on the existence and quality of consultation processes in the development of key PAR strategic documents. A sample of up to six key PAR strategic documents was assessed in each Western Balkan administration. The most comprehensive PAR documents (PAR strategies or similar) and PFM reform documents were selected as mandatory sample units, while the selection of other strategic documents covering the remaining PAR areas was dependent on PAR agendas currently in place. Monitoring was performed by combining data sources to ensure the reliability of results, including the qualitative analysis of strategic documents, and official data that is publicly available or obtained from institutions responsible for PAR. Moreover, analysis of documents was corroborated with the results of semi-structured interviews with representatives of institutions responsible for PAR and focus groups with civil society representatives who participated in consultation processes (where it was impossible to organise focus groups they were replaced with interviews with civil society representatives). Since strategic documents usually cover multiple years, and their adoption or revision does not necessarily coincide with WeBER monitoring cycles, findings were carried over for strategic documents that did not undergo revision or were not updated at the time of WeBER monitoring.

For North Macedonia, therefore, the analysis under this indicator included:

- Revision of the Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022[9] and
- Action Plan for 2020 of the Public Financial Management Program 2018 - 2021

The monitoring of the participation of civil society in PAR implementation (in PAR coordination and monitoring structures) considered only the most comprehensive PAR strategic documents being implemented as units of analysis. The intention of this approach was to determine whether efforts exist to better facilitate monitoring and coordination structures in PAR agenda generally. As for the first indicator, review and qualitative assessment of official documents pertaining to the organisation and functioning of these structures was performed, and other data sources were used to corroborate the findings.

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9 In the reporting period drafting of the new PAR Strategy 2023-2030 has started

II.2 WeBER monitoring results

PRINCIPLE 1: THE GOVERNMENT HAS DEVELOPED AND ENACTED AN EFFECTIVE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM AGENDA THAT ADDRESSES KEY CHALLENGES

WeBER indicator SFPAR P1 I1: Use of participatory approaches in the development of key strategic PAR documents

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
Consultations with civil society are conducted when the document(s) are developed	0/4	0/4	2/4
Consultations with civil society are conducted in an early phase of the development of the document(s)	2/4	2/4	2/4
Invitations to the civil society to participate in the consultations are open	2/4	2/4	4/4
Responsible government bodies are proactive in ensuring that a wide range of external stakeholders become involved in the process	0/2	0/2	2/2
Civil society is provided complete information for preparation for consultations	4/4	4/4	4/4
Comments and inputs received in the consultation process are considered by the responsible government bodies in charge of developing key PAR strategic documents	0/4	0/4	0/4
Responsible government bodies publicly provide feedback on the treatment of received comments	0/2	0/2	0/2
Responsible government bodies engage in open dialogue with civil society on contested questions	0/2	0/2	0/2
Consultations in the development of strategic PAR documents are open to the public	2/4	2/4	0/4
Total score	10/30	10/30	15/30
Indicator value 2020/2021 (scale 0 – 5)[10]	1		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[11]		1	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[12]			2

As in the previous PAR Monitor the researchers analysed the same documents, having in mind that those are currently the respective strategic PAR documents. Hence, the situation is as follows with respect to the Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 Public Administration Reform Strategy and the 2020 Action Plan of the 2018-2021 Public Financial Management (PFM) Program. Public consultations on the Revision lasted 15 days and an open call for comments and suggestions was published on the ENER (Single National Electronic Register of Regulations) on 21 December 2019. However, although the document had been published on the ENER, representatives in focus group stated that this particular document had been prepared in a non-inclusive process, unlike the process of preparation of the PAR Strategy and the AP. This was assessed as a deviation from the previously established good practice. Regarding the Action Plan for 2020 of the Public Financial Management (PFM), the researchers could not find information about the consultative process and through FOI they received the answer that consultations took place on 27 March 2020 at an online meeting of the Sectoral Group for PFM with the deadline for submission of comments on 2 April 2020. Comments from two CSOs were received, which upon assessment by respective institutions were made part of the final document. This was confirmed by representatives in the focus group, but it was also mentioned that the participation was only formal, and their comments were usually not taken into consideration.

10 Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-10 points = 1; 11-15 points = 2; 16-20 points =3; 21-25 points = 4; 26-30 points = 5
11 ibid
12 ibid

As far as invitations to the civil society to participate in consultations are concerned, there was an open invitation only for the Revision of the Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022. In addition, CSOs were provided complete information for preparation for the consultative process.

As a general comment about consultations overall it was underlined that usually consultations were held at a very belated stage when the documents were in fact already prepared, and the responsible government bodies were not proactive in ensuring that a wide range of external stakeholders were involved in the process. Furthermore, there is no evidence (minutes or reports) found confirming consideration of individual comments by CSOs on both strategic documents, or open dialogue on contested questions.

Despite the fact that the document was published on the ENER which is considered a consultative process, the Revision of the Action Plan for Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022 was prepared in a non-inclusive process, unlike the process of preparation of the PAR Strategy and the AP. This was assessed as a deviation from the previously established good practice. Moreover, as regards the Action Plan for 2020 of the Public Financial Management Program 2018 – 2021 the participation of CSOs is considered to be only a formality and their comments were usually not taken into consideratio

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator SFPAR P1 I1: Use of participatory approaches in the development of key strategic PAR documents

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

PRINCIPLE 2: PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION REFORM IS PURPOSEFULLY IMPLEMENTED; REFORM OUTCOME TARGETS ARE SET AND REGULARLY MONITORED;

PRINCIPLE 4: PAR HAS ROBUST AND FUNCTIONING MANAGEMENT CO-ORDINATION STRUCTURES, AT BOTH THE POLITICAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE LEVELS TO STEER THE REFORM DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

WeBER indicator SFPAR P2_4 I1: Civil society involvement in the PAR monitoring and coordination structures

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
Administrative structures for PAR coordination and monitoring foresee an involvement of CSOs	0/2	0/2	0/2
Political level structures for PAR coordination foresee an involvement of CSOs	0/2	0/2	0/2
Format of CSO involvement in administrative structures for PAR coordination and monitoring	0/4	0/4	0/4
Format of CSO involvement in political structures for PAR coordination and monitoring	0/4	0/4	0/4
Involvement of CSOs is achieved based on an open competitive process	0/4	0/4	0/4
Meetings of the PAR coordination and monitoring structures are held regularly with CSO involvement	0/4	0/4	0/4
The format of meetings allows for discussion, contribution and feedback from CSOs	0/4	0/4	0/4
CSOs get consulted on the specific measures of PAR financing	0/4	0/4	0/2
Total score	0/28	0/28	0/26
Indicator value 2020/2021 (scale 0 – 5)[13]	0		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[14]		0	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[15]			0

As in the previous 2019/2020 Monitoring cycle, the situation in North Macedonia is the same regarding the issue of involving CSOs in administrative structures for PAR coordination and monitoring. However, it should be emphasized that in 2022 the preparation of the new PAR strategy started and in cooperation with SIGMA, the MISA started a comprehensive consultation process, with CSOs being invited and involved from the beginning of the process.

A Team for PAR coordination and monitoring was established at the MISA. The PAR Secretariat provides technical and professional support for the process, but it does not include any CSO members. The PAR Council is established for purposes of monitoring and coordinating the overall PAR process at the political level, but it does not have CSO members on board.

The PAR monitoring and reporting is done by the MISA, which each six months prepares and submits a report on its implementation to the PAR Council and once a year to the Government. After publishing the reports on its website, and prior to discussions within the Council, consultations are conducted with CSOs.

The Strategy foresees inviting stakeholders to public debates related to the PAR implementation twice a year and that reports are to be made public. The Strategy also foresees that an evaluation be made every two years by independent experts. In the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR, the civil society sector is mentioned once in terms of consultation about prioritization of services that need to be delivered. Having in mind that CSOs are not involved in the structures, consequently they are not consulted about specific measures for PAR financing as well. However, in the process of developing the new 2023-2030 PAR Strategy, CSOs are consulted about the overall measures, activities, indicators, and financing of the entirety of envisaged activities.

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13 Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-10 points = 1; 11-15 points = 2; 16-20 points =3; 21-25 points = 4; 26-30 points = 5
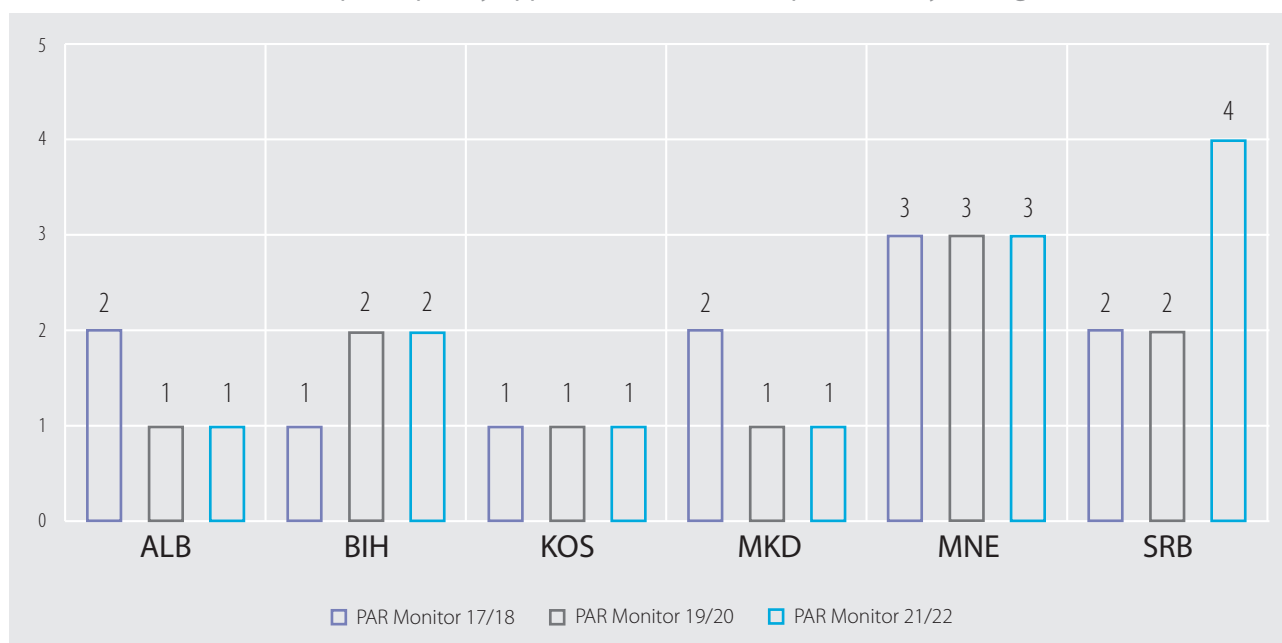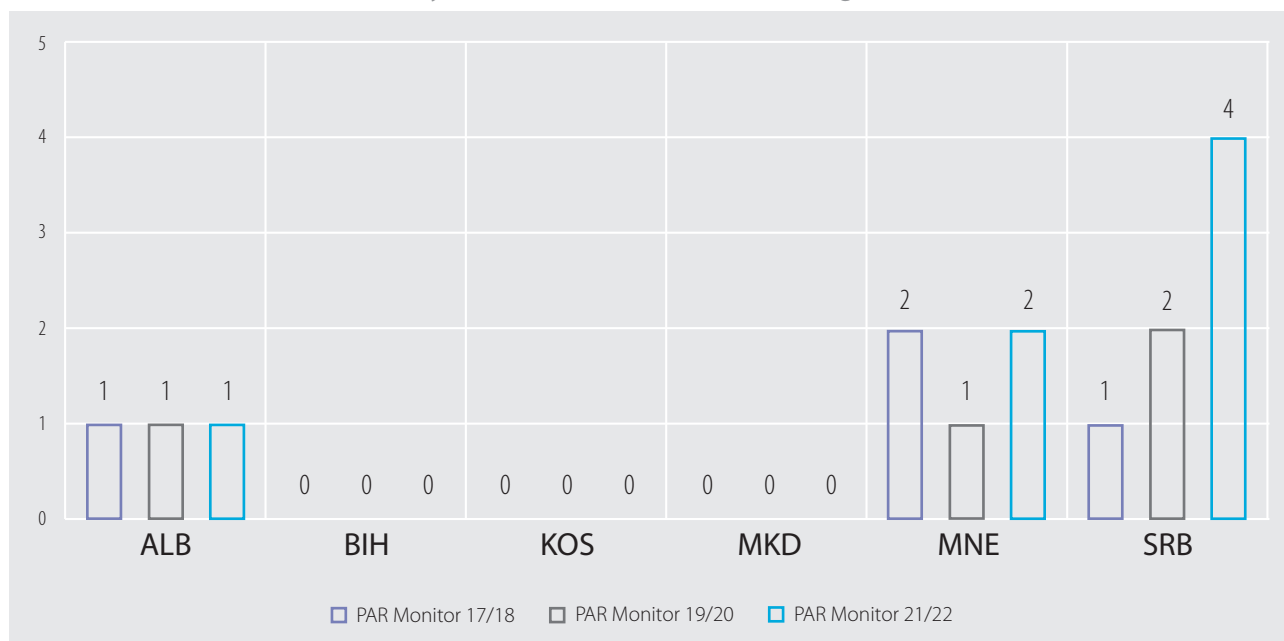14 ibid
15 ibid

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator SFPAR P2_P4 I1: Civil society involvement in the PAR monitoring and coordination structures

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

II.3 Summary results: PAR Strategic Framework

The Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy was made in 2020. Consultations with CSOs during the revision took place at a late stage. Consequently, this process is assessed as less transparent and open than the process of development of the PAR Strategy and its previous AP. In addition, there is no practice of preparing minutes of the consultation processes and stakeholders are not given any feedback whether their comments and remarks have been taken into consideration. The same conclusion applies to the 2020 Action Plan for the 2018-2021 Public Financial Management (PFM) Programme.

The current PAR Strategy does not foresee involvement of CSOs in the PAR coordination and monitoring structures and the PFM Reform Programme does not mention the civil society and it does not define the framework under which cooperation with CSOs will be pursued.

In April 2022, the MISA published a public call for interested CSOs to get involved in thematic working groups for preparation of the new 2023-2030 PAR Strategy. Comprehensive and wide consultations with CSOs started at the early stage of the process, which was previously missing in the process of revision of the earlier PAR Strategy. Preparations for the process began in May 2022, when in cooperation with SIGMA, the MISA organized a preparatory workshop on the new PAR Strategy. This preparatory workshop was an announcement for the opening of a comprehensive and transparent process, inclusive dialogue and cooperation between the MISA and stakeholders regarding the vision, priority areas, objectives and the overall plan for public administration reforms. The draft strategy is a document complementary to other relevant strategic documents. Its envisaged objectives and measures reflect a sectoral approach in creating policies, planning funds, strengthening administrative capacities and a commitment to harmonizing national legislation with the European acquis.

◼ Recommendations for PAR Strategic Framework

Tracking recommendations under the 2019/2020 PAR Monitor

Recommendation	Status	Comment
1. The MISA and the MoF should explore the opportunity of having joint consultations about issues that are of relevance for the effective implementation of the Strategic Framework, such as cost estimates.	Not Implemented	Although the national authorities committed to continuing to ensure a coordinated monitoring and reporting framework and to improving the administrative capacity for better PAR implementation, there are no results in terms of joint efforts to this end.
2. The MISA should explore the opportunity and avenues of including the public as of the early stages of consultations about the PAR Strategy, in addition to including CSOs.	Implemented	In April 2022, the MISA published a public call for interested CSOs to get involved in thematic working groups for preparation of the new 2023-2030 PAR Strategy and that should be a continuous practice. [16]
3. The MISA should keep detailed records and documentation about the PAR Strategy consultations and timely publish them on its website in order to inform the public about what issues have been debated, what proposals have been tabled and which of them have been accepted.	Not implemented	There is no evidence (minutes or reports) found regarding individual comments and proposals by CSOs, or about an open dialogue on contested issues.

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16 https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/rja/povik.pdf

4. CSOs should be informed and provided feedback about their contributions and comments given during the consultations.	Not implemented	There is no evidence (minutes or reports) found regarding individual comments and proposals by CSOs, or about an open dialogue on contested questions.
5. Open dialogue about contested issues and questions should be fostered with CSOs in order to come to a common conclusion and solutions accepted and owned by all stakeholders included in the process.	Not implemented	There is no evidence (minutes or reports) found regarding individual comments and proposals by CSOs, or about an open dialogue on contested issues.
6. The MoF should include all relevant stakeholders early in the consultation process when defining strategic priorities and directions. Moreover, the MoF should timely invite and provide CSOs with all relevant documentation of importance for the consultation process.	Partially implemented	Regarding the 2020 PFM Action Plan, researchers could not find online information about the consultative process about the document. Hence, in reply to FOI requests they were informed that consultations took place on 27 March 2020, at an online meeting of the PFM Sectoral Group, with a deadline for submission of comments on 2 April 2020. According to the FOI request reply, two CSOs sent comments, which upon assessment by in-line institutions were included in the final document. This was confirmed by representatives in the focus group, but it was also mentioned that the participation in the Sectoral Group is strictly formal, and their comments are usually not taken into consideration.
7. CSOs should be included in the PAR coordinating bodies at the political and administrative level.	Not implemented	The PAR Strategy does not foresee involvement of CSOs in the PAR coordination and monitoring administrative and political structures.
8. A clear systematic approach should be designed, defining the format of consultations within sector groups that have been established under the PAR Strategy.	Partially implemented	Regarding the 2020 PFM Action Plan, researchers could not find online information about the consultative process about this document. Hence, in reply to FOI requests they were informed that consultations took place on 27 March 2020, at an online meeting of the PFM Sectoral Group, with a deadline for submission of comments on 2 April 2020. The FOI request reply stated that two CSOs sent their comments, which upon assessment by in-line respective institutions were included in the final document. This was confirmed by representatives in the focus group, but it was also mentioned that the participation in the Sectoral Group is formal, and their comments are usually not taken into consideration.

1. The MISA and the MoF should have joint consultations about issues of relevance for the effective implementation of the Strategic Framework, such as cost estimates/fiscal implications.

2. The MISA should keep detailed records and documentation about the PAR Strategy consultations and timely publish them on its website in order to inform the public about issues discussed, proposals and remarks given and whether proposals and remarks have been accepted or not, and the rationale behind such decisions.

3. Open dialogue about contested issues and questions should be fostered with a view to defining common conclusions and solutions accepted and owned by all stakeholders involved in the process.

4. CSOs should be informed and provided feedback about their contributions and comments given in the consultations process.

5. The MoF should include all relevant stakeholders early in the consultation process, when defining the strategic priorities and directions. Moreover, it should timely invite and provide CSOs with all relevant documentation required for the consultation process.

6. CSOs should be included in the PAR coordination bodies at the political and administrative level.

7. A systematic approach should be designed, defining the format of consultations within sector groups established under the PAR Strategy.

III.

POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

III.1 WeBER indicators used in Policy Development and Co-ordination and country values for North Macedonia

2PDC P5 I1: Public availability of information on the Government performance					
0	1	2	3	4	5
2PDC P5 I2: Civil society perception of the Government's pursuit and achievement of its planned objectives					
0	1	2	3	4	5
2PDC P6 I1: Transparency of the Government's decision-making					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5
2PDC P10 I1: Use of evidence created by think tanks, independent institutes and other CSOs in policy development					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5
2PDC P11 I1: Civil society perception and scope of involvement in policymaking					
0	**1**	2	3	4	5

■ **State of Play in the Policy Development and Co-ordination and main developments since 2020**

Compared to 2017, North Macedonia has made some progress in the policy development and co-ordination area.[17] The improvement is primarily due to a more consistent application of critical tools for evidence-based and participatory policy making and to some degree of advancement in the transparency of government decision making. However, major weaknesses and gaps still exist in both the regulatory and the methodological frameworks for government policy development and policy planning and monitoring, including European integration planning, as well as in the implementation and enforcement of key procedures and functions required for effective operation of the centre of government.[18]

The European Commission (EC) underlined that: "The legal framework and the institutional structures provide for a coherent policy-making system and include, an electronic system for strategic planning and preparation of the government's annual work plan. Efforts continued to clarify the responsibilities of some policy-making institutions and ensure their proper functioning and in streamlining reporting lines."[19] Moreover, the role of the Secretariat General remains insufficient.[20]

There is a progress regarding the transparency and legal compliance of government decision making, largely because the agenda and minutes of Government sessions are now publicly available at a central website.[21] In addition, there are some improvements in the evidence-based and consultative policy making compared to the last monitoring cycles, due to a more consistent application of the Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) and public consultation rules.[22]

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17 SIGMA/OECD 2021 Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
18 Ibid
19 North Macedonia 2022 Report, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022_en
20 Ibid
21 SIGMA/OECD 2021 Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
22 Ibid

What does WeBER monitor and how?

In the Policy Development and Coordination area, WeBER monitoring is performed against four SIGMA Principles:

> **Principle 5:** Regular monitoring of the government's performance enables public scrutiny and supports the government in achieving its objectives;
>
> **Principle 6:** Government decisions are prepared in a transparent manner and based on the administration's professional judgement; legal conformity of the decisions is ensured;
>
> **Principle 10:** The policy-making and legal-drafting process is evidence-based, and impact assessment is consistently used across ministries;
>
> **Principle 11:** Policies and legislation are designed in an inclusive manner that enables the active participation of society and allows for co-ordination of different perspectives within the government;

In the third edition of the PAR Monitor, five WeBER indicators are used for the analysis in the Policy Development and Coordination. The first indicator measures the extent of openness and availability of information about the Government's performance to the public, through analysis of the most comprehensive websites through which the Government communicates its activities and publishes reports. Written information published by the Government relates to press releases, and online publishing of annual (or semi-annual) reports. The measurement covers a period of two annual reporting cycles, except for the press releases which are assessed for a period of one year (due to the frequency of their publishing). Other aspects of the Government's performance information analysed include its understandability, usage of quantitative and qualitative information, presence of assessments/descriptions of concrete results, availability of data in open format and gender segregated data, and the online availability of reports on key whole-of-government planning documents.

The second indicator measures how civil society perceives Government's planning, monitoring and reporting on its work and objectives that it has promised to the public. To explore perceptions, a survey of civil society organisations in the Western Balkans was implemented using an online surveying platform, in the period April - June 2022.[23] The uniform questionnaire with 28 questions was used in all Western Balkans, ensuring an even approach in survey implementation. It was disseminated in local languages through the existing networks and platforms of civil society organisations with large contact databases but also through centralised points of contact such as governmental offices in charge for cooperation with civil society. To ensure that the survey targeted as many organisations as possible in terms of their type, geographical distribution, and activity areas, and hence contribute to is representativeness as much as possible, additional boosting was done where needed to increase the overall response. A focus group with CSOs served the purpose of complementing the survey findings with qualitative information.[24]

The third indicator measures the transparency of decision-making by the Government, combining the survey data on the perceptions of civil society with the analysis of relevant governmental websites. Besides publishing information on the decisions of the Government, the website analysis considers information completeness, citizen-friendliness, timeliness, and consistency. Monitoring was done for each government session in the period of the six months - last three months in the calendar year preceding the monitoring (2021), and first three months in the monitoring year (2022), except for timeliness which is measured against all government sessions in the period of three months from the start of monitoring (roughly from beginning of February until beginning of May 2022).

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23 The survey of CSOs was administered through an anonymous, online questionnaire. In North Macedonia, the survey was conducted in the period from 04.04. – 01.06. 2022. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). The survey sample was N=94.

24 FG was conducted in September 2022 with 6 participants.

The fourth indicator measures whether government institutions invite civil society to prepare evidence-based policy documents and whether evidence produced by the CSOs is considered and used in the process of policy development. Again, the measurement combines expert analysis of official documents and a survey of civilsociety perception data. In relation to the former, the frequency of referencing CSOs' evidence-based findings are analysed for official policy and strategic documents, policy papers, and ex-ante and ex-post policy analyses and impact assessments for a sample of three policy areas.[25]

Finally, the fifth indicator, focusing on the quality of involvement of the public in the policy making through public consultations, was modified in this monitoring cycle to include not only perceptions of CSOs collected by implementing online survey, but also additional qualitative data through the analysis of a sample of public consultations as well as assessment of online governmental portals used for public consultations. More precisely, in this PAR Monitor addition the indicator was enhanced with the addition of qualitative analysis of scope and impact of public consultations on policy documents and legislation in the period of six months (second half of 2022), availability and quality of reporting on public consultations, functionalities of the public consultation portals, and proactiveness of informing by the responsible institutions.

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25 Policy areas where a substantial number of CSOs actively works. For North Macedonia, the three policy areas selected are the environment, anti-discrimination, and social welfare.

III.2 WeBER monitoring results

PRINCIPLE 5: REGULAR MONITORING OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE ENABLES PUBLIC SCRUTINY AND
SUPPORTS THE GOVERNMENT IN ACHIEVING ITS OBJECTIVES.

WeBER indicator 2PDC P5 I1: Public availability of information on the Government performance

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
The Government regularly publishes written information about its activities	0/4	4/4	0/4
The information issued by the Government about its activities is written in an understandable way	0/2	2/2	0/2
The information issued by the Government is sufficiently detailed, including both quantitative data and qualitative information and assessments	0/2	2/2	0/2
The information issued by the Government includes assessments of the achievement of concrete results	0/4	2/4	0/4
The information issued by the Government about its activities and results is available in open data format(s)	0/2	0/2	0/2
The information issued by the Government about its activities and results contain gender segregated data	0/2	0/2	0/2
Share of reports on Government strategies and plans, which are available online	0/2	1/2	0/2
Total score	0/18	11/18	0/18
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[26]	0		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[27]		2	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[28]			0

The Government publishes press releases on a daily (in some cases even multiple times a day) and weekly basis. The press releases are published in the section of the Government website „Медиа Центар/Media centre". In this section, there is a filter added to select what type of announcements and press releases one would like to be familiarised with (for example a filter on EU integration or service information). Press releases of the Government are written in an understandable and simple way (written in a journalistic style, without bureaucratic or formal language).

There are no available annual work reports of the Government for 2020 and 2021, so researchers could not assess whether those reports are understandable, sufficiently detailed, including both quantitative data and qualitative information and assessments, or whether they include assessments of achievement of concrete results and gender segregated data. Consequently, there are no reports available in an open data format.

When it comes to reports on Government strategies and plans, there are at least 4 national strategies with action plans published by the Government, for which there are no published reports for the last full reporting year.[29] There are also three current plans published by the Government and there are no reports regarding those plans, as well.[30]

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26 Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-8 points = 1; 9-11 points = 2; 12-14 points =3; 15-17 points = 4; 18-20 points = 5.
27 ibid
28 ibid
29 The Strategy for One Society and Interculturalism - One society for all/(Стратегијата за едно општество и интеркултурализам - Едно општество за сите); The national strategy for cooperation with the diaspora/(Националната стратегија за соработка со дијаспората); Transparency Strategy/ Стратегија за транспарентност; Strategy for strengthening the capacities for conducting financial investigations and confiscation of property for the period 2021-2023 with an action plan/ Стратегија за јакнење на капацитетите за водење финансиски истраги и конфискација на имот за периодот 2021-2023 година со акциски план – no report
30 Plan for accelerated economic growth (2022-2026)/ План за забрзан економски раст (2022-2026); Investment intervention plan (IPI 2021-2027)/ Интервентен план за инвестиции (ИПИ 2021-2027) and Clean Air Plan/План за чист воздух

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator 2PDC P5 I1: Public availability of information on the Government performance
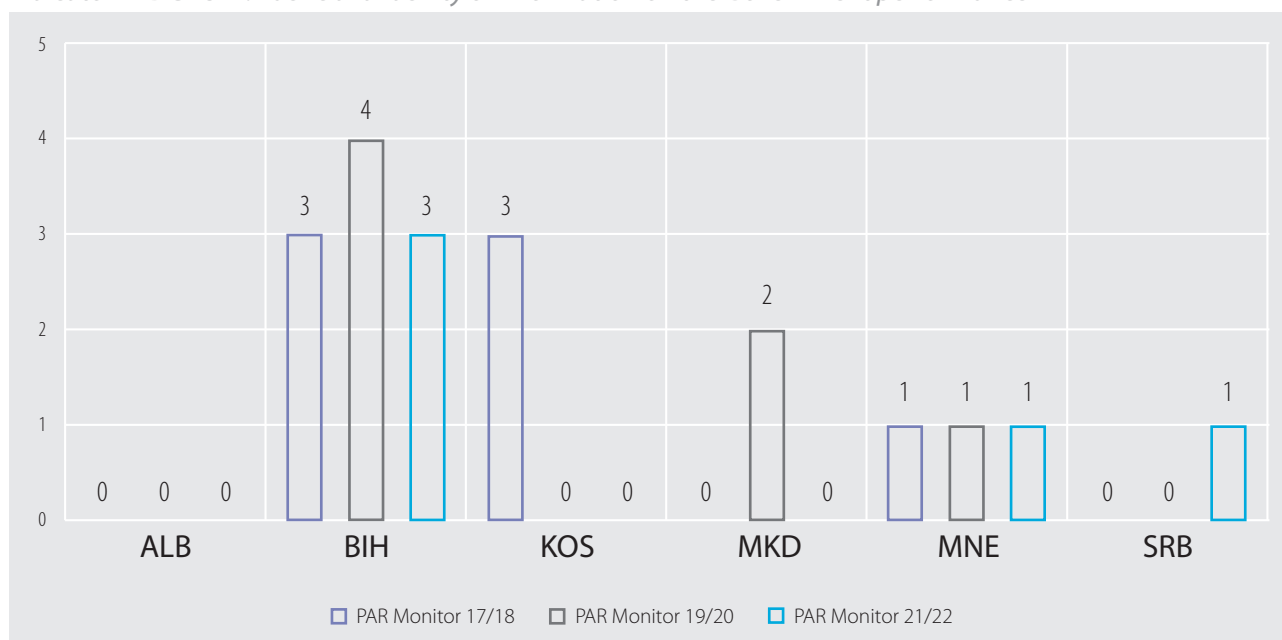
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: *www.par-monitor.org/.*

WeBER indicator 2PDC P5 I2: Civil society perception of the Government's pursuance and achievement of its planned objectives

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
CSOs consider the Government's formal planning documents as relevant for the actual developments in individual policy areas	0/2	0/2	0/2
CSOs consider that the Government regularly reports to the public about progress against set objectives	0/4	0/4	2/4
CSOs consider that official strategies determine government's or ministries' actions in specific policy areas	1/2	0/2	1/2
CSOs consider that ministries regularly publish monitoring reports about their sectoral strategies	0/4	0/4	0/4
CSOs consider that EU accession priorities are adequately integrated in the Government's planning documents	1/2	0/2	1/2
CSOs consider that Government's reports incorporate adequate updates on the progress against the set EU accession priorities	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	2/16	0/16	4/16
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[31]	0		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[32]		0	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[33]			1

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31 Conversion of points: 0-3 points = 0; 4-5 points = 1; 6-7 points = 2; 8-10 points =3; 11-13 points = 4; 14-16 points = 5
32 ibid
33 ibid

As regards CSOs perceptions of the Government's formal planning documents as relevant for the actual developments in the individual policy area, 27.14% of surveyed CSOs (similar as in 2019/2020 with 27.94%) "agree" with the statement "In the policy area my organisation works, government's reports incorporate adequate updates on the progress against the set of EU accession priorities". On the other hand, 34.29% "neither agree, nor disagree" with the same statement.

Only 25.72% of surveyed CSOs "agree" with the statement: "The Government regularly reports to the public on the progress in the achievement of the objectives set in its work-plan". On the other hand, most of the respondents (40%) "disagree" with the statement.

31.43% (25.00% in 2019/2020) of surveyed CSOs either "agree"(30%) or "strongly agree" (1.43%) with the statement "Official strategies determine the Government's or Ministries' action in certain areas". This percentage is the same (31.43%) when it comes to people who disagree. 18.57% of surveyed CSOs either "agree"(30%) or "strongly agree" (1.43%) with the statement "Ministries regularly publish monitoring reports on their sectoral strategies".

30% of surveyed CSOs "agree" with statement: "In the policy area my organisation works, priorities of the EU accession process are adequately integrated into the government's plans". There was no "strongly agree" response, and the highest number of respondents (35.71%) "disagree" with the statement.

Once again, there were no "strongly agree" responses, and 21.43% of surveyed CSOs "agree" with statement: "In the policy area my organisation works, government's reports incorporate adequate updates on the progress against the set of EU accession priorities" whereas total of 35.71% disagreed.

One FG participant mentioned that some of the planning documents are relevant, but not all of them (for example, planning documents in the field of education are not relevant and are not appropriate from various aspects). The second FG representative mentioned that the Government rarely reports on results of its implemented activities. The other two participants pointed out that planning documents are not sufficiently relevant. Three FG participants pointed out that usually Government institutions do not report on the progress in the achievement of objectives set in their work-plans. The MISA has been mentioned as a positive example. One of the FG participants pointed out that in recent years, the Government's transparency regarding the implementation of plans and programs was at a higher level.

FG representatives believe that official strategies define the Government's or Ministries' action in specific policy areas. One FG participant pointed out that not all official strategies define the Ministries' actions, and this depends by whose mandate a specific issue is covered.

Furthermore, the Sector Monitoring Committee on Democracy and Governance (focus on PAR and PFM) does not have regular meetings, or meetings are conducted as a formality, and it is not clear whether CSOs interventions are taken into consideration at the end of a day. In general, the Government makes sure that documents are in line with the EU rules, but their implementation in practice is lacking. Other FG representatives mentioned that EU priorities were incorporated in Government planning documents, but their updating is a weak spot.

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator 2PDC P5 I2: Civil society perception of the Government's pursuance and achievement of its planned objectives
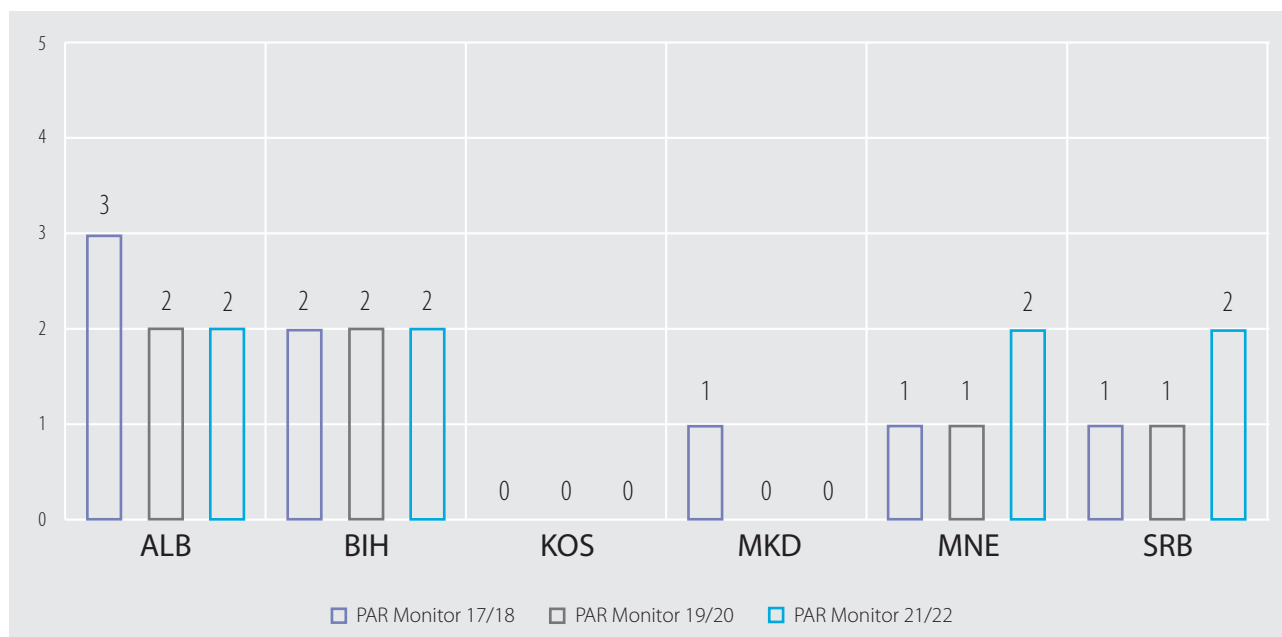
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org/.

PRINCIPLE 6: GOVERNMENT DECISIONS ARE PREPARED IN A TRANSPARENT MANNER AND BASED ON THE ADMINISTRATIONS' PROFESSIONAL JUDGEMENT; LEGAL CONFORMITY OF DECISIONS IS ENSURED

WeBER indicator PDC P6 I1: Transparency of the Government's decision-making

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
CSOs consider the Government decision-making to be generally transparent	0/2	0/2	0/2
CSOs consider the exceptions to the rules of publishing Government decisions to be appropriate	0/2	0/2	0/2
The Government makes publicly available the documents from its sessions	2/4	2/4	2/4
The Government communicates its decisions in a citizen-friendly manner	4/4	4/4	4/4
The Government publishes adopted documents in a timely manner	0/4	0/4	0/4
Total score	6/16	6/16	6/16
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[34]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[35]		2	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[36]			2

23.61% CSO respondents agree and 39% strongly agree with the statement that the Government's decision making is transparent. 37.50% of surveyed CSOs are neutral saying they "neither agree, nor disagree" with this statement.

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34 Conversion of points: 0-2 points = 0; 3-5 points = 1; 6-8 points = 2; 9-11 points =3; 12-14 points = 4; 15-16 points = 5.
35 ibid
36 ibid

19.44% of CSO respondents agree with the statement that exceptions to the rules of publishing Government's decisions were appropriate. This is a remarkable change (almost double) in terms of perception from the last monitoring report for 2019/2020, when only 8.45% of respondents agreed with the statement.

Agendas, minutes and press releases of Government sessions (from 1 August 2021 to 31 January 2022) for the entire monitoring period are made publicly available (August, September, and October 2021) and for the first three months of the monitoring year (November - December 2021 and January 2022). In the same period, documents adopted at these sessions were not made available on the Government's website, for any of the Government sessions at the time of measurement. Those documents are published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, which is not free of charge, i.e., subscription is required. Hence, it can be concluded that only agendas and sessions' minutes are published in a timely manner.

Published press releases are written in a citizen-friendly manner. For example, in the press-release from the 3rd session in 2022, they state: "The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia at today's third session, which was held via video conference link, adopted a Decision to determine the number of teaching days in the school year 2021/2022 in primary schools under extraordinary circumstances. With this decision, the number of teaching days in the school year 2021/2022 in primary schools under extraordinary circumstances is set at 172 teaching days, which means that the winter vacation of students will last until February 1, 2022, and the school year will end on 10 June 2022."

FG participants confirmed that in most of the cases the Government decision-making is transparent and the exceptions to the rules of publishing Government's decisions is appropriate.

Same as in the previous two PAR monitoring cycles, the Government maintained the transparency of its decision-making process in terms of publishing agenda, minutes and press releases of Government sessions for the entire monitoring period, making them available to the public. However, documents adopted at these sessions are not made available on the Government's website.

■ **How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?**

Indicator PDC P6 I1: Transparency of the Government's decision-making
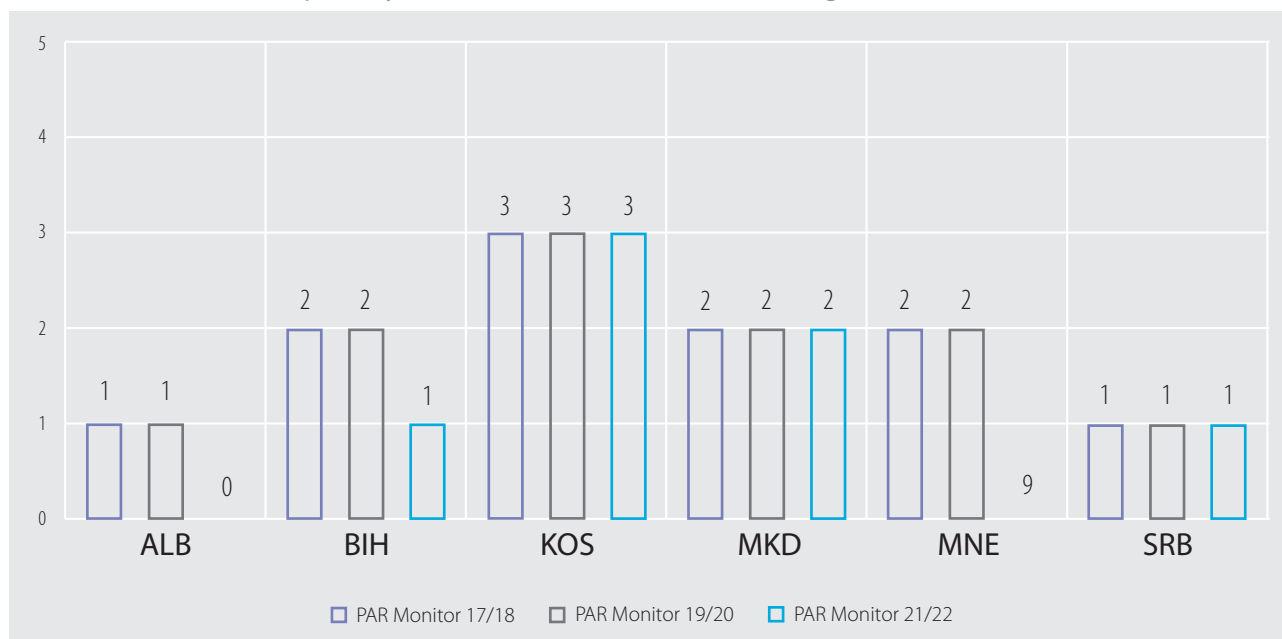
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org/.

PRINCIPLE 10: THE POLICY-MAKING AND LEGAL-DRAFTING PROCESS IS EVIDENCE-BASED, AND IMPACT ASSESSMENT IS CONSISTENTLY USED ACROSS MINISTRIES

WeBER indicator PDC P10 I1: Use of evidence created by think tanks, independent institutes and other CSOs in policy development

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
Frequency of referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in the adopted government policy documents	4/4	2/4	0/4
Frequency of referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and ex ante impact assessments	2/4	0/4	0/4
Share of evidence-based findings produced by wide range of CSOs, such as think tanks, independent institutes, locally-based organisations, referenced in ex post policy analyses and assessments of government institutions	0/2	0/2	0/2
Relevant ministries or other government institutions invite or commission wide range of CSOs, such as think tanks, independent institutes, locally-based organisations, to prepare policy studies, papers or impact assessments for specific policy problems or proposals	1/2	1/2	1/2
Representatives of relevant ministries participate in policy dialogue (discussions, round tables, closed door meetings, etc.) pertaining to specific policy research products	1/2	1/2	1/2
Representatives of wide range of CSOs, such as think tanks, independent institutes, locally-based organisations are invited to participate in working groups/ task forces for drafting policy or legislative proposals, when they have specific proposals and recommendations based on evidence	2/4	2/4	2/4
Relevant ministries in general, provide feedback on the evidence-based proposals and recommendations of the wide range of CSOs, such as think tanks, independent institutes, locally-based organisations, which have been accepted or rejected, justifying either action	0/2	0/2	0/2
Ministries accept CSOs' policy proposals in the work of working groups for developing policies and legislation	0/4	0/4	0/4
Total score	10/24	6/24	4/24
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[37]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[38]		1	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[39]			0

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37 Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-8 points = 1; 9-12 points = 2; 13-16 points =3; 17-19 points = 4; 20-24 points = 5
38 ibid
39 ibid

Researchers analysed 19 documents currently being implemented within three policy areas: anti-discrimination, environment, and social welfare.[40] Seven of them[41] were analysed in the previous monitoring cycle and are still valid. Over 50% of examined documents reference to CSO findings. Only 10 documents contain references to findings produced by CSOs. In the context of referencing to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and *ex-ante* impact assessments, 23 documents were analysed and only one document had a reference to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs, and none had an *ex-ante* impact assessment.

No *ex-post* analyses were found on the websites of Ministries in charge of implementing these strategies, action plans, legislation, or programmes and the research team did not receive any *ex-post* analysis through sent FOIs.

As regards the opinion of the civil society in North Macedonia on the use of evidence in policy making 40.91% of surveyed CSOs (44.12% in 2019/2020) either "agree" (37.88%) or "strongly agree" (0.03%) with the statement "When addressing policy problems or developing policy proposals, government institutions invite my organization to prepare or submit policy papers, studies or impact assessments". The percent of those who disagree with this statement is 23.53% (9.09% Strongly disagree; 24.24% disagree).

Furthermore, 46.97% of surveyed CSOs (57.35% in 2019/2020) stated that upon inviting government institutions to partake in their events these invitations are often (36.36%) or always (10.61%) accepted, while 28.79% of CSOs replied that this practice happens rarely -18.18% or never - 10.61%.

31.82% of CSOs (35.29% in 2019/2020) answered they are invited "often" (27.27%) or "always" (4.55%) to working groups/task forces for drafting policy or legislative proposals when having specific evidence-based proposals and recommendations. The percent of respondents that perceive that this practice happens rarely or never is 36.37% (rarely 16.67%; never 19.70%).

A total of 13.64% of CSOs (20.59% in 2019/2020) answered that they are provided with feedback "often" (10.61%) or "always" (3.03%), on either the acceptance or rejection of evidence-based proposals and recommendations coming from their organizations during the participation in working groups. The percent of respondents that perceive that this practice happens rarely or never is 57.57% (rarely 30.30%; never 27.27%).

16.67% of respondent CSOs (17.65% in 2019/2020) answered that relevant Ministries generally consider policy proposals made by their organisation (13.64% - "often" and "always" - 3.03%). The percent of respondents that perceive that this practice happens rarely or never is 42.42% (rarely 24.24%; never 18.18%).

FG participants confirmed that the Government usually was not referencing to findings produced by CSOs. One FG representative pointed out that cooperation with CSOs was strengthened, and often findings and recommendations under their research were incorporated in Government policies and plans.

Another FG participant pointed out that as a CSO they actively contributed to the design of the National Strategy for Agriculture and Rural Development, but their research was not referenced, although in oral interviews or when representatives of in-line institutions were guests at their events, their contribution was praised. On the other hand, they mentioned the Open Government Partnership, as a positive example, where the commitment of each organisation is visible, the organizations' research is included, and referenced. etc.

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40 1. 2020-2022 National Strategy for Development of the Concept of One Society and Interculturalism; 2. 2022-2030 Strategy for Roma Inclusion; 3. National Program for the Transformation of Undeclared Work among Roma in the Republic of North Macedonia); environment 4. 2017-2027 National Strategy for Nature Protection; 5. 2018-2023 National Strategy on Biodiversity; 6. 2012—2040 National Strategy for Waters; 7. 2009-2030 National Strategy for Sustainable Development; 8. National Strategy for Approximation in the Area of the Environment; 9. Draft Strategy for Energetics Development until 2040; and social welfare 10. 2020-2025 National Strategy and 2020-2022 Action Plan   for Prevention of and Protection of Children against Violence; 11. 2018-2027 National Strategy for Deinstitutionalization in the Republic of Macedonia; 12. 2018-2022 Strategy for Formalization of the Informal Economy in the Republic of Macedonia; 13. 2015-2024 Strategy for Demographic Policies of the Republic of Macedonia; 14. 2021-2025 Strategy for Promotion and Development of Volunteering and Implementation Plan (Action Plan); 15. National Strategy for the Development of Social Enterprises in the Republic of North Macedonia; 16. 2021-2025 Strategy for Safety and Health at Work; 17. 2021-2027 National Employment Strategy and 2021-2023 Employment Action Plan; 18. Medium-term Strategy for Social Responsibility in the Republic of North Macedonia; 19. 2019-2023 Strategy for Women Entrepreneurship Development in the Republic of Macedonia
41 Under numbers: 4; 5; 6; 7; 8; 10 and 11

FG participants confirmed that relevant Ministries or other Government institutions invite wide range of CSOs, however they assess that invitations were not transparent, being instead selective or sometimes some relevant CSOs are not consulted/invited. Again, the MISA was pointed out as a positive example for conducting wide and transparent consultations with the CSOs. They confirmed that representatives of relevant Ministries participate in policy dialogue (discussions, round tables, closed door meetings, etc.) pertaining to specific policy research products. One participant pointed out that this happened partially or selectively and depended on who carried out the research. FG participants confirmed that the Government in general was not providing feedback on the evidence-based proposals and recommendations of the wide range of CSOs, with feedback given only occasionally.

FG participants also confirmed that Ministries to some extent accepted CSOs' policy proposals in the course of proceedings of working groups tasked with developing policies and legislation.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PDC P10 I1: Use of evidence created by think tanks, independent institutes and other CSOs in policy development

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org/.

WeBER indicator PDC P11 I1: Civil society perception and scope of involvement in policymaking

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018[42]
Scope of public consultations on policy documents in central administration	4/4	4/4	
Scope of public consultations on legislation in central administration	4/4	4/4	
Availability of reporting on public consultations on policy documents by the central administration	0/4	0/4	
Availability of reporting on public consultations on legislation by the central administration	0/4	0/4	
Basic functionality of a national public consultation portal	2/4	2/4	
Advanced functionality of a national public consultation portal	1/2	2/2	
Proactiveness of informing on public consultations	0/2	0/2	
Embeddedness of early public consultations in practice	0/2	0/2	
Quality of reporting on public consultations	0/2	0/2	
Impact of public consultation results on policy making	0/2	1/2	
CSOs consider formal consultation procedures create preconditions for effective inclusion of the public in the policy-making process	0/2	0/2	2/4
CSOs consider formal consultation procedures are applied consistently	0/2	0/2	0/4
CSOs consider that they are consulted at the early phases of the policy process	0/2	0/2	0/4
CSOs consider consultees are timely provided with information on the content of legislative or policy proposals	0/2	0/2	0/2
CSOs consider consultees are provided with adequate information on the content of legislative or policy proposals	0/2	0/2	0/2
CSOs consider sponsoring ministries take actions to ensure that diversity of interests is represented in the consultation processes (women's groups, minority rights groups, trade unions, employers' associations, etc.)	0/2	0/2	0/2
CSOs consider ministries (sponsors of policy and legislative proposals) provide written feedback on consultees' inputs/comments	0/2	0/2	0/4
CSOs consider ministries (sponsors of policy and legislative proposals) accept consultees' inputs/comments	0/2	0/2	0/4
CSOs consider ministries (sponsors of policy and legislative proposals) hold constructive discussions on how the consultees' views have shaped and influenced policy and final decision of the Government	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	11/50	13/50	2/30
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[43]	1		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[44]		1	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[45]			0

42 As this indicator has been changed since the 2017/2018 monitoring cycle, the results from these three cycles are not entirely comparable. In other words, in the monitoring cycle 2017/2018, point allocation was entirely based on the CSO perception survey, while in the last two monitoring cycles it is based on a combination of survey-based data on the one hand, and available data on implemented consultations, communication with external stakeholders, and the functioning of the e-consultation portal, on the other.
43 Conversion of points: 0-9 points = 0; 10-17 points = 1; 18-25 points = 2; 26-33 points =3; 34-41 points = 4; 42-50 points = 5.
44 ibid
45 ibid

In the period of measurement, there were two policy documents adopted for which a consultation process had been opened, the 2022-2023 Strategy for Roma Inclusion and the Methodology for measuring the delivery of e-services. However, there were no published reports on the consultative process. Six legal decrees were adopted by the Government in the period of measurement. For all of them public consultations were opened, but there were no published reports on the public consultations.

There were no publicly available reports on legislative and policy proposals, hence there is no assessment regarding the quality of reporting on public consultations and the impact of public consultations cannot be measured since there were no reports identified.

The National e-consultation portal (ENER) has a searchable data of consultations going back to 2008, with information on: which is the competent (responsible) body; 72 policy areas; type of document; release date; status of a document (whether it is open or closed for consultations); and short description. Furthermore, users can search by key word. Although institutions are obliged to publish reports on the consultation process, they publish them rarely or do not publish them at all, therefore the third criterion of the methodology is not met.

The ENER has the following options: to be notified if a public consultation is opened by a certain institution/sector; to submit comments directly in the text of the proposal; to see comments submitted by other participants in the public consultation process and comprehensive documentation published for each public consultation process, in addition to the text of proposals (mostly RIA sheets).

The only criterion that is lacking is the notification that feedback to submitted comments has been delivered. The Guidelines state that "Institutions are not obliged to respond to all comments that are submitted on the ENER. However, action guidelines for ENER users from state institutions, as well as the features of the system, have been set up in order to support the efforts that every posted comment gets the attention it deserves." Regarding proactiveness of informing on public consultations, there is no assessment by researchers, having in mind that consultations were not opened in the monitoring period.

Formally, for each legislative document, the process of consultations starts in the early stage by publishing a Notification on the commencement of preparation of the respective draft law on the ENER portal. However, a notification for commencement of the process is not published together with a concept/initial document or any text prepared, and there is no evidence on this early consultation in a form of minutes, or report. Notifications contain information on the following (the name of the law; responsible institution; short description on the problem tackled; the objective of the law; period for the preparation of the law; the manner of involvement of stakeholders (for example written opinions; participation in WGs, etc); announcements for public debates; email of the responsible person. The stages/versions of legislative documents are as follows: Draft text of the law accompanied by draft text of RIA and Proposal of the law accompanied by RIA proposal (the Proposal of the Law is the version which enters Government procedure).

28.2% of surveyed CSOs either "agree" (21.79%) or strongly agree" (6.41%) with the statement: "Formal consultation procedures provide conditions for an effective involvement of the public in policy-making processes". Around one third was neutral with 37.18%. 10.25% of surveyed CSOs "agree" (7.69%) or "strongly agree" (2.56%) with the statement: "Government institutions consistently apply formal consultation procedures when developing policies within their purview, and nor respondent "strongly agreed." More than a third was neutral (37.18%), and 43.59% disagreed or strongly disagreed. 12.82% of surveyed CSOs state that "often"(11.54%)" or "always" (1.28%) relevant government institutions consult CSOs at the early stages of policy and legislative processes (before any draft documents are produced)". "Sometimes" accounts for 29.49% of responses, whereas the majority believes that this happens rarely or never (51.28%).

21.8% of surveyed CSOs either "agree" (17.95%) or "strongly agree" (3.85%) with the statement: "In the public consultation processes, government institutions timely provide information on the content of legislative or policy proposals)". 24.35% of surveyed CSOs either "agree" (21.79%) or "strongly agree" (2.56%) with the statement: "In the public consultation processes, government institutions provide adequate information on the content of legislative or policy proposals".

12.82% of surveyed CSOs state that "often" (11.54%) or "always"(1.28%) relevant Ministries ensure that diverse interest groups are represented in the public consultation processes (for example women, minorities, trade unions, employers).

29.49% believe that this happens "sometimes", while 51.29% consider that this happens "rarely" (47,44%) or "never" (3.85%). 7.69% of surveyed CSOs state that it is either often (6.41%) or always (1.28%) that relevant ministries provide written feedback to consultees on whether their inputs are accepted or rejected. The majority believes this happens rarely (35.90%) or never (21.79%) - 57.69%.

11.53% of surveyed CSOs state either often (8.97%) or always (2.56%) to the question "In the consultation process, relevant ministries accept the feedback coming from my organisation". 25.64% believe this happens sometimes, and 44.87% believe that this practice happens rarely or never.

6.41% of surveyed CSOs state that often relevant Ministries conduct additional consultations with CSOs outside of the formal scope of public consultations, and no respondent believes this happens "always". More than half of the respondents stated "rarely" or "never" - 52.56%.

FG participants pointed out that in most of the cases the formal consultation procedures do not create preconditions for effective inclusion of the public in the policy-making process. There are positive examples: the MISA, the Ministry of Justice (in the process of preparing amendments to the Law on Associations and Foundations) and the Secretariat General (when drafting the Strategy for the Government's cooperation with CSOs). However, FG participants emphasized that it was important to note that most of the time it was about processes that were fully or partially financed by the donor community, so institutions then had no choice but to carry out the consultation process accordingly, because the donor monitors the process. CSOs are not included in a timely manner and do not have all the necessary documents and information.

FG participants do not think that the CSOs are consulted in the early stage of the process or are not included in timely manner and often lack the necessary documents and information. However, it should be emphasized that before starting the preparation of the new PAR Strategy, the MISA started comprehensive wide-scope consultations with CSOs, by issuing a call for inclusion of all interested CSOs.

FG participants agree that they either receive the materials too late or the materials are usually too extensive to read, or they are consulted at a stage when the documents are already drafted.

As regards the issue of whether institutions ensure the involvement of groups with different interests in the consultative processes (women's groups, minority rights groups, trade unions, employers' associations, etc.), some CSOs representatives consider that this is usually not the case, i.e., various stakeholders or those stakeholders on whom the particular document or legal solution would have impact are not invited. Thus, the assessment is that there is no comprehensiveness of the consultation process.

FG participants agree that Ministries (sponsors of policy and legislative proposals) usually do not provide written feedback on consultees' inputs/comments and that Ministries to some extent accept consultees' inputs/comments. In most of the cases Ministries do not hold constructive discussions on how the consultees' views have shaped and influenced a given policy and a final decision of the Government.

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PDC P11 I1: Civil society perception and scope of involvement in policymaking
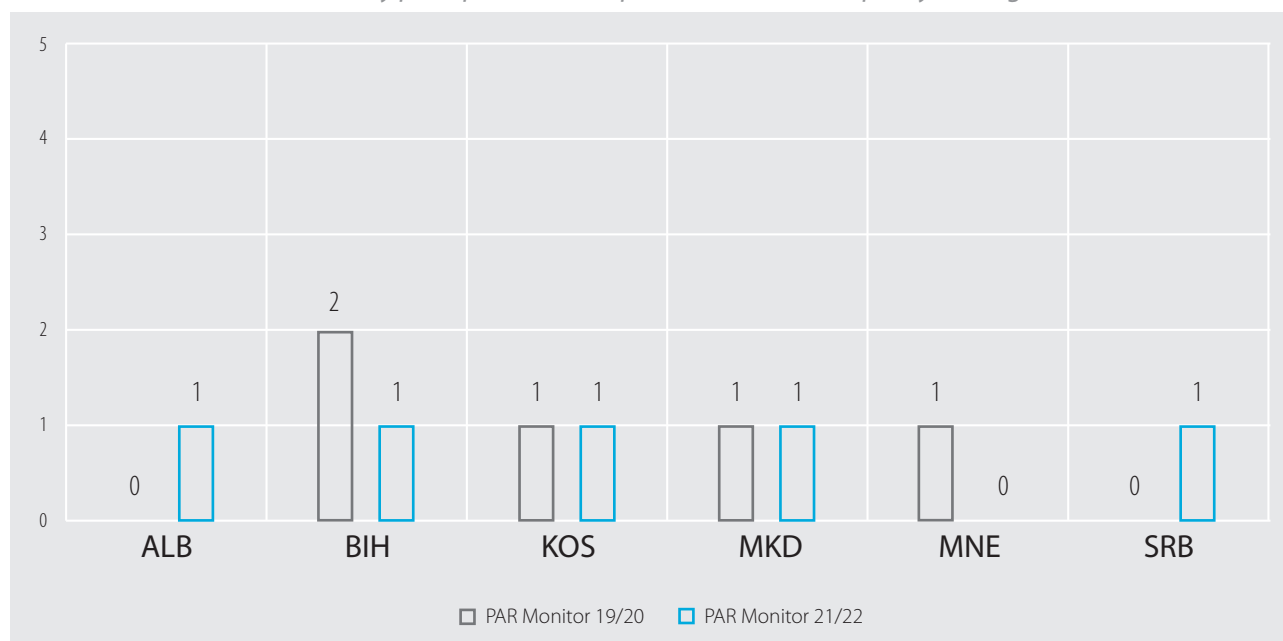
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: *www.par-monitor.org/.*

III.3 Summary results: Policy Development and Co-ordination

There is a significant setback from the last monitoring cycle in terms of the government regularly publishing information about its activities as the Government has not published annual work reports on 2020 and 2021, so researchers could not assess whether those reports are understandable, sufficiently detailed, including both quantitative data and qualitative information and assessments, or whether they include assessments of achievement of concrete results and gender segregated data. Consequently, there were no reports available in an open data format. There are also at least 4 national strategies published by the Government, for which there are no published report for the last full reporting year. There are also three current plans published by the Government and there are no reports regarding those plans.

The situation remains the same as during last cycle's monitoring regarding the governments publication of documents related to its sessions. The government still publishes agendas, press releases and minutes from its sessions, while it does not publish all of the documents which are adopted at its sessions. The government still communicated its decisions in a citizen friendly manner.

CSOs' perception of the Government reporting is similar with the previous monitoring cycle. Namely, CSOs disagree that the Government regularly reports to the public about the progress against set objectives and CSOs are not confident that official strategies determine actions in specific policy areas and that they incorporate adequate updates on the progress against the set of EU accession priorities.

Government produced documents contain regular referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in its adopted documents. This is a significant improvement from the monitoring cycle in 2019/2020 when only occasional referencing was found.

As during the last cycle, the government still conducts public consultations on policy documents in the central administration and on legislation in central administration. Regardless, the situation still remains worrying in terms of reporting on public consultations as such reports are still not published. The national e-portal for consultations, which contains advanced functionality options is functioning. Proactiveness on informing on public consultations is still lacking as well as conducting early public consultations.

■ Recommendations for Policy Development and Co-ordination

Tracking recommendations from the 2019/2020 PAR Monitor

Recommendation	Status	Comment
1. State institutions should prepare and appropriately publish reports about their strategic documents and plans.	Not implemented	When it comes to reports on Government strategies and plans, researchers found out that there are at least four national strategies with action plans published by the Government, for which there are no published reports for the last full reporting year. There are also three current plans published by the Government and there are no reports regarding those plans.

2. Government reports should contain relevant updates about the progress in attaining set EU accession priorities and they should be adequately integrated in all upcoming strategies. These strategies and documents should have an appropriate set of indicators, timelines, and objectives, which is not the case now.	Not implemented	
3. The access to the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia should be free of charge for all citizens.	Not implemented	Only the old editions are free of charge.
4. State institutions should adequately and thoroughly reference to evidence-based findings of CSOs in adopted policy documents, policy papers, *ex-ante* impact assessments, *ex-post* policy analyses, etc.	Partially implemented	Regarding referencing to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and ex-ante impact assessments, 23 documents were analysed and only one document had a reference to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs.
5. RIAs should be published under the adequate tab on the ENER, as well as on the websites of in-line Ministries.	Not implemented	
6. When preparing RIAs, the Government should consider CSOs findings and adequately refer to them in the documents.	Partially implemented	Government produced documents contain regular referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in its adopted documents. This is a significant improvement from the monitoring cycle in 2019/2020 when only occasional referencing was found. Namely, out of total 19 documents, referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs was found in 10 documents, which is 52% and according to the Methodology this is considered as a regular referencing. However, since there are 48% remaining, we assess this recommendation as partially implemented and we decided to be listed as a recommendation in the 2021/2022 PAR Monitor, as well.
7. State institutions should proactively and systematically provide feedback about evidence-based proposals and recommendations given by CSOs in the policy-making process.	Partially implemented	There is no evidence of early consultations taking place, in a form of minutes, or reports, which would contain feedback (comments, proposals, and/or suggestions and whether they have been accepted or not). The impact of public consultations cannot be measured since there have been no reports identified.

8. State institutions should consult CSOs in the early stages of the policy-making process to develop priorities and objectives in partnership with them, instead of inviting CSOs to debate and comment on already prepared documents.	Partially implemented	12.82% of surveyed CSOs state that "often"(11.54%)" or "always" (1.28%) relevant government institutions consult CSOs at the early stages of policy and legislative processes (before draft documents are produced)". 29.49% of surveyed CSOs think that this happens sometimes, whereas the majority believes this occurs rarely or never (51.28%).
9. State institutions should provide adequate and timely information to CSOs regarding the content of legislative or policy proposals. Relevant information should be provided to CSOs at least 20 days ahead.	Not implemented	The ENER does not contain such information.
10. State institutions should develop a systematic database of contacts to ensure that diversity of interests is represented in the consultation processes (women's groups, minority rights groups, trade unions, employers' associations, etc.), and should appropriately invite them to take part in the consultations by adequately understanding their area of interest.	Partially implemented	Usually only the ENER contains such information, but sometimes such information. Information can be found on websites of the Ministries as well.
11. Explanatory materials relevant to the legislation should always be made visibly available on the ENER and on websites of respective institutions. These materials should be prepared in a citizen friendly manner.	Partially implemented	

1. State institutions should prepare and publish reports on the level of implementation/realization of their strategic documents and plans.

2. Government reports should contain relevant updates about the progress in the achievement of EU accession priorities and they should be adequately integrated in all upcoming strategies. Strategies and documents should contain set of indicators, timeframe and fiscal implications.

3. The Government should publish on its web site the materials adopted on its sessions.

4. The access to the Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia should be free of charge for all citizens.

5. State institutions should adequately and thoroughly reference evidence-based findings by the CSOs in adopted policy documents, policy papers, ex-ante impact assessments, ex-post policy analyses, etc.

6. Explanatory materials (prepared in a citizen friendly manner) relevant to the legislation should be made visibly available on the ENER and on websites of respective institutions.

7. RIAs should be published under the adequate tab on the ENER, as well as on websites of in-line ministries.

8. The Government should consider CSOs findings and adequately refer to them in documents.

9. State institutions should proactively and systematically provide feedback about evidence-based proposals and recommendations given by CSOs.

10. State institutions should consult CSOs in the early stages of policy-making process to develop priorities and objectives in partnership with them, instead of inviting CSOs to debate and comment on already prepared documents.

11. State institutions should provide adequate and timely information (at least 20 days ahead) to CSOs regarding the content of legislative or policy proposals.

12. State institutions should develop criteria for participation of CSOs in the consultation process and accordingly create a database of contacts to ensure that diverse interests are represented in the consultations (women's groups, minority rights groups, trade unions, employers' associations, etc.), and should appropriately invite them to take part in the consultations according to their area of interest.

IV.

PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT

IV.1 WeBER indicators used in Public service and the human resources management and country values for North Macedonia

3PSHRM P2 I1: Public availability of statistics and reports about the civil service and employees in central state administration					
0	**1**	2	3	4	5

3PSHRM P2 I2: Performance of tasks characteristic for civil service outside of the civil service merit-based regime					
0	1	2	3	4	5

3PSHRM P3 I1: Openness, transparency and fairness of recruitment into the civil service					
0	**1**	2	3	4	5

3PSHRM P4 I1: Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference					
0	1	2	3	4	5

3PSHRM P5 I1: Transparency, clarity and public availability of information on the civil service remuneration system					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5

3PSHRM P7 I1: Effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the civil service					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5

■ **State of Play in the Public Service and the Human Resources Management and main developments since 2020**

The Law on Administrative Servants (LAS), the Law on Public Sector Employees (LPSE), special laws in different areas and the Law on Labour Relations and collective agreements regulate rights, obligations, and responsibilities of administrative servants (employment, promotion, mobility, salaries and remuneration, responsibility, professional development, evaluation, and termination of office) and classification and status of employees in the public sector. However, there are no provisions that will ensure *de facto* depoliticization of the public service. The Law on Top Management Service (LTMS) has been in the pipeline since 2019, which means that top managerial positions are still subject of a highly discretionary system, with holders of such positions being politically appointed and dismissed by applying unobjective criteria. The new Law will introduce merit-based and open competition in recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants. In the context of merit-based recruitment, demotion and dismissal of civil servants are adequately regulated, nevertheless recruitment processes are not sufficiently competitive.[46] Furthermore, the new LAS and LPSE that are now prepared, together with the LTMS, aim to improve the management of human resources across the administration and provide for greater assurance of merit-based recruitment, promotion, and dismissal, including at the senior management level.[47]

The utilisation of agencies for temporary employment is assessed as a deviation from the LPSE, since employees are not obliged to meet criteria and enter the public service without a public announcement, which is a breach of the merit-based principle. The administration still frequently uses procedures to convert temporary or service employment contracts into full-time employment contracts.[48]

The human resource management information system (HRMIS) has been more intensively utilized.[49] Although the system has various functionalities/modules, data have not been regularly entered and updated by institutions across the administration. The professional development process is not systematic, and the government still lacks a centralised database of all trainings offered by various institutions.[50]

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46 SIGMA Monitoring Report, 2021, North Macedonia, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
47 EC North Macedonia Report, 2022, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf
48 Ibid
49 Ibid
50 Ibid

The issue of integrity in the public sector is supported by a strong legislative framework. The scope of the integrity policy covers the entire public service, and the policy sets out clear objectives. The SCPC focuses its activities mainly on elected and appointed political officials and pays little attention to civil servants (with the notable exception of top managers, who are subject to similar regulations). Management of integrity of civil servants apparently falls under the responsibility of the MISA, (which on the other hand is not well positioned to deal with this issue), but there is no designated position tasked with this issue.[51]

Despite the fact that whistle-blower legislation is in place, there are no data on whether and how whistle-blowers are protected against retaliatory action.[52]

The remuneration system in the LAS is yet to be revised. Several institutions still maintain the practice of paying salary supplements although in lower amounts under the Law on Execution of the 2022 Budget.[53]

Albeit there is regular reporting on the public service by the Agency of Administration (AA) and the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA), in the reporting period AA's Annual Reports for 2020 and 2021 were not publicly available, since they were still in parliamentary procedure. The reports of the AA and of the MISA contain data on recruitments, disciplinary procedures, assessments, and trainings. However, these reports are mostly statistical and do not include analytical information regarding the quality and/or the outcomes of the public service.

■ What does WeBER monitor and how?

WeBER monitoring within the PSHRM area covers five SIGMA Principles and relates exclusively to central administration (centre of Government institutions, ministries, subordinated bodies and special organisations). In other words, monitoring encompasses central government civil service, as defined by the relevant legislation (primarily the Civil Service Law). The selected principles are those that focus on the quality and practical implementation of the civil service legal and policy frameworks, on measures related to merit-based recruitment, use of temporary engagements, transparency of the remuneration system, integrity and anti-corruption in the civil service. The WeBER approach was based on elements which SIGMA does not strongly focus on in its monitoring, but which are significant to the civil society from the perspective of transparency of the civil service system and government openness, or the public availability of data on the implementation of civil service policy.

The following SIGMA principles were selected for monitoring, in line with the WeBER selection criteria:

Principle 2: The policy and legal frameworks for a professional and coherent public service are established and applied in practice; the institutional set-up enables consistent and effective human resource management practices across the public service.

Principle 3: The recruitment of public servants is based on merit and equal treatment in all its phases; the criteria for demotion and termination of public servants are explicit.

Principle 4: Direct or indirect political influence on senior managerial positions in the public service is prevented.

Principle 5: The remuneration system of public servants is based on the job classification; it is fair and transparent.

Principle 7: Measures for promoting integrity, preventing corruption and ensuring discipline in the public service are in place.

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51 SIGMA Monitoring Report, 2021, North Macedonia, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
52 EC North Macedonia Report, 2022, https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2022-10/North%20Macedonia%20Report%202022.pdf
53 Ibid

Monitoring of these principles combines the findings of SIGMA's assessment within specific sub-indicators. In addition, monitoring is based on WeBER's expert review of legislation, documents and websites, including collection and analysis of government administrative data, reports and other documents searched for online or requested through freedom of information (FoI) requests. To create a more balanced qualitative and quantitative approach, research included the measuring of perceptions of civil servants, CSOs and the wider public by employing perception surveys. Finally, the data collection includes semi-structured face-to face-interviews and focus groups with relevant stakeholders, such as senior civil servants, former senior civil servants, and former candidates for jobs in civil service, representatives of state institutions in charge of the human resource management policy.

Surveys of civil servants and CSOs in the six Western Balkan administrations were implemented using an online survey tool, in April - August 2021.[54] In most of the administrations, the civil servant survey was disseminated through a single contact point, located in respective national institutions responsible for the overall civil service system.[55] The CSO survey, was distributed through existing networks and platforms of civil society organisations, with large contact databases, but also through centralised points of contact, such as government offices in charge of cooperation with the civil society.[56] In order to ensure that the CSO survey targeted as many organisations as possible in terms of their type, geographical distribution, and activity areas, and to thus ensure its representativeness as much as possible, additional boosting was done where needed. Finally, the public perception survey included computer-assisted personal interviewing of the public (aged 18 and older) in the Western Balkan Region, in the period 05- 30 May 2021.[57] In all three surveys, WeBER applied uniform questionnaires throughout the region and disseminated them in local languages, ensuring an even approach to the survey implementation.

WeBER uses six indicators to measure the five principles mentioned above. Under the first indicator, WeBER monitors the public availability of official data and reports about the civil service and employees in the central state administration. The monitoring under the second indicator includes the extent to which widely applied temporary engagement procedures undermine the merit-based regime. Openness, transparency, and fairness of recruitment in the civil service, as a particularly critical aspect of HRM in the public administration due to its public facing character, is examined by applying the third indicator. The fourth indicator places focus on the prevention of direct and indirect political influence on senior managerial positions in the public service, while the fifth indicator analyses whether information about the civil service remuneration is transparent, clear, and publicly available. Finally, under the sixth indicator, WeBER examines the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the civil service.

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54 The surveys were administered through an anonymous, online questionnaire. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). In North Macedonia, the civil servants' survey was conducted from 01.06 to15.08. 2021, and the CSO from 04.04. to 01.06.2021

55 For North Macedonia, the survey sample was N=581. The base for questions within Principle 2 was n=547 respondents, Principle 3 had n=581 respondents, Principle 4 had n=517 respondents, Principle 5 had n=511 respondents and Principle 7 had n=497 respondents.

56 For North Macedonia, the survey sample was N=94. The base for questions was n= 70 respondents.

57 Perceptions are explored using a survey targeting the public (aged 18 and older) in six Western Balkan countries. The public perception survey employed a multi-stage probability sampling and was administered combining computer-assisted web and telephone interviewing (CAWI, and CATI), using a standardized questionnaire with omnibus surveys in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia from 5 to 30 May 2021. For North Macedonia, the margin of error for the total sample of 1000 citizens is ± 3.15%, at the 95% confidence level.

IV.2 WeBER monitoring results

PRINCIPLE 2: THE POLICY AND LEGAL FRAMEWORKS FOR A PROFESSIONAL AND COHERENT PUBLIC SERVICE ARE ESTABLISHED AND APPLIED IN PRACTICE; THE INSTITUTIONAL SET-UP ENABLES CONSISTENT AND EFFECTIVE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES ACROSS THE PUBLIC SERVICE

WeBER indicator 3PSHRM P2 I1: Public availability of statistics and reports about the civil service and employees in central state administration

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. The Government keeps reliable data pertaining to the public service	2/4	2/4	2/4
E2. The Government regularly publishes basic statistical data pertaining to the public service	4/4	4/4	4/4
E3. Published statistical data include data on employees other than full-time civil servants in the central state administration	0/4	2/4	2/4
E4. Published statistical data on public service is segregated based on gender and ethnic structure	1/2	1/2	1/2
E5. Published official data is available in open data format(s)	0/1	0/1	0/1
E6. The Government comprehensively reports on the public service policy	0/4	0/4	0/4
E7. The Government regularly reports on the public service policy	0/2	0/2	0/2
E8. Reports on the public service include substantiated information concerning the quality and/or outcomes of the public service work	0/2	0/2	0/2
E9. Data and information about the public service are actively promoted to the public	2/2	2/2	2/2
Total score	9/25	11/25	11/25
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[58]	1		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[59]		2	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[60]			2

According to SIGMA: "the central HRMIS (the Register) is still underperforming. While very robust and complete on paper, the database still lacks important data from various public bodies, despite the legal obligation to submit that data. Consequently, the `2020 Annual Report – Register of Public Employees is only partially based on the central HRMIS and is mainly statistical and not analytical, encompassing only limited dimensions. There has been a clear improvement in the quality of the policy documents and in the monitoring of their implementation.[61] The MISA offers more support to the HR units, such as providing manuals and organizing network meetings, but support remains insufficient. The current use of a HRMIS shows that, although data is collected by the institutions, there is not yet a data-driven culture in the construction of the HR strategy, either at the central level or in the public bodies themselves."[62]

Data on civil servants are available per institution and type of institution in annual reports from the Register published by the MISA. These reports are published regularly on annual basis on the MISA website. They are published on a visible part of the website under the section "Documents", and they are three clicks away.

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58 Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-9 points = 1; 10-13 points = 2; 14-17 points =3; 18-21 points = 4; 22-25 points = 5
59 ibid
60 ibid
61 SIGMA Monitoring Report, 2021, North Macedonia, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
62 Ibid

The LPSE introduces the competence of the MISA to establish and maintain a single register of all employees in public sector institutions.[63] The Public Sector Employee Register is part of the HRMS. Data contained in the Annual Report are a result of the exchange of data from records of the MISA, the Employment Agency, the Public Revenue Office, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and of the Health Insurance Fund.

Pursuant to Article 2, paragraph (1) of the LPSE, the Register includes persons employed at: state and local government bodies and other state bodies established in accordance with the Constitution and law and - institutions that perform activities in fields of education, science, health, culture, labour, social protection and child protection, sports, as well as those performing other activities of public interest determined by law, and organized as agencies, funds, public institutions and public enterprises established by the Republic of North Macedonia or by municipalities, by the City of Skopje, as well as by municipalities in the City of Skopje.

In this Report, the MISA also informs the public about the number of employees at state-owned companies. The latest 2021 report does not contain the number of temporary employed staff. Previous reports from the Register contained the number of temporary employments with the explanation that such employees do not have the status of employees in the public sector and are not part of the analyses contained in the report. In July 2022, the team preparing this Report requested that data from the MISA, which stated that the Agency of Employment could provide such data. However, the Agency of Employment also was not able to provide such data.

The 2021 report presents detailed information on the ethnic and gender structure of employees and presents crosscutting data where possible, per type of institution. Data on the ethnic structure is provided per institution of the central administration too. However, as in previous reports, data are not fully segregated as they are not divided per rank and position. The latest report for 2021 is not published in an open data format. The 2021 report from the Register was promoted on the MISA website.

On 31 March 2022, the MISA published the 2021 Report on their website,[64] their Facebook page,[65] as well as on the Government website.[66] The information about the Report was published also on the Public Broadcasting Service website.[67]

On 8 April 2021, the 2020 Report from the Register was published on MISA's website,[68] on the Government website,[69] as well as on MISA's Facebook page.[70]

Reports, which contain the element's methodology key issues on administrative servants are delivered by the AA and the MISA. That data is published by the AA in its annual reports, but the AA has not published the reports for the last two years- 2020 and 2021. The AA reports on the following key issues in its Annual Reports: recruitments (job announcements, selection procedures and exams); disciplinary procedures and decisions; corruption/integrity issues and measures (this is under disciplinary procedures and measures considering that a breach of the Ethical Code is a disciplinary offence, as well as other types of professional misconduct). Furthermore, Annual reports contain information on activities improving the work of the AA, measuring user satisfaction, etc. However, the AA has not published its Annual Working Reports for 2020 and 2021.

Freedom of information request (FOI) regarding AA's Annual Working Reports for 2020 and 2021 was sent to the AA. In the answer received, the AA states that the reports are not available/published since they are still in parliamentary procedure. According to the Law, the report is sent to the Parliament on 31 March of the current year.

63 Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 27/14, 199/14, 27/16, 35/18 and 198/18 and Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia No. 143/19 and 14/20
64 https://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/3947
65 https://www.facebook.com/mioa.gov.mk/posts/348048017365248
66 https://vlada.mk/node/28287
67 https://mrt.com.mk/node/71477
68 https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/3288
69 https://vlada.mk/node/24850
70 https://www.facebook.com/mioa.gov.mk/posts/pfbid0EpMywp8xXUG46NtpMavFzPjgzC6UMyhxRGPTYT13LFFpqLZZSNqUWRJ4tZ1Rz8mrl

On the other hand, according to the LAS, the MISA should report on performance assessments and trainings. Namely, the MISA is responsible for the Register of performance assessments. A FOI for the 2019 Performance Assessment Report from the Register was sent, because it is not available online, following which the Report was received. The Report contains statistical data on the performance assessment process. The 2020 and 2021 Performance Assessment Reports from the Register of performance assessments are not published (they were requested under FOI sent on 30 June 2022, but they have not been received).

The AA publishes "Bulletins of monthly activities"[71] where, *inter alia,* it lists completed trainings for that month (example in May 2021[72]). The 2021 and 2022 Annual Programmes of Generic Trainings and the Annual Programmes of training on administrative management were published.[73]

According to SIGMA "overall, the value for the indicator 'Adequacy of the policy, legal framework and institutional setup for professional human resource management in public service' is 3. The indicator value has risen from 2 since 2017, because the MISA has enhanced the quality, implementation, and monitoring of public service policies. The MISA formally plays a more important role regarding civil service policy, although the strategic use of human resource (HR) data remains weak."[74]

■ **How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?**

Indicator 2PSHRM P2 I1: Public availability of statistics and reports about the civil service and employees in the central state administration
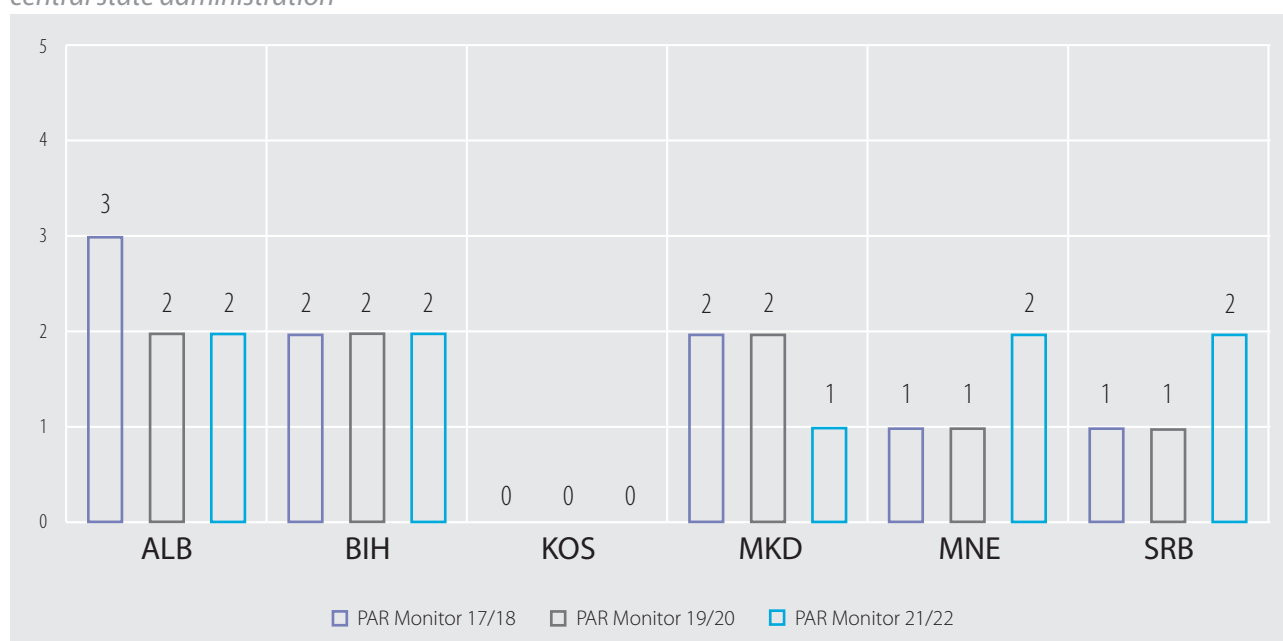
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

71 https://www.aa.mk/bilteni_na_mesecni_aktivnosti_2021.nspx
72 https://bit.ly/39JB6mf
73 https://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/tr-documents
74 SIGMA Monitoring Report, 2021, North Macedonia, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf

WeBER indicator 2PSHRM P2 I2: Performance of tasks characteristic for civil service outside of the civil service merit-based regime

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. The number of temporary engagements for performance of tasks characteristic of civil service in the central state administration is limited by law	0/4	0/4	0/4
E2. There are specific criteria determined for the selection of individuals for temporary engagements in the state administration.	0/4	0/4	0/4
E3. The hiring procedure for individuals engaged on temporary contracts is open and transparent	0/4	0/4	4/4
E4. Duration of temporary engagement contracts is limited	2/4	2/4	2/4
E5. Civil servants perceive that temporary engagements in the administration are an exception	0/2	0/2	0/2
E6. Civil servants perceive that performance of tasks characteristic of civil service by individuals hired on a temporary basis is an exception	0/2	0/2	0/2
E7. Civil servants perceive that appointments on a temporary basis in the administration are merit-based	0/2	0/2	0/2
E8. Civil servants perceive that the formal rules for appointments on a temporary basis are applied in practice	1/2	1/2	0/2
E9. Civil servants perceive that individuals hired on a temporary basis go on to become civil servants after their contracts end	0/2	0/2	0/2
E10. Civil servants perceive that contracts for temporary engagements are extended to more than one year	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	3/28	3/28	6/28
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[75]	0		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[76]		0	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[77]			1

According to Article 22, paragraph (1) of the LPSE, the head of the public institution may fill a position by concluding a contract for fixed term employment on the following grounds: replacement of a temporarily absent employee, who is absent for more than one month; temporarily increased workload; seasonal work; unpredictable short-term activities that occur during the performance of the predominant activity of the employer; project work or filling in special positions/special advisors in the offices of the President of the Republic Macedonia, the Speaker of the Assembly, the Vice Speaker of the Assembly, the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers and the Secretary General of the Government.

Article 22, paragraph 11 prescribes the maximum allowed number of vacancies for special advisors that can be filled (item 6 of paragraph 1 above) at the offices of the: President of the Republic Macedonia (5), Speaker of the Parliament (5), the Vice Speakers (VS) of the Parliament (one for each VP), the Prime Minister (15), Deputy- Prime Ministers (3 for each DPM), Ministers (3 for ministries having over 100 employees and 2 for ministries having under 100 employees and one for each Minister without a portfolio) and the Secretary General of the Government (3).

The LPSE does not prescribe limitations on employments under items 1, 2, 3, 5 of paragraph 1 of Article 22. However, it would be reasonable not to set limitations for cases under item 1, since this provision refers to the replacement of temporarily absent employee.

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75 Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-9 points = 1; 10-14 points = 2; 15-19 points =3; 20-24 points = 4; 25-28 points = 5
76 ibid
77 ibid

According to Article 6 of the LPSE (the principle of expertise and competence) employment procedure in the public sector procedure is conducted by publishing an announcement, whereby in a transparent, fair, and competitive selection procedure, the most professional and competent candidate for the job will be selected. Article 17, paragraph 2 of the LPSE stipulates that pieces of secondary legislation regulating the systematization of jobs define general and special conditions and the job description, i.e., the description of duties and working tasks for each job position. However, the LPSE does not refer to criteria for temporary engagement.

Again, the deviation was made with employments via private agencies for temporary employments, given that employees are not obliged to meet criteria and enter the public service without a vacancy announcement, which is a breach of the merit-based principle. The review of the legislation did not show any reference to criteria for temporary engagement. In terms of temporary engagements through agencies specifically, no evidence was found about criteria that agencies employ. Pieces of secondary legislation on the systematisation of jobs and special laws set forth criteria for employment of administrative servants on permanent basis, but no evidence was found that the same conditions are applied regarding temporary employment.

However, the overall the system is not transparent. There is a limit only at the institutional level, and the criterion allows this limit to change every year ("more than 1% of the total number of employees at the end of the previous year"). Finally, Article 9 of the Law on Transformation into Regular Employment, allows the authority to engage more people temporarily, as well as for longer periods when approved by the Ministry of Finance. Overall, the system is not transparent and does not ensure the 10% limitation.

The survey has shown the following:

- 15% (15.92% in 2019/2020) of respondents - civil servants answered "agree" (12%) while (3%) answered that they "strongly agree" with the statement "hiring of individuals on temporary basis (on fixed-term, service and other temporary contracts) is an exception in my institution."

- 16% (17.04% in 2019/2020) answered "rarely" (8%) while (8%) answered "never or almost never" to the statement "Individuals who are hired on a temporary basis perform tasks which should normally be performed by civil servants.", 22% (25.10% in 2019/2020) answered "often" (13%) while (9%) answered "always" to the statement "When people are hired on a temporary basis, they are selected based on qualifications and skills."

- 30% (31.28% in 2019/2020) answered "often" (19%) while (11%) answered "always or almost always" to the statement " formal rules for hiring people on temporary basis are applied in practice."

- 24 % of civil servants answered "rarely" (13.30%) while (3.56%) answered "never or almost never" to the statement "individuals hired on temporary basis go on to become civil servants after their temporary engagement."

- 11% answered "rarely" (6%) while (5%) answered "never or almost never" to the statement "such contracts get extended to more than one year."

According to the information received in answer to FOIs from sampled institutions the findings are as follows:

The Secretariat General (SG) has temporary employments via the LPSE and conditions and criteria are listed in the public announcements and via agencies for temporary employments without announcements). However, the SG has not provided for the content of announcements; the Ministry of Economy (ME) has temporary employments only via the LPSE by publishing announcements with general and specific conditions that have to be fulfilled and it has sent the content of the announcements; the MISA has temporary employments only via the LPSE by publishing announcements with conditions that have to be fulfilled;[78] the Ministry of Local Self-Government (MLDSP) has no temporary employments; the Ministry of Education and Science has 23 temporary employments only under the LPSE by publishing announcements with conditions that have to be fulfilled;[79] the Ministry of Justice has no temporary employments; the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) has temporary employments only under the LPSE by publishing announcements with general and

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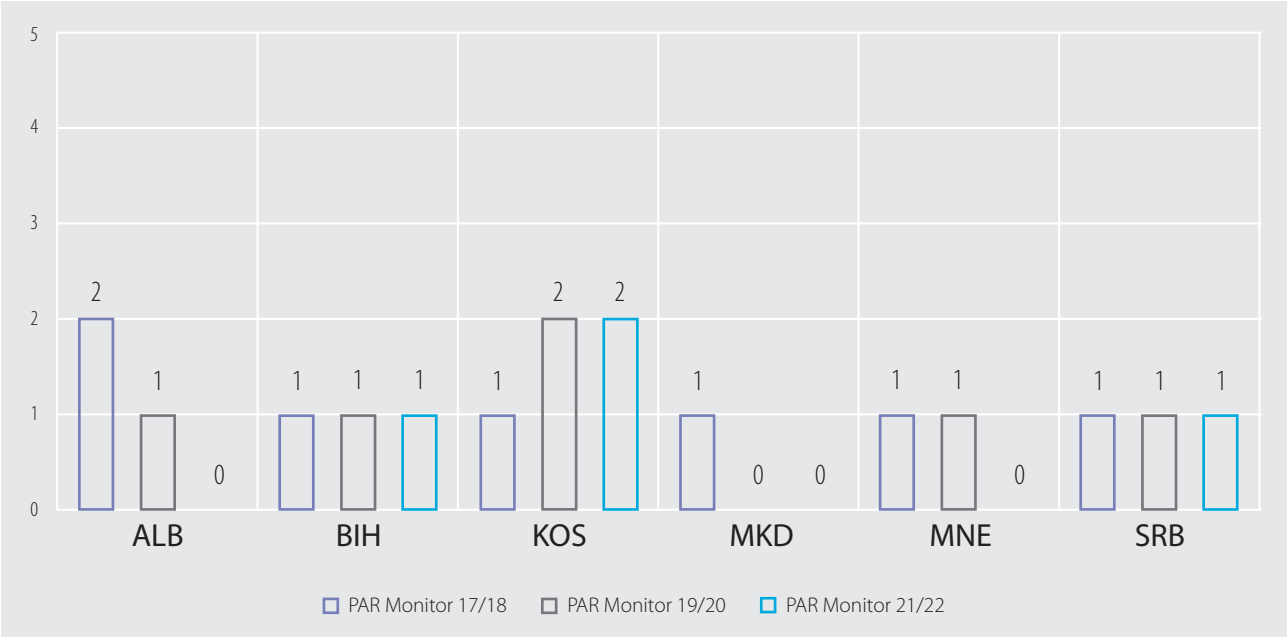78 Conditions and criteria are contained in the Rulebook on systematization of jobs https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/Pravilnik_za_sistematizacija_MIOA_2020_konsolidiran.pdf;

79 Conditions and criteria are contained in the Rulebook on systematization of jobs https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Pravilnik%20za%20sistematizacija%20na%20rabotni%20mesta%20vo%20MON%202021.pdf

specific conditions that have to be fulfilled and the MLSP sent the content of the announcements; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs has 15 temporary employments through an agency for temporary employment; the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning has no temporary employments; and the Secretariat for European Affairs has 5 temporary employments only under the LPSE by publishing announcements with general and specific conditions that have to be fulfilled; the SEA sent the content of the announcements.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator 2PSHRM P2 I2: Performance of tasks characteristic for civil service outside of the civil service merit-based regime

Legend: □ PAR Monitor 17/18   □ PAR Monitor 19/20   □ PAR Monitor 21/22

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

WeBER indicator PSHRM P3 I1: Openness, transparency and fairness of recruitment into the civil service

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Information about public competitions is made broadly publicly available	4/4	4/4	4/4
E2. Public competition announcements are written in a simple, clear and understandable language	2/4	2/4	2/4
E3. During the public competition procedure, interested candidates can request and obtain clarifications, which are made publicly available	0/4	0/4	0/4
E4. There are no unreasonable barriers for external candidates, which make public competitions more easily accessible to internal candidates	0/2	0/2	0/2
E5. The application procedure imposes minimum administrative and paper-work burden on candidates	0/4	0/4	0/4
E6. Candidates are allowed and invited to supplement missing documentation within a reasonable timeframe	0/4	0/4	0/4
E7. Decisions and reasoning of the selection panels are made publicly available, with due respect to the protection of personal information	2/4	2/4	2/4
E8. Information about annulled announcements is made publicly available, with reasoning provided	0/4	0/4	0/4
E9. Civil servants perceive the recruitments into the civil service as based on merit	0/2	0/2	0/2
E10. Civil servants perceive the recruitment procedure to ensure equal opportunity	1/2	1/2	0/2
E11. The public perceives the recruitments done through the public competition process as based on merit	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	9/36	9/36	8/36
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[80]	1		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[81]		1	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[82]			1

Public announcements for recruitment of administrative servants, pursuant to the LAS, are published on the website of the AA, as well as in at least three daily newspapers, one of which is a newspaper published in the language spoken by at least 20% of citizens, who speak an official language other than the Macedonian language. Which newspapers the announcement will be published in depends on the institution that has submitted the request for publication. The deadline for applying for the announced positions is between 15 and 20 days, as of the day of publishing in the daily newspapers. Internet portals also re-publish announcements, namely they copy them from the AA site.[83]

The interviewee from the AA pointed out that public announcements are publicly available and, in addition to being published in three daily newspapers, one of which is published in the language spoken by at least 20% of the citizens who speak an official language other than the Macedonian, they are also published on the AA website.[84] The interviewee pointed out that some of the requested clarifications for the selection procedure of candidates for employment are published in the FAQ section of the AA website, which is currently updated, as well as in the Instructions for creating a profile and applying under an employment advertisement. In the announcement itself, the essential clarifications of the employment procedure are stated. Candidates can request additional clarifications from a person authorized to contact the Department for the selection of candidates for employment via a designated telephone number and email: kontakt@aa.mk, published on the AA website, or by submitting a request for clarification in writing to the AA archives or in person at the AA premises.[85]

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80 Conversion of points: 0-6 points = 0; 7-12 points = 1; 13-18 points = 2; 19-24 points = 3; 25-30 points = 4; 31-36 points = 5
81 ibid
82 ibid
83 National PAR Monitor - North Macedonia, 2019/2020, https://epi.org.mk/post/17326?lang=en
84 Interview with a representative from the AA (conducted on 20 July 2022)
85 Ibid

Two of the former candidates for civil service job mentioned that public announcements are publicly available having in mind that they are published on the AA site, as well as other online portals and social networks.[86] The third interviewed candidate pointed out that public announcements are not widely publicly available, having in mind that the legal requirement is to publish them in the public media, but those are mostly printed newspapers. Considering that printed newspapers are read mainly by retirees who are no longer active on the labour market, the interviewee believes that advertisements are not easily accessible to people who would like to apply. Sometimes some websites download and re-publish the announcements, but this should happen at the initiative of the AA or the institution on the behalf of which the announcement is published, and not at the initiative of a random portal. The fourth interviewee pointed out that announcements are not adequately broadly available.

Two former candidates for civil service job mentioned that announcements are written in a simple and understandable language, but regarding the professional exam for an administrative servant it is not clearly specified which questions should be taken for a certain level. The third interviewed candidate pointed out that the language of the announcements is simple and clear, but only within what the law stipulates, while the fourth candidate thinks that the announcements are more user friendly for the younger generation, maybe the older generation will have difficulties in understanding conditions set out in announcements.

In the context of clarification of public announcements, one of the former candidates for civil service job mentioned that the only way to receive a clarification is to call the phone number stated on the AA website. One of the former candidates pointed out that that he had no experience of asking for clarifications. The third former candidate said that receiving clarifications was possible if someone answered the phone. The fourth candidate pointed out that clarifications could be found in the FAQ section or by phone.[87]

The situation with public announcements in sampled institutions is as follows:

- In the period from 1 January 2021 to 31 December 2021 the Ministry of Economy published 31 announcement (8 annulled and 23 completed) Nos: 382/2021, 383/2021, 384/2021, 385/2021, 388/2021, 389/2021, 390/2021, 391/2021, 392/2021, 393/2021, 394/2021, 395/2021, 396/2021, 397/2021, 566/2021, 569/2021, 570/2021, 571/2021, 572/2021, 589/2021, 590/2021, 591/2021, 592/2021, 645/2021, 646/2021, 647/2021, 675/2021, 677/2021, 678/2021, 691/2021 and 736/2021; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs published 2 announcements (2 completed), Nos. 244/2021 and 726/2021; the Ministry of Finance published 4 announcements (4 completed), Nos. 115/2021, 121/2021, 669/2021 and 673/2021; the MISA published 1 announcement (1 completed), No. 378/2021 and the Ministry of Justice published 2 announcements (2 completed). Nos. 119/2021 and 644/2021.[88] However, the legislation does not contain provisions regarding obtaining clarifications.

According to information given by the AA in answer to a sent FOI, during the public announcement and the employment procedure candidates can request information from a designated person at the Sector for selection of candidates at the phone number +38923094223 and by email kontakt@aa.mk, published on the AA website, then by submitting a written request by mail (post office) and personally at the AA archive. In addition, requested clarifications are published in the FAQ section on the AA website https://www.aa.mk/prasanjavrabotuvanje.nspx.

According to Article 36 of the LAS: "Candidates for administrative officers fill in the electronic application" on the website of the AA, where the applicant must create a personal profile: (https://goo.gl/bALtWd). The mandatory requirements are determined, such as proof of citizenship; medical certificate; internationally recognized certificate of knowledge of one of the three most commonly used languages of the European Union (English, French, German); certificate/diploma for completed education; proof of an unspecified penalty ban on performing a profession, activity or duty; while paragraph 3 of the same Article 36 states that there are also optional documents that the candidates can attach, such as: recommendations from previous employers; certificates of

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86 Interviews with 4 former candidates for civil service jobs were conducted on 15, then on 20 and 21 July 2022.
87 Interviews with 4 former candidates for civil service jobs were conducted on 15, 20 and 21 July 2022
88 Information from 5 public announcements for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2021 obtained from the AA under a FOI: 1. Ministry of Economy, 2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 3. Ministry of Information Society and Administration, 4. Ministry of Finance, 5. Ministry of Justice (FOI answer received on 19 September 2022)

attended training, professional certificates for other professional qualifications and specializations, papers and publications; an internationally recognized certificate of knowledge of one of the six official languages at the United Nations, etc.[89]

The interviewee from the AA pointed out that that there are no unreasonable barriers to external candidates, which makes public announcements more accessible to candidates who have the status of administrative officers and that in order to apply for a public announcement published on the AA website, it is necessary to fill out a profile with appropriate information and documents (personal data, education, work experience, work competencies and other data that are in the interest of the job applied for). When filling in data on the profile, it is mandatory to attach the corresponding documents in a scanned format that confirm that the conditions required are met.[90]

As a proof of fulfilment of general conditions, the following documents must be attached: citizenship certificate and medical certificate for employment purposes. The following documents are needed for education related requirements, diplomas from the last acquired degree of education, previous degrees of education (certificates for every year of secondary education), diplomas of master's degree or doctorate, etc., as well as the recognition of equivalence document for candidates, who have completed their education abroad. The following is to be attached under the required work experience section: employment history issued by the Employment Agency (this does not apply to people who do not have work experience), while under the work competencies section: computer certificates for office work and the necessary certificates for proficiency in foreign languages (if required in the published advertisement) are to be attached ; In the other data section the following is attached: all other forms of vocational education, diplomas or certificates, various recommendations, certificates of volunteer experience, statements or other documents that they possess, which are of interest regarding the position in question.[91]

As regards attached documents that require additional clarification, it is defined which documents should be additionally submitted in Phase 3 – verification of the reliability of evidence and interview (for example, a full medical certificate if the candidate has attached only one page of the medical certificate, proof of education average grade if it is stated in the application, but not entered in the diploma, the employment history issued by the Employment Agency, etc.[92]

Three former candidates for civil service jobs noted that there were unreasonable barriers, while one of them believes that there are no barriers and all of them believe that the procedure is burdensome.

The legislation does not contain provisions relating to submitting additional evidence. The interviewee from the AA pointed out that the candidate who has been asked to submit additional evidence is sent a notice by e-mail: oglasi@aa.mk, which states which additional documents he/she should submit, and which are also designated in the Record/Minutes of the Administrative Selection.

Article 14, paragraph 10 of the LAS stipulates that "the exam results of all candidates ranked according to their exam scores shall be published on the website of the AA and immediately sent to the e-mail addresses of all candidates who took the exam". However, there is no reasoning for the decision given, though decisions on the selection are available on the website of the AA. Reasoning is not provided in the decisions either, just a formal statement on the selection, available on the AA site.[93]

Former candidates confirmed that the selection decisions are available on the website of the AA and that the reasoning is not provided in the decisions; instead, there is only formal statement on the conducted selection.

Article 19-a, paragraphs 5 and 6 of the LAS stipulate the grounds for annulment of public announcements, but there is no provision on the reasoning and its public availability.

89 Law on Administrative Servants, https://www.aa.mk/content/pdf/Drugi%20dokumenti/ZAS/zakoni/zakon_za_administrativni_sluzhbenici_2020.pdf
90 Interview with a representative from the AA (conducted on 20 July 2022)
91 Interview with a representative from the AA (conducted on 20 July 2022)
92 Ibid
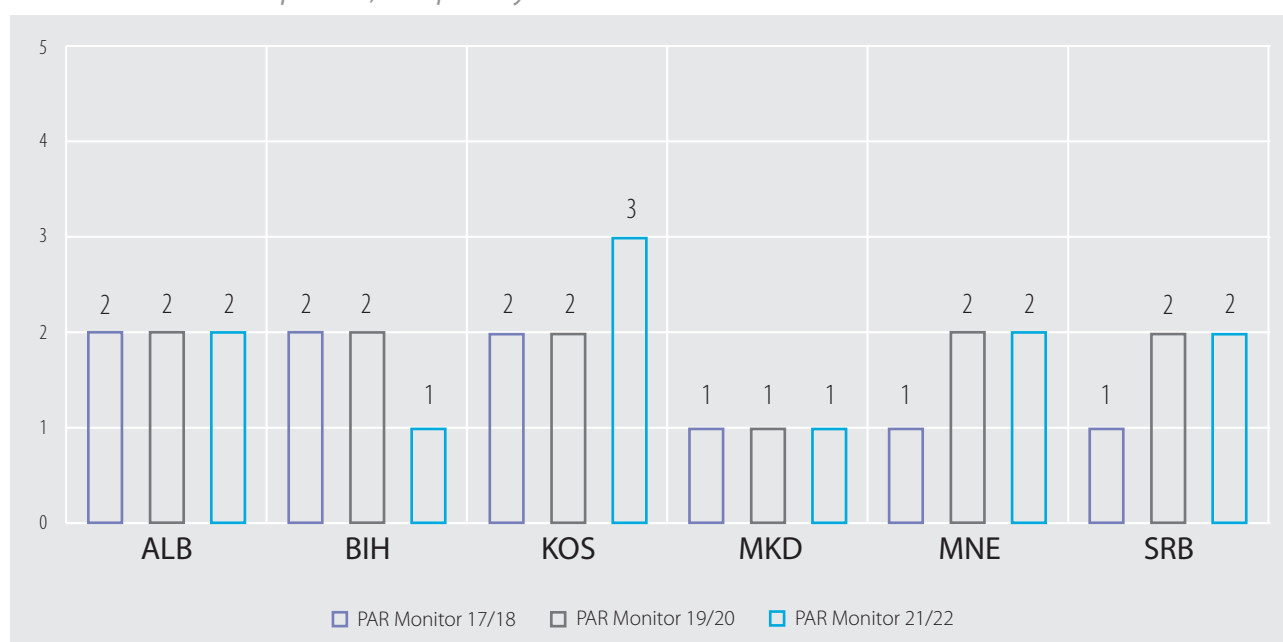93 http://aa.mk/odluki.nspx; http://aa.mk/rang-listi.nspx

According to information received under a FOI sent to the AA, the AA annuls announcements upon request of the institution for whose needs the advertisement was published, according to Article 54 of the Law on General Administrative Procedure. In the course of 2020, 54 public announcements were annulled, and in 2021, 136 announcements were annulled.

The results of the survey are as follows:

- 29% of the surveyed civil servants answered "agree" (22%) or "strongly agree" (7%) to the statement "Civil servants in my country's administration are recruited on the basis of qualifications and skills". 26% of respondents disagreed (14%) or strongly disagreed (12%) with the statement "To get a civil service job in my institution, one needs to have connections".

- 37% (39.83% in 2019/2020) of the civil servants answered agree (23%) or strongly agree (14%) with the statement "Recruitment procedure for civil servants in my country's administration ensures equal opportunity for all candidates."

- 19.08% of surveyed citizens either (20.9% in 2019/2020) agreed with the statement "public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit (i.e., best candidates are enabled to get the jobs)." More than two thirds of citizen believe that this is not the case - 76.52%.

◼ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PSHRM P3 I1: Openness, transparency and fairness of recruitment into the civil service

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: *www.par-monitor.org*

WeBER indicator PSHRM P4 I1: Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2022	Scores 2017/2018
E1. The Law prescribes competitive, merit-based procedures for the selection of senior managers in the civil service	0/2	0/2	2/2
E2. The law prescribes objective criteria for the termination of employment of senior civil servants	0/2	0/2	0/2
E3. The merit-based recruitment of senior civil servants is efficiently applied in practice	0/4	0/4	0/4
E4. Acting senior managers can by law, and are, only appointed from within the civil service ranks for a maximum period limited by the Law	0/4	0/4	0/4
E5. Ratio of eligible candidates per senior-level vacancy	0/4	0/4	4/4
E6. Civil servants consider that the procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs	0/2	0/2	0/2
E7. CSOs perceive that the procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs	0/2	0/2	0/2
E8. Civil servants perceive that senior civil servants are appointed based on political support	0/2	0/2	0/2
E9. Existence of vetting or deliberation procedures on appointments of senior civil servants outside of the scope of the civil service legislation	0/2	0/2	0/2
E10. Civil servants consider that senior civil servants would not implement and can effectively reject illegal orders of political superiors	0/2	1/2	0/2
E11. Civil servants consider that senior civil service positions are not subject of political agreements and "divisions of the cake" among the ruling political parties	0/2	0/2	0/2
E12. Civil servants perceive that senior civil servants are not dismissed for political motives	1/2	1/2	0/2
E13. Civil servants consider the criteria for dismissal of senior public servants to be properly applied in the practice	0/2	0/2	0/2
E14. CSOs consider senior managerial civil servants to be professionalised in practice	0/2	0/2	0/2
E15. Civil servants perceive that senior civil servants do not participate in electoral campaigns of political parties	0/2	0/2	0/2
E16. Share of appointments without a competitive procedure (including acting positions outside of public service scope) out of the total number of appointments to senior managerial civil service positions	0/4	0/4	0/4
Total score	1/40	2/40	6/40
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[94]	0		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[95]		0	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[96]			0

According to SIGMA "the discretionary appointment and dismissal of senior managers without competition and assessment of competences remain a problem. The Government is aware of it and is preparing a new law that could drastically improve the state of play. The representation of women in senior civil service remains high."[97]

"Overall, the value for the indicator 'Merit based recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants' is 0, the same as in 2019 but lower than in 2017. The main reason for the reduction in value is the instability in senior civil service positions due to discretionary dismissals in 2020."[98]

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94 Conversion of points: 0-7 points = 0; 8-14 points = 1; 15-21 points = 2; 22-28 points =3; 29-34 points = 4; 35-40 points = 5
95 ibid
96 ibid
97 Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, 2021, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
98 Ibid

The LAS does not prescribe any merit-based procedures for employment/competitive procedures for senior management officials/state secretaries.[99] Their appointment is a discretionary right of the head of the institution and there is no prescribed selection procedure (announcement, terms, conditions, etc.). Furthermore, the LAS does not provide for the selection of the best candidate or one of the three best candidates for state secretary, because he/she is not selected under a public announcement but is appointed by the head of the institution. The LAS does not prescribe objective criteria for termination of employment of senior officials. The only provision in this respect stipulates that the term of office ends with the term of office of the official who appointed him/her.[100]

In an approach consistent with the last two monitoring reports, group B1 (state advisors) and group B2 (heads of sectors) positions were taken into account in assessing this sub-indicator: 44% of the given positions are occupied by women. However, only a little less than 20% of positions in the A group (secretaries) are occupied by women".[101]

Considering the fact that the head appoints state secretaries without a prescribed selection procedure, the principle of merit cannot be reliably applied.[102] The legislation does not provide for a possibility of appointing acting senior managers.[103]

The discretionary appointment and dismissal of senior managers remains the weakest area. Based on the LAS or on the sector legislation, even if there are formal public calls for some agencies, the entire system of senior managerial positions is not competitive, and merit based. The Government is preparing LTMS to overhaul the system.[104]

21 % of surveyed civil servants either "agreed"(16%) or "strongly agreed" (5%) with the statement "Procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs in my institution" while 48% "disagree" with this statement.

10% of surveyed civil servants replied either "rarely" (4%) or "never or almost never" (6%) to the statement "Senior civil servants are at least in part appointed thanks to political support". Large number of civil servants (54%) replied either "often" (26%) or "always or almost always" (28%).

34% of surveyed civil servants replied either "disagree" (24%) or "strongly disagree" (10%) to the statement "In my institution, senior civil servants would implement illegal actions if political superiors asked them to do so".

26% of surveyed civil servants replied either "agree" (21%) or "strongly agree" (5%) to the statement "Senior civil servants can reject an illegal order from a minister or another political superior, without endangering their position".

19% of surveyed civil servants answered either "disagree"(10%) or "strongly disagree"(9%) with the statement "Senior civil service positions are subject of political agreements and "divisions of the cake" among the ruling political parties".

37% of surveyed civil servants replied either "rarely" (11%) or "never or almost never" (27%) to the statement "in my institution senior civil servants get dismissed for political motives". 32% of them replied that they did not know. 10% of surveyed civil servants replied, "always or almost always" to the statement "Formal rules and criteria for dismissing senior civil servants are properly applied in practice". 46% of them did not know the answer. 9% of surveyed civil servants replied, "never or almost never" to the statement "In my institution, senior civil servants participate in electoral campaigns of political parties during elections". 19% of them think that this happens "often", and additional 14% that it happens always, or almost always.

A total of 8.57% of surveyed CSOs "agree (7.14%)" or "strongly agree (1.43%)" with the statement "Procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs". This is a slight increase from the 1.47% of surveyed CSOs in the 2019/2020 monitoring cycle. On the other hand, the percentage of CSOs that disagree with this statement is the same as in the previous monitoring cycle – 80%.

99 National PAR Monitor-North Macedonia 2019/2020, https://epi.org.mk/post/17326?lang=en
100 Ibid
101 SIGMA/OECD Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, 2021, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
102 National PAR Monitor-North Macedonia 2019/2020, https://epi.org.mk/post/17326?lang=en
103 Ibid
104 SIGMA/OECD, Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, 2021, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf

7.14% (8.82% in 2019/2020) of CSOs replied that they agree with the statement "Senior managerial civil servants are professional in practice". Two thirds of surveyed CSOs-68.58%, disagree with the statement ("disagree – 38.57%" or "strongly disagree – 30.00%"), while 20% were neutral.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PSHRM P4 I1: Effective protection of senior civil servants' position from unwanted political interference
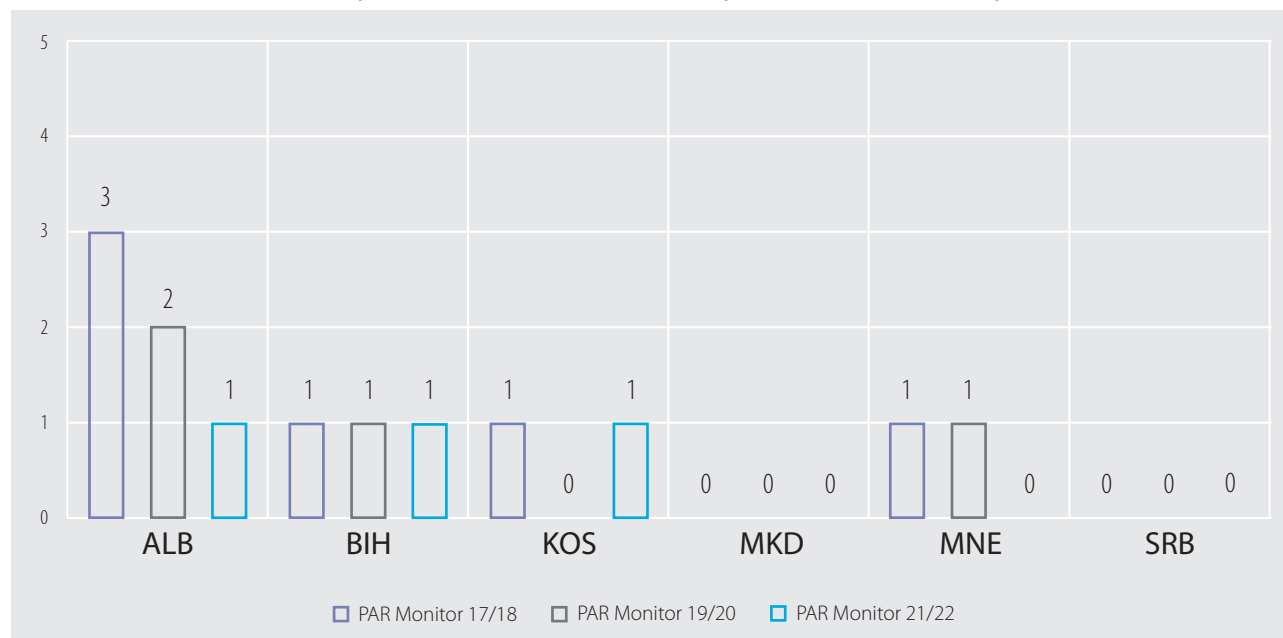
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

PRINCIPLE 5: THE REMUNERATION SYSTEM OF PUBLIC SERVANTS IS BASED ON THE JOB CLASSIFICATION; IT IS FAIR AND TRANSPARENT

WeBER indicator PSHRM P5 I1: Transparency, clarity and public availability of information on the civil service remuneration system

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. The civil service remuneration system is simply structured	4/4	4/4	4/4
E2. The civil service salary/remuneration system foresees limited and clearly defined options for salary supplements additional to the basic salary	2/4	2/4	2/4
E3. Information on civil service remuneration system is available online	2/6	4/6	4/6
E4. Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of remuneration information are available online	1/2	1/2	1/2
E5. Discretionary supplements are limited by legislation and cannot comprise a major part of a civil servant's salary/remuneration	2/4	2/4	2/4
E6. Civil servants consider the discretionary supplements to be used for their intended objective of stimulating and awarding performance, rather than for political or personal favouritism	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	11/22	13/22	13/22
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[105]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[106]		3	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[107]			3

105 Conversion of points: 0-3 points = 0; 4-7 points = 1; 8-11 points = 2; 12-15 points =3; 16-19 points = 4; 20-22 points = 5
106 ibid
107 ibid

Article 86 of the LAS stipulates that the salary of an administrative servant is composed of the general and the exceptional component. Article 87 sets forth a clear structure of the general salary components (part of salary for level of education; position supplement; and working experience supplement) with tables for relevant categories. The part of salary for degree of education, acquired by the administrative servant is valued as follows: Level of Qualifications VI A, 240 ECTS points or completed VII/1 degree – 200 points; Level of Qualifications VI B or 180 points according to ECTS – 175 points; Level of Qualifications V 1, 60 to 120 ECTS points, or post-secondary education -150 points; Level of Qualifications IV A, 240 points according to ECVET or MKSOO - 100 points

The part of the salary for the position to which the administrative servant is deployed is valued as follows: A1 – secretary - first level – 845 points; A2 – secretary - second level -706 points; A3 - secretary – third level – 661 points; A4 – secretary - fourth level -596 points A5 – secretary - fifth level -506 points; B1 - managerial administrative servant - first level - 516 points; B2 - managerial administrative servant - second level - 496 points; B 3 - managerial administrative servant - third level - 406 points; B 4 - managerial administrative servant - fourth level- 346 points; C1 - expert administrative servant - first level -281 points; C2 - expert administrative servant - second level -246 points; C3 - expert administrative servant - third level - 231 points; C 4 - expert administrative servant - fourth level - 201 points;D1 - assistant-expert administrative servant - first level - 196 points; D 2 - assistant-expert administrative servant - second level -181 points;D3 - assistant-expert administrative servant - third level -166 points; D4 - assistant-expert administrative servant - fourth level -159 points;

The part of the salary for working experience of administrative servants is valued at the amount of 0,5% of the parts of the salary for level of education and for position, for each year of service, up to 20% at the most.

The exceptional component (Article 89) is comprised of: salary supplement for special working conditions; salary supplement due to adjustment to the labour market; and/or salary supplement for night work, work in shifts and overtime work.

Article 90 clearly defines and limits the amounts of supplements for special working conditions (two types):1. work at high-risk jobs and 2. work at an Office of high official.

The administrative officer, who in the course of performance of his/her tasks is subject to high risk to his/her life and health shall have depending on the type of risk, the right to salary supplement in the amount of 10-30% of the amount of his basic salary, according to the law.

An employee at the Office of a high official shall have due to the specific duties and working assignments and 24-hour availability to the public official in whose office he/she is working, the right to salary supplement for work in such an Office, in the amount of 10-30% of the amount of his/her basic salary.

Article 91 of the LAS defines the conditions under which labour market adjustment supplement can be requested. It does not set an upper limit and partially regulates the conditions having in mind that part of the Article (paragraph 3) has been annulled by the Constitutional Court, and paragraph 2 refers to the annulled paragraph 3 and it is still in the Law, which is an omission, which should be overcome under the next amendments to the LAS. However, this Article vaguely elaborates the issue of labour market adjustments and has never been applied.

Article 92, paragraph 1 sets forth five additional types of supplements: 1. for overnight work - The salary supplement for work at night per hour is valued in the amount of 35% of the amount of the basic salary per hour, 2. for work in shifts - The salary supplement for work in shifts per hour is valued in the amount of 5% of the amount of the basic salary per hour, 3. Supplement for work on weekends, 4. for work on a public holiday; and 5. for overtime work, while also setting out rules for award of these supplements and their upper limits.

An administrative servant who was engaged to work under conditions referred to in paragraph (1), subparagraphs 3, 4 and 5 shall be entitled to as many free hours, i.e., days, which are equal to the hours for which he/she was engaged to work outside regular working hours. He/she shall be entitled to use the free hours, i.e., days of the current month until the end of the next month, following the month for which he/she was engaged. In case the administrative servant was not allowed to use the free hours, i.e., days referred to in paragraph (6) of this Article, he/she shall be paid a salary supplement in the amount of 35% of the amount of the basic salary per hour.

The same Article clearly states that these supplements are not mutually exclusive, which is not a shortcoming having in mind that these supplements are cumulative. (for example, one can work in shifts and that could be during a weekend and on a public holiday).

The salary components are expressed in points, and Article 88 defines the manner of calculating, i. e. determining the value of a point. The Government decision on the value of the point for calculation of the salary of civil servants is a publicly available document published in the Official Gazette.

The remuneration system is assessed as simply structured since it consists of a table with clearly defined points for degrees of education, position supplement and working experience supplement with tables for relevant categories, as well as a clear and limited set of rules and formulas for calculating supplements (salary supplement for special working conditions; salary supplement due to adjustment to the labour market; and/or salary supplement for night work, work in shifts and overtime work) expressed as a percentage of the basic salary.

According to SIGMA "another issue is related to the lack of availability of information concerning remuneration, which could be easily solved. Information about the average total pay (per level or grade) is not available on the MISA website or on websites of the AA or the MoF). The same is true for salary scales, which are not publicly displayed. The availability of data about the payroll is as problematic as socio-demographic data concerning the civil service in its entirety. For instance, data on the potential gender gap is not available."[108]

However, public announcements contain information on the salary for each announced working post[109]. Job announcements on websites contain information on the net salary, as well as job announcement samples received in reply to a FOI sent to the Agency of Administration.

The LAS is available online at MISA's website and stipulates that the salary of an administrative servant is composed of the basic and the exceptional component. This Law also envisages a clear structure of basic salary components, with tables for relevant categories. Salary components are expressed in points, and Article 88 defines the manner of determining the value of a point.

According to SIGMA "the legislative framework regarding the remuneration system is rational, based on job classification, with reasonable seniority progression and limited performance-related bonuses. The basic job classification system does not take into account certain differences in the levels of responsibility. Transparency on salaries is insufficient due to the lack of easily available information on actual salaries and salary progression. On average, salaries in public administration are competitive with the private sector, according to statistical data."[110]

In addition to the formal remuneration system of civil servants, there are groups of officials and public bodies that benefit from various types of salary supplements created using different instruments, as analysed in a study published by a civil society organisation.[111] The latest supplements were established in July 2021 by amending the Law on the Execution of the Budget that opened the door to awarding salary supplements of up to 30% of the basic salary to employees due to the specificity of the work and work tasks and increased volume of work.[112]

Another new supplement of 15% may be awarded to employees, who work in Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA)-related positions and even if intended to solve specific challenges, such as retention difficulties, fragment these supplements distort the overall pay system. The award criteria are not sufficiently clear and objective, creating thus opportunities for their misuse and they could have negative unintended consequences for the entire public service.[113]

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108 SIGMA/OECD Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, 2021, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Rpublic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
109 Law on Labor Relations, https://mtsp.gov.mk/content/pdf/trud_2017/pravilnici/16,11-%D0%B0%D0%BA%D0%BE%D0%BD%D0%A0%D0%B0%D0%B1%D0%9E%D0%B4%D0%BD%D0%BE%D1%81%D0%B8.pdf
110 SIGMA/OECD Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, 2021, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
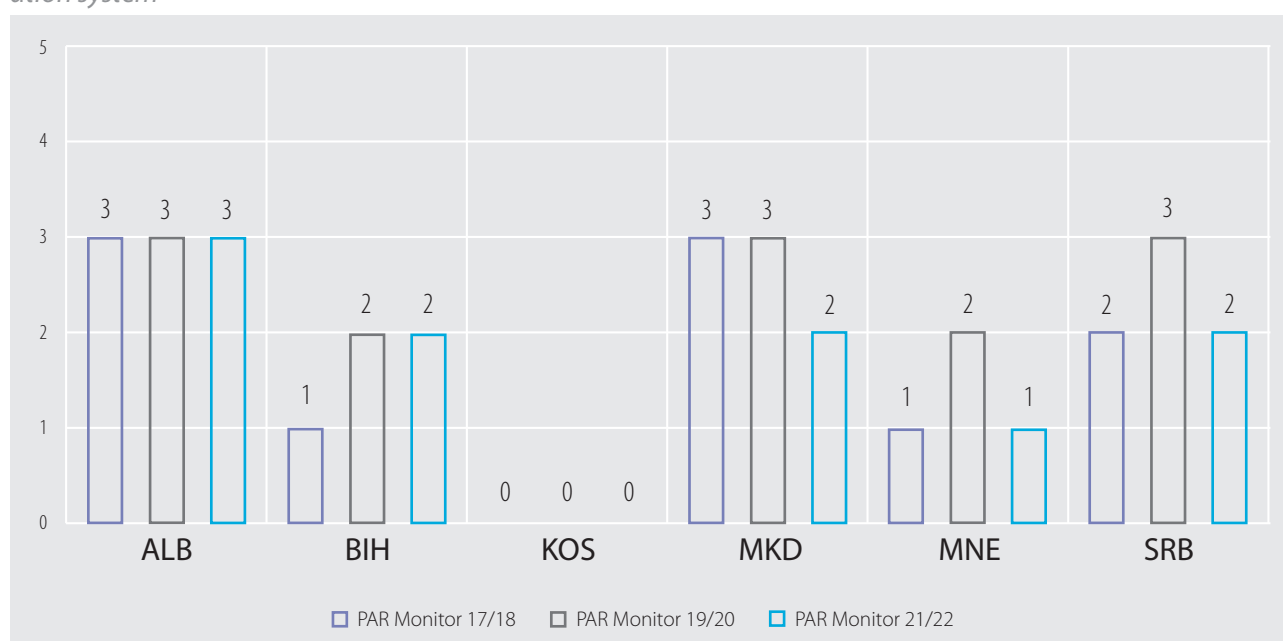111 ibid
112 ibid
113 ibid

In that regard, a FoI was sent to the MF[114] on the number of employees (at the budget users of the central government) which have the right to a salary supplement up to 30% of the amount of the basic salary, in accordance with the Law on the Execution of the Budget; the basis on which that right has been exercised (specificity of work, work tasks and increased workload), as well as the criteria for exercising the right on allowance. The MF answered that each budgetary user should be asked individually in order to get data about administrative servants that were awarded those supplements/allowances. In addition, the MF stated that their task is to approve the salary, only regarding the allowed monthly right to salaries according to the approved limit/funds.

In this context, 1, 6% of the respondents-civil servants strongly agreed and 16% agreed (20% chose not to respond to this question, by opting "don't know/ don't want to respond") and 19% of the respondents answered, "never or almost never", whereas 17% responded with "rarely" (20% opted for "don't know/ don't want to respond").

■ **How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?**

Indicator PSHRM P5 I1: Transparency, clarity, and public availability of information on the civil service remuneration system

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

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114 FOI was sent on 16.08.2022

WeBER indicator PSHRM P7 I1: Effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the civil service

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are formally established in the central administration	4/4	4/4	4/4
E2. Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are implemented in the central administration	2/4	2/4	2/4
E3. Civil servants consider the integrity and anti-corruption measures as effective	1/2	1/2	0/2
E4. CSOs consider the integrity and anti-corruption measures as effective	0/2	0/2	0/2
E5. Civil servants consider that the integrity and anti-corruption measures are impartial	0/2	0/2	0/2
E6. CSOs consider that the integrity and anti-corruption measures in the state administration are impartial	0/2	0/2	0/2
E7. Civil servants feel they would be protected as whistle blowers	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	8/18	8/18	6/18
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[115]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)[116]		2	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)[117]			1

According to SIGMA the area of integrity in the public sector is supported by a strong legislative framework. The Law on Prevention of Conflict of Interest (LPCI), as well as the LAS, the Code of Conduct of Civil Servants and the Criminal Code contain various regulations instrumental in the fight against corruption. The SCPC is the main player in this regard.[118]

The SCPC focuses its activities mainly on elected and appointed political officials and pays little attention to civil servants (with the notable exception of top managers, who are subject to similar regulations). The management of the integrity of civil servants apparently falls under the responsibility of the MISA, but nobody at this Ministry is in charge of this issue.

SIGMA noted that: "the regulation on the disciplinary system presents some weaknesses that could allow unfair use by the authorities on one side and a sense of impunity among potential offenders on the other. The percentage of disciplinary sanctions confirmed by the courts remains low, which indicates procedural weaknesses and/or unfair disciplinary sanctions."[119]

The LPCI and the SCPC provide a sound legislative and institutional framework, mainly focused on the political authorities. There is no civil service-specific integrity policy. According to the Balkan Barometer, bribery in the public sector remains comparatively high." As a consequence of the lack of specific focus on civil servants, in practice, such investigations are nearly non-existent, with no case of secondary employment, post-employment or improper use of gifts and benefits by a civil servant investigated in 2020. No programme of inspection has been established on these topics, and the SCPC mainly investigates based on delations. As mentioned under E1 the management of integrity of civil servants apparently falls under the responsibility of the MISA, but nobody at this Ministry is in charge of this issue.

31% of surveyed civil servants (same as in the 2019/2020 monitoring cycle) answered "agree" (26%) or "strongly agree" (5%) with the statement "integrity and anti-corruption measures in place in my institution are effective in achieving their purpose." 29% (30% in 2019/2020 monitoring cycle) of surveyed civil servants answered "agree" (23%) or "strongly agree" (6%) with the statement "integrity and anti-corruption measures in place in my institution

115 Conversion of points: 0-3 points = 0; 4-6 points = 1; 7-9 points = 2; 10-12 points =3; 13-15 points = 4; 16-18 points = 5
116 ibid
117 ibid
118 SIGMA/OECD Monitoring Report, North Macedonia, 2021, https://www.sigmaweb.org/publications/Monitoring-Report-2021-Republic-of-North-Macedonia.pdf
119 ibid

are impartial." 9% of surveyed civil servants (8.49% in 2019/2020) answered "agree" (6%) or "strongly agree" (3%) with the statement "if I were to become a whistle-blower, I would feel protected." On the other hand, 42% of respondents disagreed with this statement. 12.86% of surveyed CSOs (16.18% in 2019/2020) "agree" (agree-11.43%; strongly agree-1.43%) with the statement "In general, the staff working on administrative service delivery is trained on how to treat vulnerable groups". Two thirds (65.71%) of surveyed CSOs disagree with the statement.

Only 10% of surveyed CSOs (4.41% in 2019/2020) "agree" with the statement "In general, the staff working on administrative service delivery is trained on how to treat vulnerable groups". Two thirds (71.43%) of the surveyed CSOs disagree with the statement.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PSHRM P7 I1: Effectiveness of measures for the promotion of integrity and prevention of corruption in the civil service
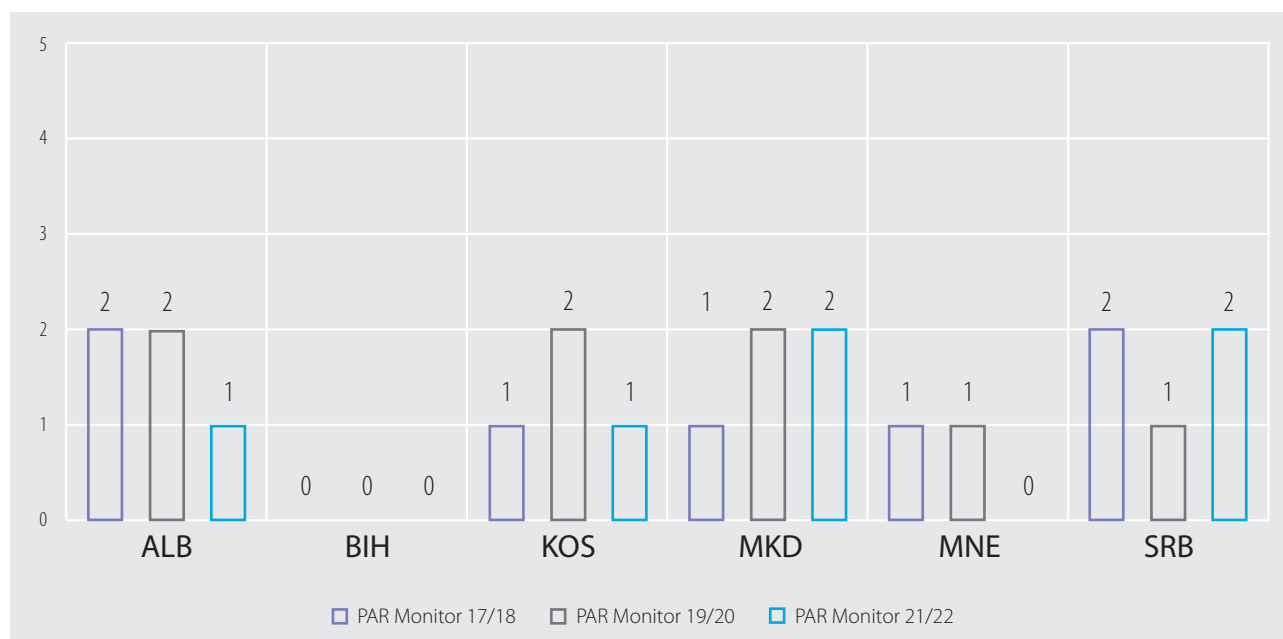
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

IV.3 Summary results:
Public service and the human resources management

The LPSE introduces and defines the competence of the MISA to establish and maintain a single Register of all employees in public sector institutions, as part of the HRMIS. Data contained in the Report are a result of the exchange of data among the MISA, the Employment Agency, the Public Revenue Office, the Pension and Disability Insurance Fund and the Health Insurance Fund. However, as assessed in the latest Sigma 2021 Report the Register is still underperforming. While very robust and complete on paper, the database still lacks important data from various public bodies, despite their legal obligation to submit such data.

Even though there is quite comprehensive reporting about the public service there are no publicly available reports about the entire public service policy, including for 2020. Moreover, reports do not include substantiated analytical information concerning the quality and/or outcomes of the public service.

The utilisation of agencies for temporary employments is a deviation from the LPSE, considering that employees are not obliged to meet criteria and enter the public service without announcements, which is a breach of the merit-based principle. The Law on Transformation into Regular Employment allows the authority to engage more people temporarily, including for longer periods, when approved by the Ministry of Finance.

Public announcements for administrative servants are written in a clear and understandable language. The selection procedure is organised in three stages, but more than 5 documents are requested to be attached with the online application (before the first stage - administrative selection procedure). The procedure is burdensome, and it discourages external candidates.

Senior civil service positions are under a highly discretionary system, based on political appointment and dismissal. The MISA prepares a new LTMS, which will introduce the merit-based principle and open competition in the recruitment at and dismissal from top management positions.

The remuneration system is simply structured since it consists of a table with clearly allocated points for degrees of education, position supplement and working experience supplement, with tables for relevant categories, as well as a clear and limited set of rules and formulas for calculating supplements but it has to be revised and adjusted.

The LPCI and the SCPC ensure a sound legislative and institutional framework, but there is no civil service-specific integrity policy. The management of integrity of civil servants should be responsibility of the MISA, but there are no designated people in charge of this issue.

▪ Recommendations for Public Service and the Human Resources Management

Tracking the 2019/2020 PAR Monitor Recommendations

Recommendation	Status	Comment
The Report presenting official data on public service employees should contain (analytical) data on temporary employments.	Not implemented	The Report does not contain such classification. In addition, temporary employments are not part of the Report.
Obligatory reports deriving from the LAS should be produced and published and should contain qualitative and comparative data.	Partially implemented	Even though there is quite comprehensive reporting about the public service (on 5 out of 7 key issues, as defined by the indicator methodology), there have been no publicly available reports about the entire public service policy for three consecutive years prior to the measurement, including for 2019. Moreover, the reports do not include substantiated information concerning the quality and/or outcomes of the public service.
The MISA should publish reports on career development (promotions and demotions) of public service employees.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor
The MoF should publish reports on salaries (and awarded bonuses) of public service employees.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor
The number of temporary engagements for performance of tasks characteristic of the civil service in the central state administration should be limited by law and its usage should be revised.	Partially implemented	The overall system is not transparent. There is no single limit at the level of the administration, but only at the institutional level, and the criterion allows this limit to change every year ("more than 1% of the total number of employees at the end of the previous year"). The Law on Transformation into Regular Employment allows the authority to engage more people temporarily, and for longer periods, when approved by the Ministry of Finance.
The LPSE should determine specific criteria (as those under the LAS) for the selection of individuals to be employed in the state administration under fixed-term contracts.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor
The Law on Agencies for Temporary Employment should be revised and aligned with the provisions of the LPSE, or it should be annulled, and the procedure for temporary employments should be conducted under the LPSE.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor

Announcements for employment in the civil sector should contain information about a focal point for clarification requests.	Not implemented	There is no such information in the announcements.
The approach and language of the announcements should be more citizen friendly, explaining what the position in question entails and should elaborate upon activities and work of the institution/body/sector hiring, i.e., there should be a job description.	Not implemented	There is no such information in the announcements.
In order to avoid excessive administrative and financial burden on candidates, only essential documents should be demanded in the first stage (CV, motivation letter, and optionally a recommendation letter).	Not implemented	There is no such information in the announcements.
Medical certificates and other ancillary documents should not be required at any stage of the process.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
Documents such as proof of citizenship should be acquired by institutions *ex officio*.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
When publishing the decision on the selection procedure, the AA should offer a comprehensive reasoning as to why a certain candidate has been selected, or not.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
The appointment of category A (Secretaries) employees should be revised. There is ample room for political influence considering that the Minister/head of Institution appoints the Secretary, i.e., a new Law on Top Management Service should be adopted.	Partially implemented	The LTMS should be drafted and adopted.
The LAS vaguely defines the conditions under which labour market adjustment supplements can be requested. Having in mind that part of the Article (paragraph 3) has been annulled by the Constitutional Court, and paragraph 2 refers to the annulled paragraph 3, which is still in the LAS, this shortcoming should be corrected under the amendments to the LAS.	Not implemented	A new LAS should be adopted.
The effectiveness of integrity and anticorruption measures should be continuously analysed and monitored.	Partially implemented	Integrity and anti-corruption policies for the civil service are formally established. However, their implementation is lacking.

1. The Report presenting official data on public service employees should contain (analytical) data on temporary employments.

2. Obligatory reports required under the LAS should be prepared and published and should contain qualitative and comparative data.

3. The MISA should publish reports on career development (promotions and demotions) of public service employees.

4. The MoF should publish reports on salaries (and awarded bonuses) of public service employees.

5. The number of temporary engagements should be limited by law and its usage should be revised.

6. The procedures to convert temporary employment contracts into permanent contracts should be abolished and the Law on transformation should be terminated.

7. The LPSE should determine specific criteria (as those in the LAS) for the selection of individuals to be employed in the state administration.

8. The Law on Agencies for Temporary Employment should be revised and aligned with the provisions of the LPSE, or it should be annulled.

9. The announcement for employment in the civil sector should contain information about a focal point for clarification of requests.

10. The approach and language of the announcements should be more citizen friendly and should contain a job description.

11. Only essential documents (such as CV and a cover letter) should be demanded in the first stage of the selection process in order to avoid excessive administrative and financial burden for candidates.

12. Medical certificates and other supplementary documents should not be required or should be provided ex officio (for example proof of citizenship).

13. The AA should offer a comprehensive reasoning as to why a certain candidate has been selected, or not when publishing decisions in the selection procedure.

14. The appointment of category A employees (secretaries) should be revised since there is significant room for political influence, i.e., the new LTMS should be adopted.

15. The remuneration system/system of salaries set forth under the LAS should be revised.

16. The effectiveness of integrity and anticorruption measures should be analysed and monitored continuously.

V.

ACCOUNTABILITY

V.1 WeBER indicators used in Accountability and country values for North Macedonia

ACC_P2_I1: Civil society perception of the quality of legislation and practice of access to public information					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5
ACC_P2_I2: Proactive informing of the public by public authorities					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5

◾ State of Play in Accountability and main developments since 2020

In the two-year period from the last WeBER report, the situation has mainly remained the same. The Law on Free Access to Public Information[120] constitutes the main pillar of the legal framework in this area. Under this Law, the Commission for protection of the right to free access to information of public character was transformed into the APRFAP, which gave this institution wider-scope powers such as, allowing it to institute misdemeanour proceedings. The Agency for the Protection of the Right to Access to Public Information (APRFAPI) has issued a Manual for Proactive Publication of Information[121], the purpose of which is to inform citizens about the main goals and benefits of the Law on Free Access to Public Information (LFAPI), as well as to offer them guidelines on their exercise of the right of access to public information. The APRFAPI has also set up a special portal (embedded on the website of the Agency itself) for applicants for free access to public information.[122] In addition, the Agency has prepared a Manual for young people on the exercise of the right to free access to public information.[123]

According to the 2022[124] semi-annual report on the implementation of the PAR Strategy, 50% of planned activities were implemented, while in 2021[125], 67% of envisaged activities were implemented.

During this period, the Government completed the project for reorganization of the state administration[126], while preparing a functional analysis[127], which produced more recommendations and findings relating to all areas of public administration. Three ministries were selected,[128] where initial findings and recommendations contained in the functional analysis will be piloted. In parallel with this process, a new law on the organization of state administration bodies is drafted, because it has been established that there is an ambiguity regarding the status of bodies within ministries.[129]

In terms of open data information, the 2018-2020 Open Data Strategy expired, and a new one is not planned to be developed, while the MISA continued to manage the open data portal[130]. As stated in the previous Report, much work remains to be done in this respect, as many institutions have one or even zero datasets published, and the number of institutions/organizations is still low[131].

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120 Law on free access to public information, Official Gazette of Republic of North Macedonia, May 2019 https://bit.ly/3LTwPvu
121 Handbook on Proactive Publication of Information, Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information https://bit.ly/3jfH4j2
122 Portal for Free Access to Public Information https://slobodenpristap.mk/
123 Manual for young people on the exercise of the right to free access to public information https://bit.ly/3BfyFBV
124 Fifth semi-annual report on the implementation of the action plan of the Strategy for reforms in public administration, MISA, September 2022, https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/rja/petti_polugodishen_izveshtaj_za_srja.pdf
125 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022 for the period January - December 2021, https://bit.ly/3LPtpdc
126 At the 9th session of the Council for Public Administration Reform, the first proposal for the reorganization of the state administration bodies, agencies and inspection services at the central level was presented, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 13 July 2021, https://vlada.mk/node/25916
127 Synthesis Report on State Reorganisation, Authors- Dace Gruberte – horizontal functional analysis Aleksandrs Antonovs – state reorganisation Gunter Kube – visualisation, 03 November 2021, https://bit.ly/3LV31Ph
128 MISA, Ministry of Transport and Communication and the Ministry of Agricultruee, Forestry and Water Management
129 Commission Staff Working Document- North Macedonia 2022 Report' (European Commission, 12 October 2022 https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2021-10/North-Macedonia-Report-2021.pdf
130 Open Data Portal https://data.gov.mk/
131 74 institutions/organizations out of 140

◼ What does WeBER monitor and how?

The SIGMA principle covering the right to access public information is the only principle presently monitored in the area of accountability, yet this principle looks at both the proactive and reactive aspects of the issue.

Principle 2: The right to access public information is enacted in legislation and consistently applied in practice.

This principle is of the utmost significance in increasing the transparency of administrations and holding them accountable by civil society and citizens, as well as in safeguarding the right-to-know by the public at large as a precondition for better administration. The WeBER approach to this principle does not assess regulatory solutions embedded in free access to information acts, being instead based on the practice of reactive and proactive provision of information by administration bodies. On one hand, this approach takes into consideration the experience of members of the civil society with enforcement of the legislation on access to public information, and on the other, it is based on direct analysis of websites of administration bodies.

WeBER's monitoring is done using two indicators. The first one focuses entirely on civil society's perception of the scope of the right to access public information and whether enforcement mechanisms enable civil society to exercise this right in a meaningful manner. To explore perceptions, a survey of civil society organisations in the Western Balkans was conducted, using an online surveying platform from the second half of June to the beginning of August 2020.[132] The uniform questionnaire with 28 questions was used to assess all Western Balkans administrations, ensuring an even approach in the survey implementation. It was disseminated in local languages through the existing networks and platforms of civil society organisations with large contact databases and through centralised points of contact, such as governmental offices in charge of cooperation with the civil society. To ensure that the survey targeted as many organisations as possible in terms of types, geographical distribution, and activity areas, and hence to have a representative sample, additional boosting was done where increases to overall responses were needed. Finally, a focus group with CSOs representatives was organised to complement survey findings with qualitative data. The focus group results were not, however, used for point allocation under this indicator.

The second indicator focuses on proactive informing of the public by administration bodies, particularly by monitoring the comprehensiveness, timeliness, and clarity of the information disseminated through official websites. In total, 18 pieces of information were selected and assessed against two groups of criteria: 1) basic criteria, looking at the information's completeness, and whether it was up to date, and 2) advanced criteria, looking at the accessibility and citizen-friendliness of the information.[133] Information was gathered from official websites of a sample of seven administration bodies, consisting of three in-line ministries (a large, a medium, and a small ministry in terms of thematic scopes), a ministry with general planning and coordination functions, a government office with centre-of-government functions, a subordinate body to a minister/ministry, and a government office tasked with delivering services.[134]

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132 The survey of CSOs was administered through an anonymous, online questionnaire. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). In North Macedonia, the survey was conducted in the period from 4 April to 1 June 2022. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). The survey sample was N=94.

133 Exceptions being information on accountability within administration bodies, which was assessed only against the first group of criteria, and information available in open data format, which was assessed separately.

134 For North Macedonia, the sample included the Ministry of Economy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Communications, Secretariat for European Affairs, Employment Service Agency, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, State Labour Inspectorate

V.2 WeBER monitoring results

WeBER indicator ACC P2 I1: Civil society perception of the quality of legislation and practice of access to public information

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E.1 CSOs consider that the information recorded and documented by public authorities is sufficient for the proper application of the right to access public information*	2/4	0/4	0/4
E.2 CSOs consider exceptions from the presumption of public character of information to be adequately defined	1/2	1/2	1/2
E.3 CSOs consider exceptions from the presumption of public character of information to be adequately applied	0/4	0/4	0/4
E.4 CSOs confirm that information is provided in the requested format	2/2	2/2	1/2
E.5 CSOs confirm that information is provided within prescribed deadlines	2/2	2/2	1/2
E.6 CSOs confirm that information is provided free of charge	2/2	2/2	2/2
E.7 CSOs confirm that the person requesting access is not obliged to provide reasons for the request for public information	1/2	1/2	1/2
E.8 CSOs confirm that in practice the unclassified portions of otherwise classified materials are released;	0/4	0/2	0/4
E.9 CSOs consider that requested information is released without portions containing personal data	1/2	1/2	1/2
E.10 CSOs consider that when only portions of classified materials are released, it is not done to mislead the requesting person with only bits of information	0/2	0/2	0/2
E.11 CSOs consider that the designated supervisory body* has, through its practice, set sufficiently high standards of the right to access public information	2/4	0/2	0/4
E.12 CSOs consider the soft measures* issued by the supervisory authority to public authorities to be effective	1/2	0/2	0/2
E.13 CSOs consider that the supervisory authority's power to impose sanctions leads to sufficiently grave consequences for the responsible persons in the noncompliant authority	0/2	0/2	1/2
Total score	14/34	9/34	8/34
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[135]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		1	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			1

In terms of civil society perception of the quality of legislation and practice of access to public information, the overall positive perception has slightly increased from the previous monitoring cycle in 2019/2020. More than a third (32.89%) of surveyed civil society representatives have agreed that public authorities record sufficient information to enable the public to exercise the right to free access to information of public importance when performing their activities. For comparison purposes, this is a significant increase since 2019/2020, when only 13.89% agreed. FG representatives also agreed, as they pointed out that in general the information recorded

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135 Conversion of points: 0-6 points = 0; 7-11 points = 1; 12-17 points = 2; 18-23 points =3; 24-28 points = 4; 29-34 points = 5.

and documented by public authorities is sufficient for the proper implementation of the right to access public information. However, there are institutions, mostly municipalities, which do not comply with the Law on Free Access to Public Information and do not send and/or provide the required information.

There is no improvement in the perception regarding the issue as to whether the legislation prescribes adequate exceptions to the public character of information produced by public authorities, while 38.16% agree that this is the case. FG representatives consider the exceptions to the presumption of the public character of information to be adequately defined, but some of them have never had the experience of being rejected to be provided with information based on exceptions. Improvement among surveyed CSOs is noted regarding the question whether the exceptions to the public character of information produced by public authorities are adequately applied in practice. Even though the percentage of surveyed CSOs who agree is low (17.11%), it has almost doubled from the previous monitoring cycle (9.72%).
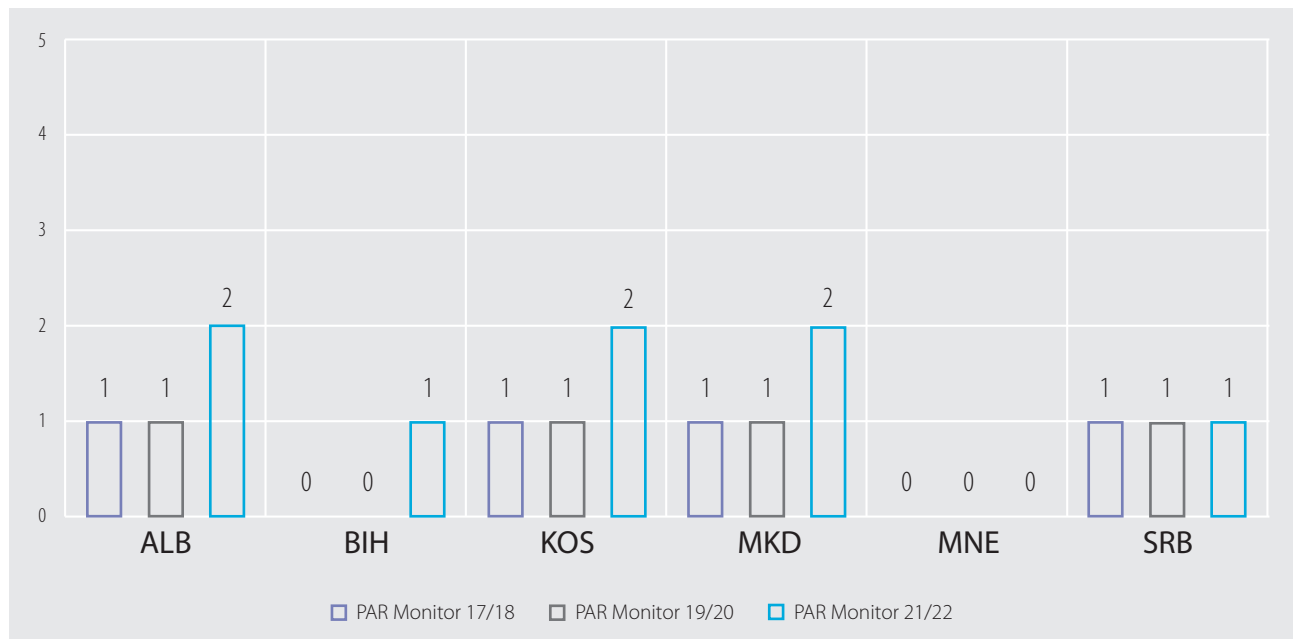
Most of surveyed CSOs agree that when they request free access to information, the provided information is "often" (38.24%) or "always" (29.41%) in the requested format and is provided within the prescribed deadline. As in the previous monitoring cycle, the greater majority of surveyed CSOs (88.23%) stated that when they requested free access to information, the information was provided free of charge. FG representatives confirmed that the information is usually provided in the requested format, or upon their reaction the information additionally would be provided in the requested format. However, sometimes there is no explanation why certain information is not complete. They also agreed that the information is usually provided within prescribed deadlines and free of charge.

There has been a slight improvement regarding the question whether the person requesting access is asked to provide reasons for the request. Namely, 44.12% of surveyed CSOs stated that this never happens (17.65%) or happens rarely (26.47%), while in 2019/2020 this percentage was higher (56.25%).Regarding the release of non-classified portions of materials that contain classified information, only a small percentage of surveyed CSOs said that this happened often or always when they requested such materials (16.59%). Still, it is positive to note that the percentage has doubled since 2019/2020 when it was 8.33%. More than a third of surveyed CSOs (38.23%) state that "often" (8.82%) or "always" (29.41%) "When requesting access to information that contains personal data materials, portions not containing personal data of these materials are released", while 23.53% of surveyed CSOs state that never or rarely when only portions of requested materials are released, it is done so as to mislead the requesting person with only partial information. One third of surveyed CSOs (35.29%) said that this happens "occasionally". FG representatives confirmed that the person requesting access is not obliged to provide reasons for requests for public information and agreed that the non-classified portions of otherwise classified materials are released i.e., the answer is given without the parts that are classified and the requested information is always released without portions containing personal data.

There is an increase in the percentage of CSOs who agree (44.12%) that the designated supervisory body (Ministry of Justice) sets, through its practice, sufficiently high standards for the right to access public information". The percentage of respondents who answered that they "neither agree nor disagree" is 35.29%. There is also an increased percentage of CSOs (35.29%) that said that soft measures issued by the supervisory authority (the Ministry of Justice) to public authorities are effective in protecting access to information. At the same time, only 26.47% of surveyed CSOs agree that the supervisory authority's power to impose sanctions leads to sufficiently grave consequences for the responsible persons in the noncompliant authority.

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator ACC_P2_I1: Civil society perception of the quality of legislation and practice of access to public information

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

WeBER indicator ACC_P2_I2: Proactive informing of the public, by public authorities

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E.1 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on the scope of work	2/4	2/4	0/4
E.2 Websites of public authorities contain easily accessible and citizen-friendly information on the scope of work	2/2	1/2	0/2
E.3. Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on accountability (who they are responsible to)	0/4	0/4	0/4
E.4 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on relevant policy documents and legal acts	2/4	4/4	0/4
E.5 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on relevant policy documents and legal acts	0/2	0/2	0/2
E.6 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under competence	0/4	0/4	0/4
E.7 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under competence	0/2	0/2	0/2
E.8 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date annual reports	0/4	0/4	0/4
E.9 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly annual reports	0/2	0/2	0/2
E.10 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on the institution's budget	0/4	0/4	0/4
E.11 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on the institution's budget	0/2	0/2	0/2
E.12 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date contact information	4/4	2/4	2/4
E.13 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly contact information	2/2	2/2	1/2
E.14 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date organisational charts which include the entire organisational structure	4/4	2/4	0/4
E.15 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly organisational charts which include the entire organisational structure	2/2	2/2	0/2
E.16 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on contact points for cooperation with civil society and other stakeholders, including public consultation processes	0/4	0/4	0/4
E.17 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on ways in which they cooperate with the civil society and other external stakeholders, including public consultation processes	0/2	0/2	0/2
E.18 Public authorities proactively pursue open data policy	2/4	0/4	0/4
Total score	20/56	15/56	3/56
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[136]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		1	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			0

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136 Conversion of points: 0-10 points = 0; 11-19 points = 1; 20-28 points = 2; 29-37 points =3; 38-46 points = 4; 47-56 points = 5.

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator ACC_P2_I2: Proactive informing of the public, by public authorities

Legend: PAR Monitor 17/18, PAR Monitor 19/20, PAR Monitor 21/22
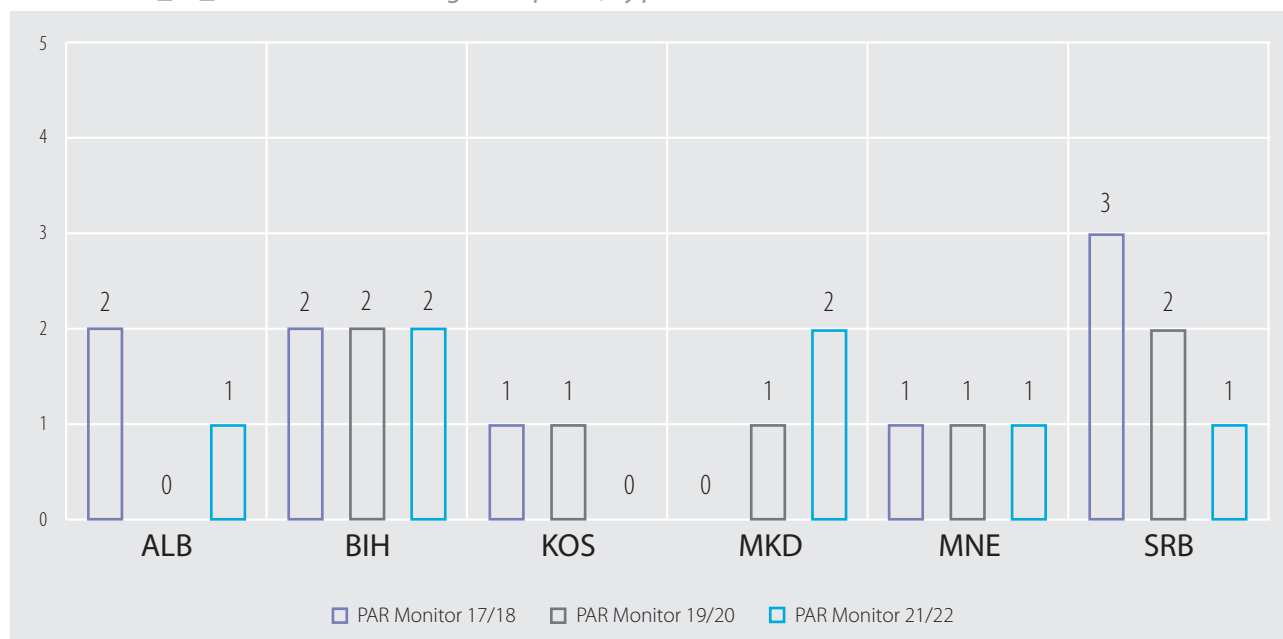
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

V.3 Summary results: Accountability

There has been slight improvement compared with previous years in the area of accountability, both in terms of the perception of CSOs and in the proactive informing by public authorities. The percentage of CSOs that think the authorities record sufficient information to enable the public to exercise the right to free access of information of public importance, when performing their activities has almost tripled since the last monitoring (32.89%). Most of surveyed CSOs (67.65%) also agree that the information that they have requested is usually provided in the requested format, and within the prescribed deadline. Furthermore, the great majority have agreed that it is provided free of charge (88.23%). The perception is slightly more negative when it comes to the question whether exceptions to the public character of information produced by public authorities are adequately applied in the practice (17.11%). In addition, one third of surveyed CSOs state that they believe that occasionally, when only portions of requested materials are released, it is done so as to mislead the requesting person with only partial information. There is also an increase in the percentage of CSOs that think the Ministry of Justice as supervisory body sets, through its practice, sufficiently high standards for the right to access public information. However, only 26.47% of surveyed CSOs agree that the supervisory authority's power to impose sanctions leads to sufficiently grave consequences for the responsible persons in the noncompliant authority.

All of the institutions have information about their scope of work on their websites, as well as contact information and organizational charts. Similarly, all institutions also have relevant policy documents and legal documents, but this is not presented in a citizen friendly manner. At the same time, it is worrying that none of the institutions provides information on ways in which they cooperate with civil society and other external stakeholders, including for public consultation processes. Only two institutions published their annual reports for 2020, and only one had its budget for 2022. Overall, the majority of institutions did not have financial reports or budgets uploaded on their websites. When it comes to open data policy, it was noted that only half of the sampled institutions pursue an open data policy.

■ **Recommendations for Accountability**

Tracking recommendations from the 2019/2020 PAR Monitor

Recommendation	Status	Comment
State institutions, whether they are Ministries or subordinate government institutions (Agencies, Funds) should produce and publish their annual reports about their work.	Not implemented	
The Official Gazette should be accessible to all citizens since it requires a paid subscription.	Not Implemented	
The Office of the Prime Minister should be more visible, since at the moment it is embedded on the official website of the Government.	Not implemented	
State institutions should start appointing contact persons for information about the cooperation with the civil society and other external stakeholders.	Not implemented	
In terms of open data information, institutions should start publishing datasets in open format, since many institutions have one or even zero datasets published.	Partially implemented	Only half of the sampled institutions pursue an open data policy.

2021/2022 PAR Monitor Recommendations

1. State institutions, whether they are ministries or subordinate government institutions (agencies, funds) should produce and publish their annual reports about their work.

2. The Official Gazette should be accessible to all citizens, since it now requires a paid subscription.

3. The Office of the Prime Minister should be more visible, since at the moment it is embedded on the official website of the Government.

4. State institutions should start appointing contact persons for information tasked with cooperation with the civil society and other external stakeholders.

5. Websites of public authorities should contain accessible and citizen-friendly information about relevant policy documents and legal documents.

VI.

SERVICE DELIVERY

VI.1 WeBER indicators used in Service delivery and country values for North Macedonia

SD P1 I1: Public perception of state administration's citizen orientation					
0	1	2	**3**	4	5
SD P3 I1: Public perception and availability of information on citizen feedback regarding the quality of administrative services					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5
SD P4 I1: CSOs' perception of accessibility of administrative services					
0	1	2	3	4	5
SD P4 I2: Availability of information regarding the provision of administrative services on websites of service providers					
0	1	2	3	**4**	5

■ **State of Play in Service delivery and main developments since 2020**

The situation in the area of service delivery has hardly changed at all between the previous and the new WeBER report. The process of full digitization of the administration is ongoing, but under an insufficiently fast pace of implementation. According to the 2022 Report on the implementation of the PAR Strategy, 67% of activities in this area are implemented within the stipulated deadline.[137]

As before, one of the main laws for this policy [138] i.e., the new Law on the General Administrative Procedure, has not yet been adopted.[139] Other laws that make up the legal framework – the Law on the Central Population Register[140]; the Law on Electronic Management and Electronic Services[141]; and the Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Confidential Services[142], were adopted back in 2019. Consequently, the Methodology for measurement of e-service delivery in terms of quality, efficiency, effectiveness[143] was adopted, the purpose of which is to measure the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of e-services from the point of view of users (citizens and legal entities), but also from the point of view of service providers (public institutions).[144]

In addition, even though an Interoperability Platform has been established and managed by the MIOA, a total of 53[145] out of 1,288 institutions are connected to the Interoperability Platform, which is too small of a number, i.e., it shows poor utilization of the potential for data exchange.

The national e-services portal[146] is functioning well and an increasing number of administrative e-services are hosted on it. Unlike two years ago when the portal had 30,062 registered users, for 810 services of 1,288 public institutions, this time those numbers have increased significantly. The number of registered users has now increased by three times, i.e., now there are 92,377 users[147], while there are only 95 e-services on the Portal[148].

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137 Fifth semi-annual report on the implementation of the Action Plan of the 2018-2022 Strategy for Public Administration Reforms (Петти полугодишен извештај за спроведување на акцискиот план на Стратегија за реформи во јавната администрација 2018-2022 година), MISA, September 2022 https://bit.ly/3LV4arh pg. 10

138 COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT - North Macedonia 2022 Report' (European Commission, 12 October 2022), https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022_en. pg. 16

139 The applicable Law was adopted in 2015, but the harmonization of special laws with the provisions of the Law on General Administrative Procedures has not been completed https://bit.ly/3AQJHgO

140 Law on the Central Population Register, https://bit.ly/3AUGDQY

141 Law on Electronic Management and Electronic Services, https://bit.ly/41VlTDj

142 Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Confidential Services, https://bit.ly/3nC5825

143 Methodology for measurement of e-service delivery in terms of quality, efficiency, effectiveness, European Commission, 3 September 2021, https://bit.ly/42eR2CC

144 Ibid.

145 Interoperability Platform https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1320

146 National e-services portal https://uslugi.gov.mk/

147 Last accessed on 18.04.2023

148 Last accessed on 18.04.2023

However, although there is an increase in numbers, this does not suffice. In order to improve the previously established Catalogue of public services, the MISA has also issued a User manual for input, verification, and translation[149] for this Catalogue.

In February 2021, the Government adopted the Methodology for evaluating the quality index of institutions[150], which was foreseen under the 2022 Work Program of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia[151] and the 2018-2022 Strategy for Public Administration Reforms.[152] According to the methodology, planned activities for evaluation of the quality index of institutions in this cycle are concentrated on ten institutions[153] important for the delivery of services to citizens. After the first cycle of data collection and analysis was carried out, the Government adopted a report about the conducted research of the quality index of institutions.[154]

It should also be noted that in 2021, the MISA began implementing a project aimed at increasing the quality and efficiency of state administration services, through the establishment of three quality software systems[155]: National System "Order of customers - Get a Number";[156] National System "Rate the Administration – Traffic light ";[157] and National System "Reserve Appointment for Service - "My Order"[158].

Finally, at the end of December 2022, the Government accepted the text for signing the International Agreement between the European Union and North Macedonia [159] on the country's participation in the Digital Europe Union program for the period from 2021 to 2027[160], which aims to accelerate the economic recovery and shape the digital transformation of the European society and economy.

149 Catalog Of Public Services User guide for input, verification and translation https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/Verifikatori%20Prevod%20Katalog%20-%20Upatstvo%20v2.0.pdf
150 Methodology for Evaluation of Institutions Quality Index, MISA, February 2022, https://bit.ly/3HAMTRu
151 2021 Work Program of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, https://bit.ly/41ZPyfl
152 Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022, Ministry of Information Society and Administration, February 2018, https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/srja_2018-2022_20022018_mk.pdf
153 Ministry of Justice; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning; State Health and Sanitary Inspectorate; Ministry of Information Society and Administration - State Administrative Inspectorate; Administrative Court of the Republic of North Macedonia; Faculty of Law "Justinian I" – Skopje; the National Institution Museum of Macedonia – Skopje; the Inter-Municipal Centre for Social Work of the City of Skopje; and the Inter-Municipal Centre for Social Affairs Strumica.
154 The Report of the Conducted Research on the Quality Index of Institutions was adopted, MISA, January 2023, https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/4553
155 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022 for the period January - December 2021, https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/rja/nacrt_izvestaj-srja_2021-23.08.2022.pdf
156 This system has been established only at One Point for Services Centres and is a centralized web-based system the function of which is to establish a queue when providing a service. This system allows every citizen to get the requested service at the right time.
157 By scanning the QR code that is contained on the serial number ticket, it enables citizens to evaluate the counter clerk, the quality of the service and the quality of the institution after the service has been delivered.
158 It allows citizens to schedule appointments for a service, on a certain date at our "One Point for Services" Centres, emphasizing the time and type of service they will require. As a result, the possibility of waiting in queues is avoided.
159 The Information on the signing of an international agreement between the European Union and North Macedonia on the Digital Europe program for the period 2021-2027 has been adopted. https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/4511
160 The Digital Europe Programme https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/activities/digital-programme

◼ What does WeBER monitor and how?

Under the Service Delivery area of PAR, three SIGMA Principles are monitored.

> **Principle 1**: Policy for citizen-oriented state administration is in place and applied;
>
> **Principle 3**: Mechanisms for ensuring the quality of public services are in place;
>
> **Principle 4**: The accessibility of public services is ensured.

From the perspective of civil society and the public at large, these principles have the greatest relevance in their addressing the outward-facing aspects of administration that are crucial for the daily provision of administrative services and contacts with the administration. In this context, these are the principles most relevant to the quality of everyday life of citizens.

The approach to monitoring these principles relies, firstly, on the public perception of the service delivery policy, including how receptive administrations are to redesign administrative services based on citizen feedback. This is complemented with the civil society's perception of distinct aspects of service delivery. Moreover, approaches to selected principles go beyond mere perceptions, exploring aspects of existence, online availability, and the accessibility of information administrations provide about services.

Four indicators were used, two fully measured with perception data (perceptions of the civil society and the public) and two by using a combination of perception and publicly available data. The public perception survey employed three-stage probability sampling targeting the public. It focused on citizen-oriented service delivery in practice, covering various aspects of awareness, efficiency, digitalisation, and feedback mechanisms. [161] Since public perception survey was, once again, implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, citizens were also asked additional questions on how interested they were to explore more about electronic services since the outbreak of the pandemic and whether they believed that, since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, the Government has improved the provision of e-services. Perception data regarding these questions were not used for measuring indicator values.

In measuring the accessibility of administrative services for vulnerable groups and in remote areas, data from a survey of civil society and a focus group with selected CSOs were used,[162] the latter for complementing the survey data with qualitative findings. The existence of feedback mechanisms was explored by combining public perception data and online data for a sample of five services.[163] Finally, the websites of providers of the same sampled services were analysed to collect information on their accessibility and prices.

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161 Perceptions are explored using a survey targeting the public (aged 18 and older) of six Western Balkan countries. The public perception survey employed a multi-stage probability sampling and was administered combining computer-assisted web and telephone interviewing (CAWI, and CATI), using a standardized questionnaire through omnibus surveys in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Serbia, Montenegro, and North Macedonia from 4 May to 15 May 2022. For North Macedonia, the margin of error for the total sample of 1,005 citizens is ± 3.18%, at the 95% confidence level.

162 The survey of CSOs was administered through an anonymous, online questionnaire. In North Macedonia, the survey was conducted in the period from 4 April to 1 June 2022. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). The survey sample was N=94.

163 The five services included were: 1) Property registration, 2) company (business) registration 3) vehicle registration 4) Issuance of personal documents: passports and ID cards and 5) Value added tax (VAT) declaration and payment for companies.

V.2 WeBER monitoring results

PRINCIPLE 1: POLICY FOR CITIZEN-ORIENTED STATE ADMINISTRATION IS IN PLACE AND APPLIED

WeBER indicator SD P1 I1: Use of participatory approaches in the development of key strategic PAR documents

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Citizens are aware of Government administrative simplification initiatives or projects	1/2	1/2	1/2
E2. Citizens confirm that administrative simplification initiatives or projects of the Government have improved service delivery	4/4	2/4	4/4
E3. Citizens confirm that dealing with the administration has become easier	2/4	2/4	2/4
E4. Citizens confirm that time needed to obtain administrative services has decreased	2/4	2/4	2/4
E5. Citizens consider that administration is moving towards digital government	1/2	2/2	2/2
E6. Citizens are aware of the availability of e-services	2/2	2/2	1/2
E7. Citizens are knowledgeable about ways on how to use e-services	1/2	2/2	2/2
E8. Citizens use e-services	2/4	2/4	0/4
E9. Citizens consider e-services to be user-friendly	2/2	2/2	2/2
E10. Citizens confirm that the administration seeks feedback from them on how administrative services can be improved	1/2	1/2	0/2
E11. Citizens confirm that the administration uses their feedback on how administrative services can be improved	4/4	2/4	4/4
Total score	22/32	20/32	20/32
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[164]	3		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		3	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			3

The public perception of the citizen orientation of the public administration remains the same as in the previous monitoring cycles. 44.44% of Macedonian citizens either "agree" or "strongly agree" that in the past two years, there have been efforts or initiatives by the Government to make administrative procedures simpler for citizens and businesses. For comparison purposes, the regional average is slightly higher (53.16%). Out of those citizens, only 62.25% agree or strongly agree that such initiatives by the Government have led to improved service delivery in the past two years. This is a significant decrease since 2019/2020, when this percentage was 80.77 and is significantly lower than the regional average, which is 83.88%.

Less citizens think that dealing with the administration has become easier in the past two years. Only 36.50% of surveyed citizens said that according to their own experience, this was the case, as opposed to 47.65% in 2019/2020 that agreed that dealing with the administration had become easier. This is also lower than the regional average which is 51.50%. Citizens have a similar worsened perception regarding the time it takes to obtain administrative services. 39.36% of Macedonian citizens (45.6% in 2019/2020) either "agree" or "strongly agree" that in the past two years, the time needed to obtain administrative services has decreased. The regional average is higher in this case as well (52.58%). When it comes to digitalization, more than 54.60% of Macedonian citizens (66.44% in 2019/2020) either agree or strongly agree that in the past two years, the Government has increasingly been moving towards digitalisation in the work of administration. The regional average is again higher standing at 66.32%.
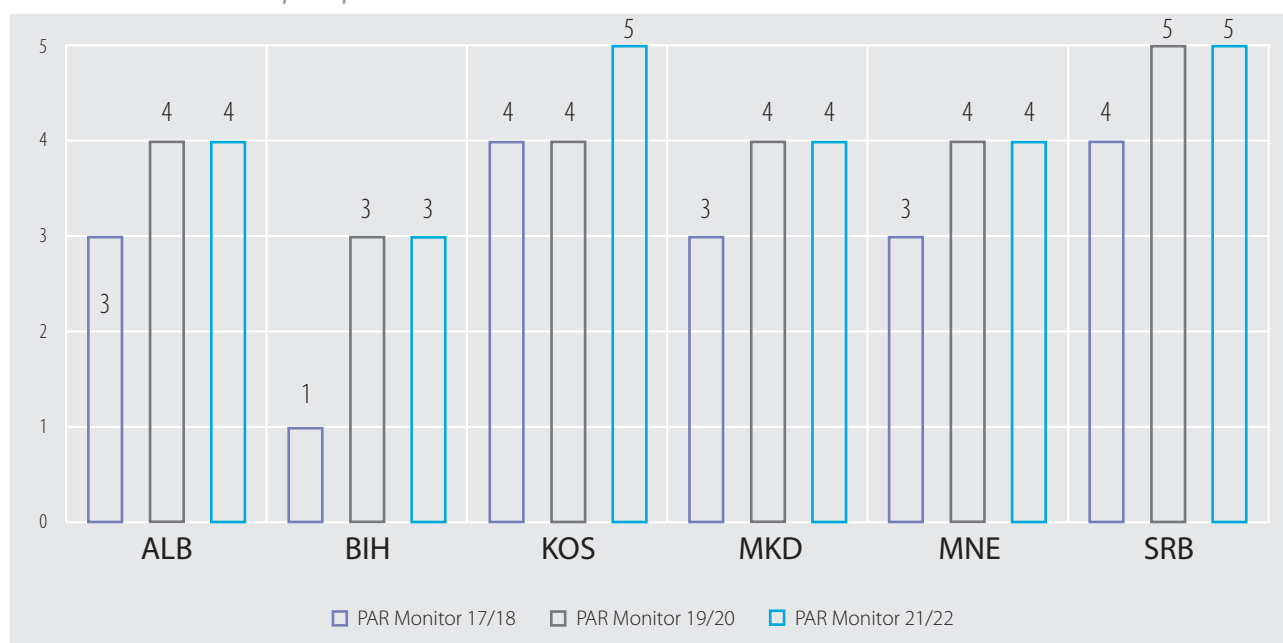
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164 Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-11 points = 1; 12-17 points = 2; 18-22 points = 3; 23-27 points = 4; 28-32 points = 5

On a positive note, the percentage of Macedonian citizens who are aware that e-services are offered in North Macedonia is higher (80.30%) than in the last monitoring period (60.37% in 2019/2020) and higher than the regional average (66.70%). However, out of those citizens that are aware of the availability of e-services, only 59.73% are generally or completely informed about the ways how to use them. This percentage was higher in the previous monitoring cycle (74.88% in 2019/2020) and is higher at the regional level (67.64%). 45.97% of Macedonian citizens (48.19% in 2019/2020) are knowledgeable about ways on how to use e-services, have either used e-services "sometimes" or "often" in the past two years. The regional average is 48.97%. It is positive that the majority of citizens (79.32%) who use e-services consider them as either "easy to use" or "very easy to use". This is in line with the regional average which is 78.44% but is lower than the last monitoring cycle (85.82% in 2019/2020). Less than half of Macedonian citizens agree or strongly agree (42.80%) that in the past two years, the administration has asked for citizens' proposal on how to improve administrative services (this is in line with the regional average, which is 42.96%).

65.89% of citizens (78.37% in 2019/2020) who to some extent confirm that their administration seeks feedback on how administrative services can be improved, either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement "In the past two years, the government has used such proposals from citizens to improve administrative services." The regional average is 78.87%.

■ **How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?**

Indicator SD P1 I1: Public perception of state administration's citizen orientation

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

WeBER indicator SD P3 I1: Public perception and availability of information on citizen feedback regarding the quality of administrative services

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Citizens consider they have the possibility to provide feedback on the quality of administrative services	1/2	1/2	1/2
E2. Citizens perceive feedback mechanisms as easy to use	2/4	2/4	4/4
E3. Citizens perceive themselves or civil society as involved in monitoring and assessment of administrative services	2/4	2/4	0/4
E4. Citizens perceive that administrative services are improved as a result of monitoring and assessment by citizens	4/4	2/4	4/4
E5. Basic information regarding citizens' feedback on administrative services is publicly available	2/4	2/4	0/4
E6. Advanced information regarding citizens' feedback on administrative services is publicly available	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	11/20	9/20	9/20
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[165]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		2	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			2

Under this indicator, the general perception remains the same as in previous years. Less than half (47.85%) of Macedonian citizens "agree" or "strongly agree" that as users of administrative services, they have possibilities to give their opinion on the quality of the individual services that they receive. The regional average is slightly lower, standing at 45.21%. In terms of using administrative channels, 52.92% of respondents find it easy to use administrative channels utilizing which they can provide their opinion on the quality of administrative services. Regarding involvement of civil society and citizens, 35.70% of Macedonian citizens think that in the past two years, they have been involved in the monitoring and assessment of administrative services. This is almost aligned with the regional average which is 38.21%. On the other hand, the percentage of people who disagree is 48.50%, which is a rise from 35.7% in the 2019/2020 monitoring cycle. 75.07% of Macedonian citizens (72% in 2019/2020) either "agree" or "strongly agree" with the statement "In the past two years, as a result of such monitoring by citizens or civil society, the government has improved administrative services" The regional average is higher, standing at 84.53%.

General information about citizen feedback, as in the previous monitoring cycle, was not found for three of the five sampled administrative services selected for assessment (property registration,[166] registration of businesses,[167] VAT declaration and payment for companies[168]). For vehicle registration and issuance of personal documents (passports and ID cards) there are two surveys accessible online, both aimed at measuring the satisfaction of citizens with the services provided by the Ministry of the Interior (MoI). The first survey[169] can be accessed as basic feedback for this service. When the survey is completed, it is possible to see the results of the survey. The second survey[170] is for measurement of the satisfaction of the civil service and can also be assessed as basic feedback for the services of the MoI. The results are also available when the survey is finished and are provided in real time. Additionally, on the website of the MoI it is noted that at the premises of the MoI there is a mailbox where citizens can leave their complaints.[171] The timeframe for responding to these complaints is 10 to 15 days. Lastly, there is no advanced publicly available information about citizens' feedback about any of the sampled services.

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165 Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-8 points = 1; 9-11 points = 2; 12-14 points =3; 15-17 points = 4; 18-20 points = 5
166 Website, Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, accessed at: https://www.katastar.gov.mk/
167 Website, Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia, accessed at: https://www.crm.com.mk/en
168 Website, Public Revenue Office, accessed at: http://ujp.gov.mk/en
169 Website, Ministry of the Interior, Survey to measure the satisfaction of service users, accessed at: https://mvr.gov.mk/anketa/
170 Website, Ministry of the Interior, Survey for measurement of the satisfaction of the civil service, accessed at: https://mvr.gov.mk/anketa2/AnketaMk
171 Website, Ministry of the Interior, accessed at: https://mvr.gov.mk/page/vidovi-uslugi

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator SD P3 I1: Public perception and availability of information on citizen feedback regarding the quality of administrative services
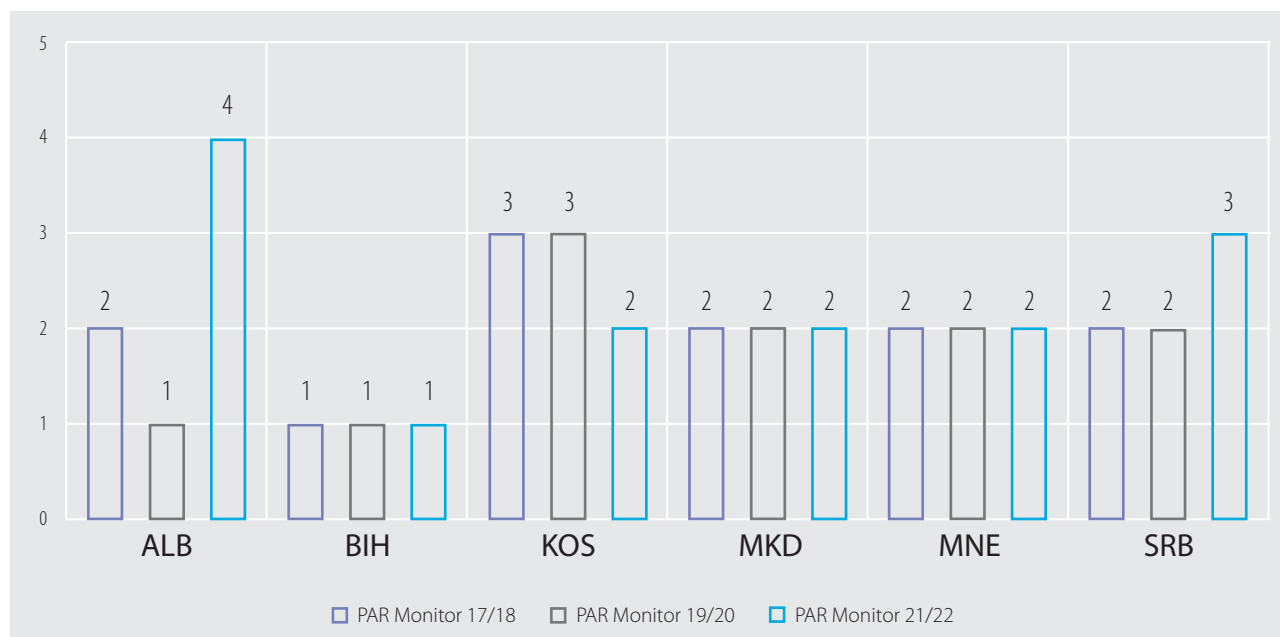
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

PRINCIPLE 4: MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES ARE IN PLACE

WeBER indicator SD P4 I1: CSOs' perception of accessibility of administrative services

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. CSOs confirm the adequacy of territorial network for access to administrative services	0/4	0/4	0/4
E2. CSOs confirm that one-stop-shops are made accessible to all	0/4	0/4	0/4
E3. CSOs consider administrative services to be provided in a manner that meets the individual needs of vulnerable groups	0/4	0/4	0/4
E4. CSOs confirm that administrative service providers are trained on how to treat vulnerable groups	0/2	0/2	0/2
E5. CSOs confirm that the administration provides different channels of choice for obtaining administrative services	0/2	0/2	0/2
E6. CSOs confirm that e-channels are easily accessible for persons with disabilities	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	0/18	0/18	0/18
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[172]	0		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		0	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			0

The results under this indicator remain the most negative in the area of service delivery. Only 13.04% of surveyed CSOs agree that administrative service providers are adequately distributed across the territory of the country in such a way that all citizens have easy access. This is a slight improvement from the last monitoring cycle when this percentage was only 4.48%. At the same time, a staggering percentage of CSOs or 62.32% in total disagree ("strongly disagree -21.74%" or "disagree - 40.58%") with that statement. Only 21.74% of surveyed CSOs (double

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172 Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-8 points = 1; 9-11 points = 2; 12-14 points =3; 15-17 points = 4; 18-20 points = 5

from the 10.45% in 2019/2020) agree with the statement that "Existing one-stop-shops are easily accessible by all citizens (through their geographic distribution)". On the other hand, half of surveyed CSOs (52.17%) disagree with that statement ("disagree - 31.88%" or "strongly disagree - 20.29%").

Six FG participants corroborated the results of the survey as they pointed out that there is no adequacy of territorial network for access to administrative services. There are places, i.e., entire villages in rural areas, which unfortunately still do not have water and sewerage. Some participants pointed out that services are distributed throughout the country but are not equally available in rural and urban areas. Most of the services are provided in urban areas, in municipalities and regional offices of central institutions, so citizens from rural areas have less access. One of the participants pointed out that according to their research of the availability of social services at the local level, public services are not equally accessible to all residents, especially those living in smaller urban and rural areas. In particular, the research showed that all existing Municipal Social Work Centres, as well as other institutional services are available only to residents of larger urban communities (Kumanovo, Prilep, Bitola, Veles, Strumica) while residents of other urban and rural areas, have to travel in order to receive social protection services, which takes additional time and money to receive the necessary services. In this regard, vulnerable groups as the elderly, people with disabilities, victims of violence, are particularly affected.

In this context, it is worrying that only 8.70% of surveyed CSOs agree that administrative service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups. On the other hand, two thirds of surveyed CSOs (63.77%) disagree with that statement ("disagree - 46.38%" or "strongly disagree - 17.39%"). Additionally, when it comes to service delivery for vulnerable groups, only 10.14% of surveyed CSOs either agree that in general, the staff working on administrative service delivery is trained on how to treat vulnerable groups. FG participants pointed out that administrative services are not provided in a manner that meets the individual needs of vulnerable groups. For example, in Kumamoto, the regional Public Revenue Office and the Central Registry are located on the second floor. There is access for people with disabilities only at the entrance, but not upstairs. One participant pointed out that their research shows that several groups of citizens report non- accommodation and unequal access to services. This applies to different groups based on ethnicity (mostly Roma), remoteness (rural versus urban environments, especially during the COVID-19 period), accessibility (persons with physical disabilities for whom there was no adequate adaptation of buildings where services are provided). FG participants also underlined that administrative service providers are not trained on how to treat vulnerable groups. There are no administrative servants who know Braille or sign language, nor have they received any training on how to treat vulnerable groups of citizens. Other participants noted that regarding public service providers, the likelihood that they have the knowledge and skills to provide quality services to different vulnerable groups is low. Another participant mentioned that there are continuous trainings for the administration and that there are designated persons, but they need trainings.

Almost half (49.27%) of surveyed CSOs disagree that the public administration provides different channels of choice (in-person, electronic) for obtaining administrative services. In addition, only 10.14% of surveyed CSOs agree that e-channels for accessing administrative services are easily accessible for vulnerable groups, while almost two thirds (62.32%) of surveyed CSOs disagree with the statement. FG participants pointed out that one-stop-shops are not accessible to all. According to one participant it seems like the one-stop shop systems have not started working at all. Another participant pointed out that one-stop-shop halls are open only in Skopje, Tetovo, Ohrid, Bitola and Kumanovo, while some of the others mentioned that it is accessible to all. It was also underlined that for some of the services there are different channels, and they are available either partially or completely electronically, but citizens should first have the information that such services are available electronically, then they should be given support and training on how to obtain i.e., use the services. It was also emphasized that the total number of 206 electronic services that are listed on the National E-services Portal for e-services[173] is far from satisfactory for the digital age we are living in, especially compared to the total number of only 821 administrative services that are listed on the portal. In addition, numerous services related to issuance of documents can be provided by mail, but citizens rarely use this option. The reason for this is the inability to track the procedure and its duration as the post office is also included in the delivery of the documents. It was also pointed out that e-channels are not easily accessible for persons with disabilities.

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173 Website, National Portal for E-services, accessed at: www.uslugi.gov.mk

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator SD P4 I1: Public perception and availability of information on citizen feedback regarding the quality of administrative services
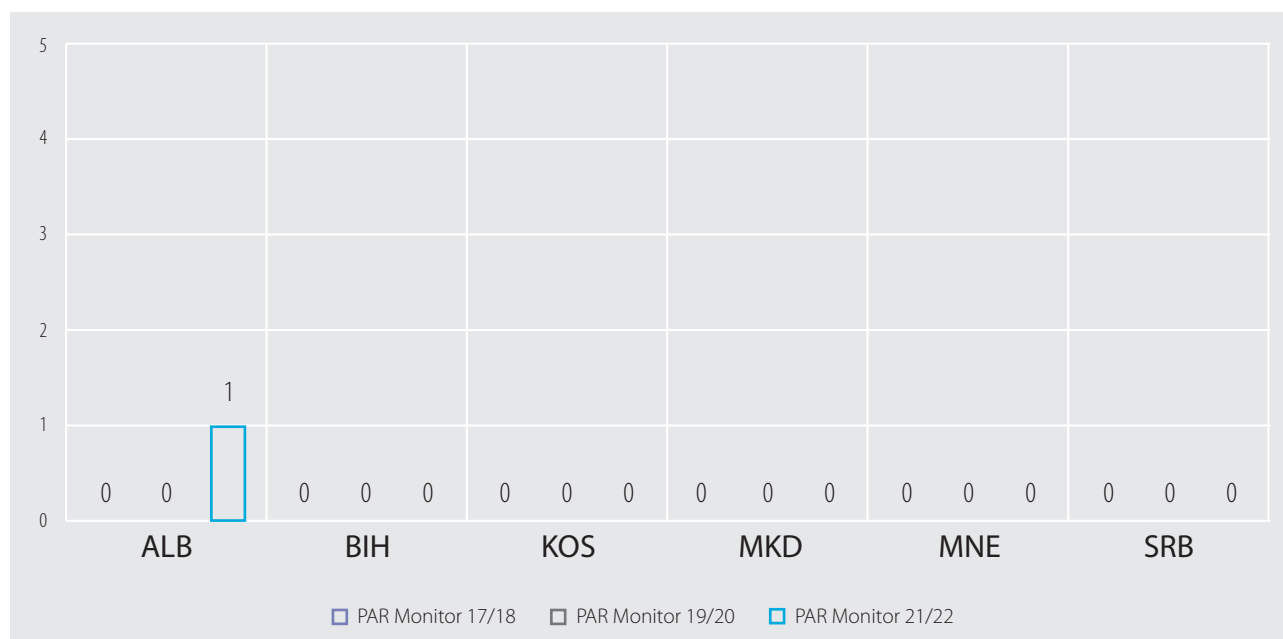
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

WeBER indicator SD P4 I2: Availability of information regarding the provision of administrative services on the websites of service providers

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Websites of administrative service providers include contact information for provision of services	4/4	4/4	4/4
E2. Websites of administrative service providers include basic procedural information on how to access administrative services	4/4	4/4	4/4
E3. Websites of administrative service providers include citizen-friendly guidance on accessing administrative services	1/2	1/2	0/2
E4. Websites of administrative service providers include information on the rights and obligations of users	2/2	2/2	2/2
E5. Individual institutions providing administrative services at the central level publish information on the price of services offered	4/4	4/4	4/4
E6. The information on the prices of administrative services differentiates between e-services and in-person services	1/2	1/2	1/2
E7. Information on administrative services is available in open data formats	1/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	17/20	16/20	15/20
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[174]	4		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		4	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			4

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174 Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-8 points = 1; 9-11 points = 2; 12-14 points =3; 15-17 points = 4; 18-20 points = 5

The most positive results in the area of service delivery have been established under this indicator. For all services, there is general contact information (phone and email address) of the persons or units in charge of service provision. This information is found on websites of the following service providers: Agency for Real Estate Cadastre for property registration,[175] Central Registry for business registration,[176] Public Revenue Office for VAT declaration and payment[177] and the MoI for issuance of ID cards, passports[178] as well as vehicle registration[179].

The websites of administrative service providers include basic procedural information on how to access administrative services about all analysed services. On the other hand, citizen-friendly guidance on accessing administrative services is only available for two services: business registration[180] and tax administration: value added tax (VAT) declaration[181] and payment for companies[182].

For property registration there are guidelines[183] on accessing services, but they can be used by notaries, lawyers, enforcement agents, banks, private geodetic firms, and property appraisers i.e., not by ordinary citizens. This means that only these "professional users" can get the electronic service, while individuals do not have that possibility.

Websites of administrative service providers include information about rights and obligations of users for all analysed services. All institutions publish information on the price of services offered, while two of the services - business registration and tax administration: value added tax (VAT) declaration and payment for companies, also provide segregated information about prices for e-services and in-person services. When it comes to availability of information in open data formats, this is only available for tax administration - value added tax (VAT) for companies.

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator SD P4 I2: Availability of information regarding the provision of administrative services on the websites of service providers

PAR Monitor 17/18   PAR Monitor 19/20   PAR Monitor 21/22
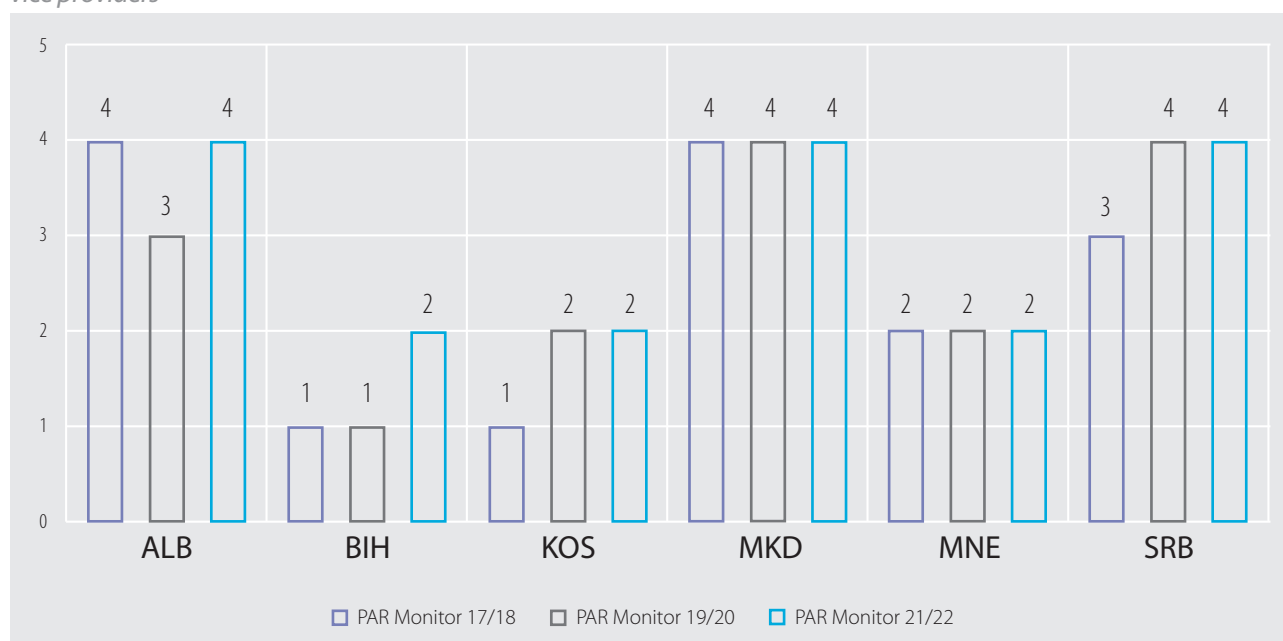
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

175 Website, Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, accessed at: https://www.katastar.gov.mk/
176 Website, Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia, accessed at: https://www.crm.com.mk/DS/
177 Website, Public Revenue Office, accessed at: http://ujp.gov.mk/en
178 Website, Ministry of the Interior, accessed at: https://termin.mvr.gov.mk/
179 Website, Ministry of the Interior, accessed at: https://mvr.gov.mk/upravni-rab/22
180 User manual for the System for centralized user login, Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia, accessed at: https://www.crm.com.mk/DS/download/Registers_document_forms/Registracija_SSO.pdf
181 User manual for E-taxes, Public Revenue Office, accessed at: https://bit.ly/3g6UR5x
182 Installation manual for Client Software on Integrated Contribution Billing, Public Revenue Office, accessed at: https://bit.ly/2Zmziry
183 Guidance on using electronic services, Agency for Real Estate Cadastre, accessed at: https://bit.ly/2yere10

VI.3 Summary results: Service Delivery

The highest results in the area of service delivery were noted with respect to the availability of information regarding the provision of administrative services on websites of service providers. The lowest results were noted, as in previous years, in the civil society perception of accessibility of administrative services.

The public perception of the citizen orientation of the public administration remains the same as in previous monitoring cycles. 44.44% of Macedonian citizens think that in the past two years, there have been efforts or initiatives by the Government to make administrative procedures simpler for citizens and businesses, which is lower than the regional average (53.16%). Furthermore, less citizens think that dealing with the administration has become easier in the past two years (36.50%). On a positive note, the percentage of citizens aware that e-services are offered in North Macedonia is higher (80.30%) than in the last monitoring period (60.37% in 2019/2020) and higher than the regional average (66.70%). It is also positive that the majority of citizens who use e-services consider them easy to use (79.32%).

The public perception and availability of information about citizen feedback regarding the quality of administrative services remains the same as in previous monitoring cycles. Less than half (47.85%) of Macedonian citizens agree that as users of administrative services, they have possibilities to give their opinion on the quality of individual services that they receive. General information about citizen feedback, as in the previous monitoring cycle, was not found for three of the five sampled administrative services selected for assessment.

As regards the civil society perception of accessibility of administrative services, it is worrying that only 13.04% of surveyed CSOs agree that administrative service providers are adequately distributed across the territory of the country in such a way that all citizens have easy access. Similarly, only 8.70% of surveyed CSOs agree that administrative service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups. When it comes to service delivery to vulnerable groups, only 10.14% of surveyed CSOs agree that in general, the staff working on administrative service delivery is trained on how to treat vulnerable groups. Almost half (49.27%) of surveyed CSOs disagree that the public administration provides different channels of choice (in-person, electronic) for obtaining administrative services and only 10.14% of surveyed CSOs agree that e-channels for obtaining administrative services are easily accessible for vulnerable groups.

Regarding the availability of information about the provision of administrative services on websites of service providers, with respect to all sampled services, there is basic contact information about persons or units in charge of service provision. Websites of sampled administrative service providers also include general procedural information on how to access administrative services. On the other hand, citizen-friendly guidance on accessing administrative services is only available for two services. All institutions publish information on the price of services offered, while two institutions only provide segregated information about e-services and in person services prices.

▪ Recommendations for Service Delivery Area

Tracking recommendations from 2019/2020 PAR Monitor

Recommendation	Status	Comment
E-channels should be easily accessible to vulnerable groups, service provisions should be adapted to their needs and the staff delivering administrative services should be trained on working with vulnerable groups	Not implemented	
There is no online possibility for vehicle registration, or for passport and ID card issuance. As regards the latter, the only e-service available is the e-service to schedule an appointment.	Partially implemented	
The service providers should contain information about administrative services in open data formats.	Not implemented	As regards reviewed services, none of the above-mentioned websites of service providers contain information about administrative services in open data formats.
The administrative services should be adequately distributed across the country and one-stop-shops should be easily accessible	Partially implemented	CSOs believe that administrative services are not adequately distributed across the country and existing one-stop-shops are not easily accessible
There should be simple and user-friendly guidance for the administrative services	Partially implemented	Out of all sampled services, only two of them offer such information

1. E-channels should be easily accessible to vulnerable groups, service provisions should be adapted to their needs and the staff delivering administrative services should be trained on working with vulnerable groups.

2. Institutions should provide different channels of choice for obtaining administrative services.

3. The service providers should contain information about administrative services in open data formats.

4. The administrative services should be adequately distributed across the country.

5. One-stop-shops should be made accessible to all and spread across the entire country.

VII.

PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT

VII.1 WeBER indicators used in Public finance management and country values for North Macedonia

PFM P5 I1: Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents					
0	1	2	**3**	4	5
PFM P6&P8 I1: Public availability of information on public internal financial controls and the parliamentary scrutiny					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5
PFM P11&13 I1: Availability of public procurement related information to the public					
0	1	**2**	3	4	5
PFM P16 I1: Supreme Audit Institution's communication and cooperation with the public pertaining to its work					
0	1	2	3	4	**5**

■ **State of Play in Public Finance Management and main developments since 2020**

In the last area – Public Finance Management – it can be said that there have been improvements in the general state of policy making and implementation.

Firstly, even though it was announced for the end of 2020, the Law on Budgets was passed and adopted in 2022.[184] The aim of this Law is to improve the capacities for analysis, the introduction of new tools for macro-economic forecasting and long-term projecting, as well as the comprehensive assessment of fiscal risks, which will strengthen the prudence of fiscal policies, as well as accountability. It is also planned to establish a Fiscal Council, which will help improve the sustainability of public finances through an independent assessment of the fiscal policy. In addition, the Law on Public Financial Control, which was announced back in 2020, has not yet been adopted, but is in parliamentary procedure.

Amendments have been adopted to the Law on Financing of Local Self-Government Units, the purpose of which is to strengthen fiscal decentralization by providing more funds to municipalities, as well as increasing the accountability and transparency of local self-government units.

One of the most important strategic documents in the economic dialogue with the European Commission and EU Member-States - the 2023-2025 Economic Reforms Program[185] was adopted in February 2023 as an extension of the previous one, which covered the period from 2022 to 2024.

The Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2023-2025 (with an outlook until 2027)[186] was adopted in May 2022. This is a medium-term strategy aimed at redesigning the budget policy and fiscal consolidation, which on their part will support macroeconomic stability. Fiscal consolidation covers three main aspects: Improving the collection of budget revenues; Reduction and restructuring of budget expenditures; Changes in the sources of financing the budget deficit, greater diversification of sources of financing the deficit, financing, and implementation of certain projects through public-private partnerships and the establishment of a Development Fund for strategic investments.[187]

In December 2020, the announced 2021-2025 Tax System Reform Strategy was enacted and adopted[188], which envisages a fair, efficient, transparent, and modern tax system that will be based on modern digital technologies and innovations in taxation, in order to achieve accelerated, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth. The

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184 The Law on Budgets https://bit.ly/3LTYVbf
185 2023-2025 Economic Reforms Program, Ministry of Finance, January 2023 https://bit.ly/44r46Xn
186 2023-2025 Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia (with an outlook until 2027), Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, May 2022, https://bit.ly/3nskBBM
187 Ibid.
188 (2021-2025) Tax System Reform Strategy, Ministry of Finance, December 2020, https://bit.ly/44qENET

Strategy sets forth five priorities for tax policy makers and authorities that administer public revenues for the period between 2021 and 2025, together with their key activities, results, responsible entities, and key performance indicators.[189]

In May 2022, the 2023-2025 Strategy for the Management of the Public Debt of the Republic of North Macedonia (with an outlook until 2027) was adopted,[190] the purpose of which is to determine the amount of public debt in the medium term, the maximum amount of net borrowing in the first year for to which the Strategy applies and the maximum amount of newly issued state guarantees in the first year to which the Strategy applies and the structure of the state debt.

In order to improve the transparency of the spending of public money, the Ministry of Finance created a new transparency tool called the Fiscal Counter[191] – a tool of the Ministry of Finance that will provide daily insight into the filling of the state treasury, as well as the expenditure side of the Budget. The tool collects high-frequency data on the execution of capital expenditures and thus exerts pressure on all institutions to improve the implementation.

Finally, as regards the announced next steps in this area, several new laws are planned that are in final preparation, such as laws to strengthen the institutional capacities of important institutions in the field of public finance and state audit, i.e. the Law on the Public Revenues Administration and the State Audit Law, in order to increase the independence of these two bodies.[192] In addition, the Ministry of Finance is planning another new tool - the Tax Calendar - using which it will create greater predictability in the business environment in terms of legal regulations.[193]

◾ What does WeBER monitor and how?

The monitoring of the PFM area is performed against six SIGMA Principles.

> **Principle 5**: Transparent budget reporting and scrutiny are ensured.
>
> **Principle 6**: The operational framework for internal control defines responsibilities and powers, and its application by the budget organisations is consistent with the legislation governing public financial management and the public administration in general.
>
> **Principle 8**: The operational framework for internal audit reflects international standards, and its application by the budget organisations is consistent with the legislation governing public administration and public financial management in general.
>
> **Principle 11:** There is central institutional and administrative capacity to develop, implement and monitor procurement policy effectively and efficiently.
>
> **Principle 13:** Public procurement operations comply with basic principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, proportionality, and transparency, while ensuring the most efficient use of public funds and making best use of modern procurement techniques and methods.
>
> **Principle 16**: The supreme audit institution applies standards in a neutral and objective manner to ensure high-quality audits, which positively impact on the functioning of the public sector.

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189 Ibid.
190 2023-2025 Public Debt Management Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia (with an outlook until 2027), Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, May 2022, https://bit.ly/3pasb4D
191 "Fiscal counter" – a new transparency tool of the Ministry of Finance that will provide daily insight into the state treasury, Ministry of Finance, March 2021, https://bit.ly/3HFFQXT
192 2022 A Crisis – But Also a Year of Significant Reforms in Public Finances, Fatmir Besimi – Minister of Finance, 17 December 2022, https://bit.ly/3ARRPh6
193 The New Budget Law: Reform for Greater Accountability, Digitalization and Better Long-Term Planning, Fatmir Besimi – Minister of Finance, 24 September 2022, https://bit.ly/3NBCZ5Q

As these principles are thoroughly assessed by SIGMA, WeBER's analysis focuses on and emphasizes elements of the transparency and accessibility of information, external communication, as well as proactive and citizen-friendly approaches to informing citizens.

As an additional development since the baseline monitoring, a new indicator was developed to cover the public procurement sub-area of PFM (SIGMA Principles 11 and 13), which was not monitored in the first cycle, and as a result four indicators were measured in this PAR Monitor edition. With this addition, WeBER researchers monitored public procurement policy for the first time, along with the annual budget policy, PIFC, and external audits. As it was measured for the first time, the indicator on public procurement in this PAR monitor edition sets baseline values in this area.

The first indicator assesses the transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents, measuring how accessible key budget documents (such as annual state-level budget and budget execution reports) are to citizens, as well as to what extent budgetary information is presented and adapted to the needs of citizens and civil society. To this end, the primary online sources are data available on websites of ministries in charge of finance and data available thereon, as well as official government portals and open data portals.

The second indicator measures the availability and communication of essential information on PIFC to the public and other stakeholders (including consolidated reporting, IA quality reviews, and FMC procedural information). The analysis considers official websites and available documents from government institutions in charge of the PIFC policy. Websites of all ministries are analysed for availability of specific FMC-related information, while official parliamentary documentation serves for the measurement of the regularity of parliamentary scrutiny of PIFC.

In the external audit area, the indicator approach considers SAI's external communication and cooperation practices with the public. This area covers the existence of strategic approaches, means of communication used, citizen-friendliness of audit reporting, the existence of channels for reporting on issues identified by external stakeholders, and consultations with the civil society. For this purpose, a combination of expert analysis of SAI documents and analysis of SAI websites was used, complemented with semi-structured interviews with SAI staff to collect additional or missing information.

Finally, in the public procurement area, the indicator introduced in the previous, 2019/2020 monitoring cycle for the first time, measures the availability of public procurement-related information to the public. It focuses on whether central procurement authorities and key contracting authorities publish annual plans and reports, as well as how informative and citizen friendly central public procurement portals are for the interested public. Additionally, this indicator investigates the availability of open procurement data, as well as the percentage of public procurement procedures done in open procedures. This indicator is entirely based on review of official documentation on the public procurement policy.

VII.2 WeBER Monitoring Results

PRINCIPLE 5: TRANSPARENT BUDGET REPORTING AND SCRUTINY ARE ENSURED

WeBER indicator PFM P5 I1: Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1 WeBER indicator PFM P5 I1: Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents	4/4	4/4	4/4
E2. In-year budget execution reports are easily accessible online	2/4	4/4	4/4
E3. Mid-year budget execution reports are easily accessible online	0/4	0/4	4/4
E4. Budget execution reports (in-year, mid-year, year-end) contain data on budget spending in terms of functional, organization and economic classification	0/4	4/4	0/4
E5. Annual year-end report contains non-financial information about the performance of the Government	1/2	0/2	0/2
E6. Official reader-friendly presentation of the annual budget (Citizen Budget) is regularly published online	4/4	4/4	4/4
E7. Budgetary data is published in open data format	2/2	2/2	2/2
Total score	13/24	18/24	18/24
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[194]	3		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		4	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			4

The situation regarding transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents remains the same as in previous monitoring cycles. The 2022[195] and 2021[196] Annual Budgets are available, easily accessible and machine readable - XML on the website of the Ministry of Finance. In-year budget execution reports are also easily accessible online and monthly economic reports are available from April 2022 until July 2022. Separate reports covering the real sector, foreign trade, the fiscal sector, social sector, monetary and finance sector are available for revenues and expenditures by budget users.

On the other hand, Mid-year budget execution reports are not easily accessible online. The last mid-year budget execution report that was found is for 2021 and it can be found only by internet browsing. Monthly reports contain data on two types of classification: economic and organizational. The report offers a separate section titled 'fiscal sector' offering data on budget revenues and expenditures. This section also offers an organizational classification titled 'expenditures per budget user'. The 2021 Mid-year report offers information on two types of classification: organizational and economic, while it lacks the functional classification. The y2021 year-end report contains data on expenditures according to all three classifications. The report presents the balance of revenues and expenses by budget user, per items and per functions of the budget of the country. A review of government programs and development sub-programs is also available.

Nonfinancial performance information is available in the concluding part of the year-end report[197] where there is a detailed description in the Gender budget initiatives section and of activities that every ministry has taken. For example, the Ministry of Finance has stated that in 2021, the number of approved housing loans for women increased by 16.9% compared to 2020. Another example is from the Ministry of Defence, where they state that – "Of the total enrolled cadets at the Military Academy in all academic years, 63.71% are male, and 36.29% are female cadets. In the 2021/2022 academic year, out of a total number of 32 students, 25% are female cadets, while 75% are male cadets."

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194 Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-8 points = 1; 9-12 points =2; 13-16 points =3; 17-20 points = 4; 21-24 points = 5
195 Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2022, https://bit.ly/42oRVZj
196 Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021, https://bit.ly/3NyA6Tv
197 FINAL ACCOUNT of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021, https://bit.ly/42mvELz

When it comes to the Citizens' Budget, it is positive to see that as of 2017, the Ministry of Finance is regularly (annually) publishing the Citizens' Budget. The Citizens Budget can be found on the Ministry of Finance website, in the "Statistics" section of the home page. It is also positive that the budgets for 2022 and 2021 are available as XML data sets.[198]

■ **How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?**

Indicator PFM P5 I1: Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents
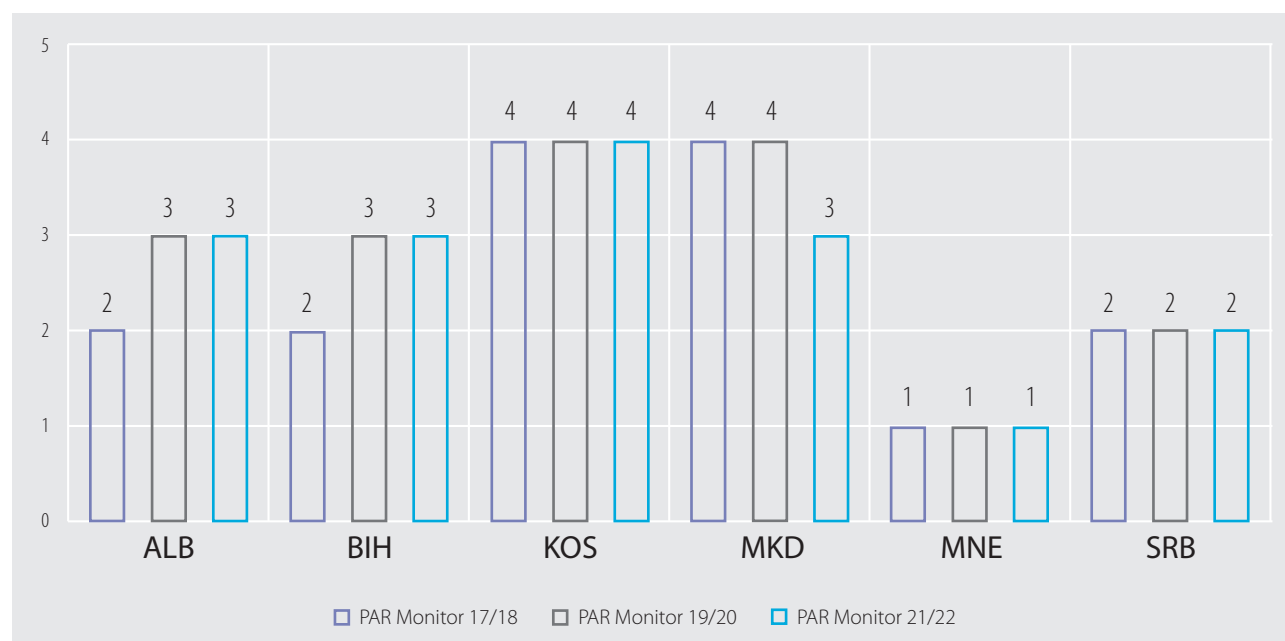
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

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198 2022 Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia in an open data set - https://finance.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/BUDZET_2022_-_konecen_za_objavuvanje_-_16.12.2021_-_mk4.xml

PRINCIPLE 6: THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNAL CONTROL DEFINES RESPONSIBILITIES AND POWERS, AND ITS APPLICATION BY THE BUDGET ORGANISATIONS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE LEGISLATION GOVERNING PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT AND THE PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION IN GENERAL.

PRINCIPLE 8: THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERNAL AUDIT REFLECTS INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS, AND ITS APPLICATION BY THE BUDGET ORGANISATIONS IS CONSISTENT WITH THE LEGISLATION GOVERNING PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND PUBLIC FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT IN GENERAL.

WeBER indicator PFM P6&P8 I1: Public availability of information on public internal financial controls and the parliamentary scrutiny

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Consolidated annual report on PIFC is regularly produced and published online.	4/4	4/4	4/4
E2. Quality reviews of internal audit reports are regularly produced and published online	0/2	0/2	0/2
E3. Ministries publish information related to financial management and control	2/2	4/4	1/2
E4. CHU proactively engages with the public	0/2	0/2	0/2
E5. The Parliament regularly deliberates on/reviews the consolidated report on PIFC	0/2	0/2	0/2
Total score	**6/12**	**8/12**	**5/12**
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[199]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		3	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			2

There has been regress in terms of public availability of information on public internal financial controls and the parliamentary scrutiny. The Central Harmonisation Unit is an organizational unit at the Ministry of Finance that is responsible for coordination of public internal financial control (PIFC) in the public sector in the Republic of North Macedonia.[200] The Ministry of Finance has published consolidated annual reports on PIFC for 2021[201] and 2020[202] (in the PIFC section). Unfortunately, there are no quality reviews of internal audit reports regularly produced or published online whatsoever. This is also one of the main findings in the latest EC 2022 Country Report on North Macedonia, which states that: "Fragmentation and inadequate staffing of the internal audit function undermine its organisational capacity and quality assurance. A national certification system for internal auditors should be introduced. The Central Harmonisation Unit continued to provide methodological guidance and to coordinate the development of financial management and control and internal audit in the public sector. Its capacities remain insufficient, especially for monitoring and reporting on the functioning of the overall internal control system, which amounts to 1,380 public entities."[203]

In order to see whether ministries publish information related to financial management and control, websites of all ministries were analysed for information on internal control in the sample and the documentation available thereon. Most of the ministries publish information related to financial management and control. 14 out of 16 ministries have at least one of the three required FMC information – risk registers; procedure registry/book of procedures; information on who is the appointed FMC manager. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Economy are the only ones that have all three. At the same time, it is worrying to see that the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations have none of the FMC information on their websites.

199 Conversion of points: 0-2 points = 0; 3-4 points = 1; 5-6 points = 2; 7-8 points =3; 9-10 points = 4; 11-12 points = 5
200 Central unit for harmonization of the PIFC system, Ministry of Finance, https://bit.ly/3VAxkPI
201 2021 Annual report on the functioning of the public internal financial control system, Ministry of Finance, July 2022, https://bit.ly/3I1ulF1
202 2020 Annual report on the functioning of the public internal financial control system, Ministry of Finance, July 2021, https://bit.ly/3T0mOin
203 COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT- North Macedonia 2022 Report' (European Commission, 12 October 2022), https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/north-macedonia-report-2022_en.

As in previous years, no evidence of CHU's proactive engagement with the public was found. There have been no media appearances, press releases or organization of public events. Production and publishing, dissemination of booklets, leaflets, and other info material were also not found. While the Ministry of Finance has profiles on YouTube and Instagram nothing has been posted. Similarly, no evidence was found on the website of the Parliament that suggest that the Parliament is reviewing the consolidated report on the PIFC. The agendas of unfinished and completed plenary sessions as well as the sessions of the working bodies, contain no such evidence. It should be noted that according to the Law on PIFC[204] (Article48), the CHU prepares annual reports on PIFC, which are then submitted only to the Government. There is no such provision in the Law that they have to submit their report to Parliament.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PFM P6&P8 I1: Public availability of information on public internal financial controls and the parliamentary scrutiny.
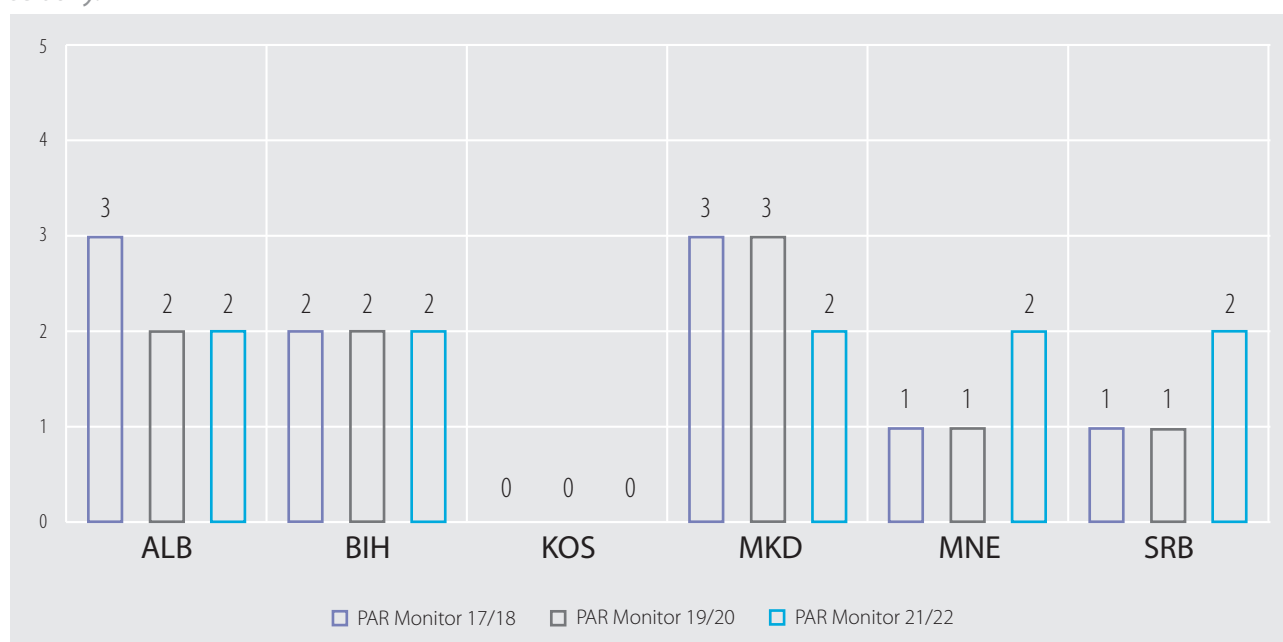
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

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204 Law on Public Internal Financial Control, https://bit.ly/423ZHlm

PRINCIPLE 11: THERE IS CENTRAL INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CAPACITY TO DEVELOP, IMPLEMENT AND MONITOR PROCUREMENT POLICY EFFECTIVELY AND EFFICIENTLY.

PRINCIPLE 13: PUBLIC PROCUREMENT OPERATIONS COMPLY WITH BASIC PRINCIPLES OF EQUAL TREATMENT, NON-DISCRIMINATION, PROPORTIONALITY, AND TRANSPARENCY, WHILE ENSURING THE MOST EFFICIENT USE OF PUBLIC FUNDS AND MAKING BEST USE OF MODERN PROCUREMENT TECHNIQUES AND METHODS.

WeBER indicator PFM P11&P13 I1: Availability of public procurement related information to the public

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. Central procurement authority regularly reports to the public on implementation of overall public procurement policy	2/4	4/4	n/a
E2. Central review body regularly reports to the public on procedures for protection of rights of bidders in public procurement	2/4	2/4	n/a
E3. Reporting on public procurement is by the central procurement is citizen-friendly and accessible	2/2	2/2	n/a
E4. Public procurement portal is user-friendly	2/2	2/2	n/a
E5. Central-level contracting authorities regularly publish annual procurement plans	4/4	4/4	n/a
E6. Central-level contracting authorities regularly publish annual procurement reports	0/4	0/4	n/a
E7. Central procurement authority publishes open procurement data	0/2	0/2	n/a
E8. Open and competitive procedures are the main method of public procurement	0/4	4/4	n/a
Total score	12/26	18/26	n/a
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[205]	2		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		4	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			/

There has also been regress in terms of availability of public procurement related information to the public in comparison with previous years. The Public Procurement Bureau has been regularly publishing Annual Reports[206] on the implementation of the overall public procurement policy, with exception for the 2021 report. The EC 2022 Report on North Macedonia states that "The Public Procurement Strategy 2022-2026 that is accompanied by an action plan for the year 2022 was adopted in March 2022. The PPB continued to modernise and improve the public procurement system in the country in order to enhance its performance and functionalities. However, the monitoring and control competencies of the PPB need to be strengthened.

The State Commission for Public Procurement Appeals has been regularly publishing reports on procedures for protection of rights of bidders in public procurements. However, the 2021 Report is an exception as it is still not published.

The reporting on public procurement done by the central procurement is citizen-friendly and accessible. The Annual Report of the Public Procurement Bureau (PPB) is divided in two parts - the first part is reporting on PPBs work, and the second part of the Report is focused on the "Public procurement market analysis", which has a summary of the "qualitative and quantitative analysis of the public procurement market in North Macedonia". Still, it would be best if in the future, this summary is made available at the beginning of the report so that readers can easily have this information straight away instead of looking through the entire document. Annual Reports contain graphs and tables throughout the reports, and they can be found with three clicks on the homepage.

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205 Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-9 points = 1; 10-13 points = 2; 14-17 points =3; 18-21 points = 4; 22-26 points = 5
206 2020 Annual Report on Activities of the Public Procurement Bureau, https://bit.ly/3LAxzpi

The Public Procurement Portal is also user friendly.[207] There is no need to be registered to search functionalities and to view the documentation. Anyone on the website can access and look through published contract notices, latest award decisions, assigned contracts, e-procurement, e-complaints, etc. When one opens the tab for example of contract notices, the number of the requests, the contracting authority, the subject matter and type of the contract, the type of procedure, timeline and documents are available. If one wishes to look through the documents, they can be seen by clicking on the number of the request where the entire contract notice is available, and documents pertaining to the contract can also be easily downloaded.

Anyone can have access to the complete tender documentation, which is free of charge. For example, in the section "Announcements", in addition to the announcement number, contracting authority, subject of the contract, type of contract, type of procedure, date of publication, deadline, there is a section for Documents, where the tender documentation of the contracting body is published.

On the National e-Portal for Public Procurement, there is no glossary for PP terms. However, the website of the Public Procurement Bureau[208] contains an entire section regarding Terminology of key public procurement terms. There are sections on the website regarding the Contracting Authority and Economic Operators, where Manuals can be found on how to use these functions. The Portal also has a frequently asked questions (FAQ) section and a searchability function.

There is no "Search" bar on the front page, but a search bar can be found in various sections on the website and the search function has a wide scope, which is not identical for each section, being tailored to the section. However, each of the sections has advanced search functionalities. For example, in the section "Announcements" or in the section "Notifications" the search bar has the following search options: Contracting authority; Subject of the public procurement contract; Subject of the part of the public procurement contract; Criteria; Ad number; Type of procedure; Contract type; Search period from/to. Therefore, even though there is no tab for free text search, one can use other options to search with keywords, for example type "Ministry" in the subject matter of the contract/announcement and obtain all the results for this keyword.

Annual Public Procurement plans are available on the National e-Portal for Public Procurement   both for 2022 and 2021, for all Ministries and other state institutions, and most of the PP plans are published on the Ministries websites. In April, the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of good governance policies tasked all budget users to improve the transparency in public procurement procedures and publish all data on their websites. According to the Information on the promotion of transparency and accountability for budget users through the publication of genera information about public procurement on the institutions' websites, which was adopted in October 2022, all budget users and individual users were obliged to create a special section (tab) on their websites entitled "Public Procurement" and regularly publish the following information and documents: Annual plan for public procurement; Advertisements for public procurement; Notifications about concluded contracts; Contracts concluded and Notifications about executed contracts.

It is concerning that no public procurement reports were found for any of the sampled central-level contracting authorities for the last two calendar years, neither on the websites of authorities, nor on the website of the National e-Portal for Public Procurement. In this context, it is important to note that the Law on Public Procurement[209] does not stipulate an obligation for ministries to prepare and publish public procurement reports. The only obligation imposed by this Law (Article 129) for all contracting authorities is that they need to keep separate records for public procurement procedures in a separate electronic book in an electronic format on the National e-Portal for Public Procurement. The record book contains all documents pertaining to the relevant stage of the public procurement procedure. So even though all ministries are obligated to keep records of all their public procurement procedures and report them to the Public Procurement Bureau through the National e-Portal, there are no consolidated reports of all their records. In terms of open data policy, only two ministries have published data related to PP in an open data format – the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning.

207 Electronic System for Public Procurement Portal https://www.e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/Home.aspx#/home
208 Official website of the Public Procurement Bureau https://www.bjn.gov.mk/
209 Law on Public Procurement https://www.bjn.gov.mk/category/zakon-za-avni-nabavki/

It is positive to see that open and competitive procedures are the main method of public procurement. The Law on Public Procurement, (Article 47), which is aligned with DIRECTIVE 2004/18/EC, stipulates the following types of public procurement procedures: a) small value procurement; b) simplified open procedure; c) open procedure ('Open procedures' means those procedures whereby any interested economic operator may submit a tender); d) restricted procedure - means those procedures in which any economic operator may request to participate and whereby only those economic operators invited by the contracting authority may submit a tender; e) competitive negotiated procedure; f) competitive dialogue; g) innovation partnership; h) negotiated procedure without publishing a call and i) negotiated procedure by publishing a call. Hence procedures are overall open and competitive/published on the electronic system except h) negotiated procedure without publishing a call. According to the 2020 Report of the Public Procurement Bureau, a total of 32,253 contracts have been concluded in 2020. The largest majority of contracts have been concluded through one of the above mentioned open and competitive procedures. Only 792 contracts (2.45%) have been concluded through the negotiated procedure without publishing a call.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PFM P11&P13 I1: Availability of public procurement related information to the public
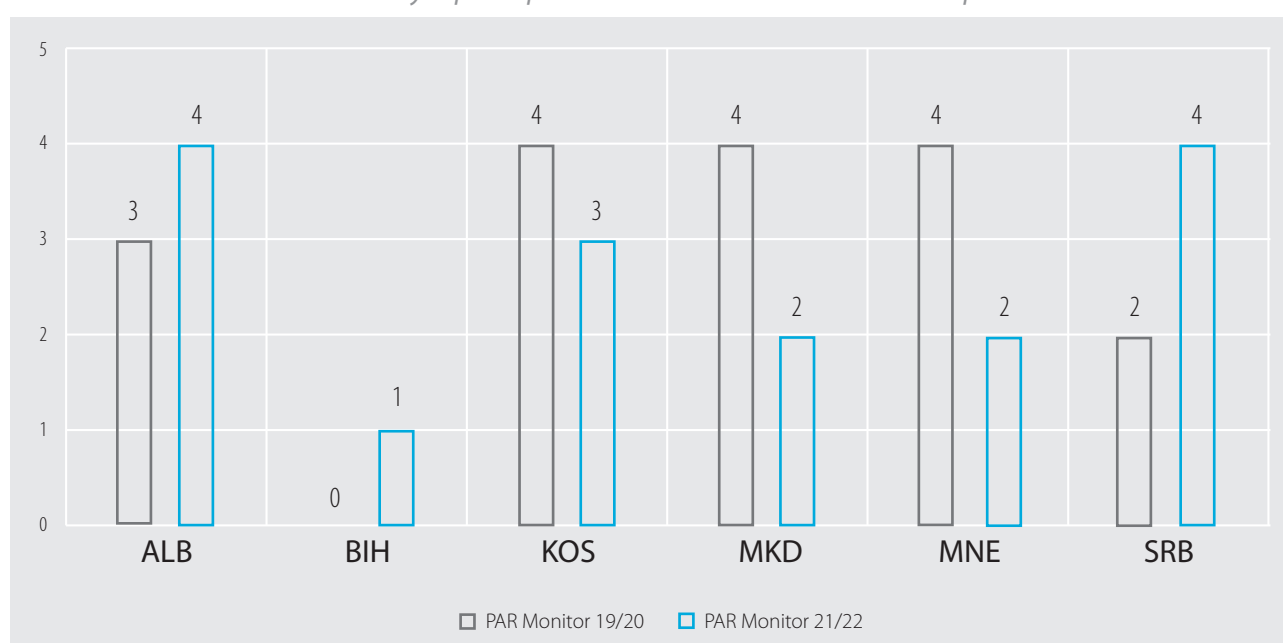
Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

PRINCIPLE 16: THE SUPREME AUDIT INSTITUTION APPLIES STANDARDS IN A NEUTRAL AND OBJECTIVE MANNER TO ENSURE HIGH-QUALITY AUDITS, WHICH POSITIVELY IMPACT ON THE FUNCTIONING OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR.

WeBER indicator PFM P16 I1: Supreme Audit Institution's communication and cooperation with the public pertaining to its work

Indicator elements	Scores 2021/2022	Scores 2019/2020	Scores 2017/2018
E1. SAI develops a communication strategy for reaching out to the public	4/4	4/4	0/4
E2. SAI has dedicated at least one job position for proactive communication and provision of feedback towards the public	4/4	2/4	0/4
E3. SAI utilises various means of communication with the public	2/2	1/2	0/2
E4. SAI produces citizen-friendly summaries of audit reports	4/4	0/4	0/4
E5. Official channels for submitting complaints or initiatives to SAI by external stakeholders are developed (wider public, CSOs)	2/2	2/2	1/4
E6. SAI consults CSOs and their work for the purpose of identifying risks in the public sector	2/2	1/2	0/2
Total score	18/18	10/18	1/18
Indicator value 2021/2022 (scale 0 – 5)[210]	5		
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)		3	
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)			0

The most positive results under the PFM area indicators have been noted under this indicator. The State Audit Office (SAO) has a standalone communication strategy for the period 2020-2023.[211] The Strategy states that the main communication problem it aims to address is the identification of channels and right messages for communication with its natural allies - the public, the media and the CSOs. The Strategy identifies target groups: the media, CSOs, the Parliament, the Public Prosecutors Office and the Ministry of Finance and lays out tailored ways of communication for all of them separately. A separate Action plan for communication for each year is elaborated (2020-2023) and means of evaluation of the communication with each target group is also indicated.

The SAO has a designated job position for proactive communication and provision of feedback to the public. As it can be noticed in the "Rulebook on the systematization of jobs",[212] there is a Sector for Support to the Auditor General, and in the Unit for public relations and informing on the state audit results, there is a position "assistant to the head of audit for public relations and informing about the results of the state audit". Furthermore, the Action Plan under the 2020-2023 Communication Strategy, states that one person is appointed to communicate with the general public. EPI's work and cooperation with the SAO prove that there is a person is in charge of communicating with the general public and in the last two years, after the SAO is under new leadership, they constantly send reports to CSOs, including the EPI.

The SAO uses various means of communication with the public. The SAO has held several press conferences, and has an active account on Facebook, YouTube, and LinkedIn. They also have a brochure on SAOs communication with the public. The SAO organized an event where the draft version of the Law on State Audit was presented, and SAO representatives also participated in events at the invitation of the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in charge of fight against corruption and the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption.[213]

In the last two years, after a new management took over the SAO leadership, all audit reports have Citizen-friendly summaries of audit reports, with concise explanation of the main findings, results and conclusions of conducted audits.[214] The SAO also has an official channel for submitting complaints, which can be found on the

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210 Conversion of points: 0-3 points = 0; 4-5 points = 1; 6-7 points = 2; 8-11 points =3; 12-15 points = 4; 16-18 points = 5
211 2020-2023 Communication Strategy of the State Audit Office, State Audit Office, February 2020, https://bit.ly/3NyHpdT
212 Rules for the systematization of jobs at the State Audit Office, State Audit Office, August 2020, https://bit.ly/417tYER (pg. 134)
213 2021 Annual Report on Conducted Audits and on the Work of the State Audit Office, State Audit Office, 2022, https://bit.ly/3Vw-miuA
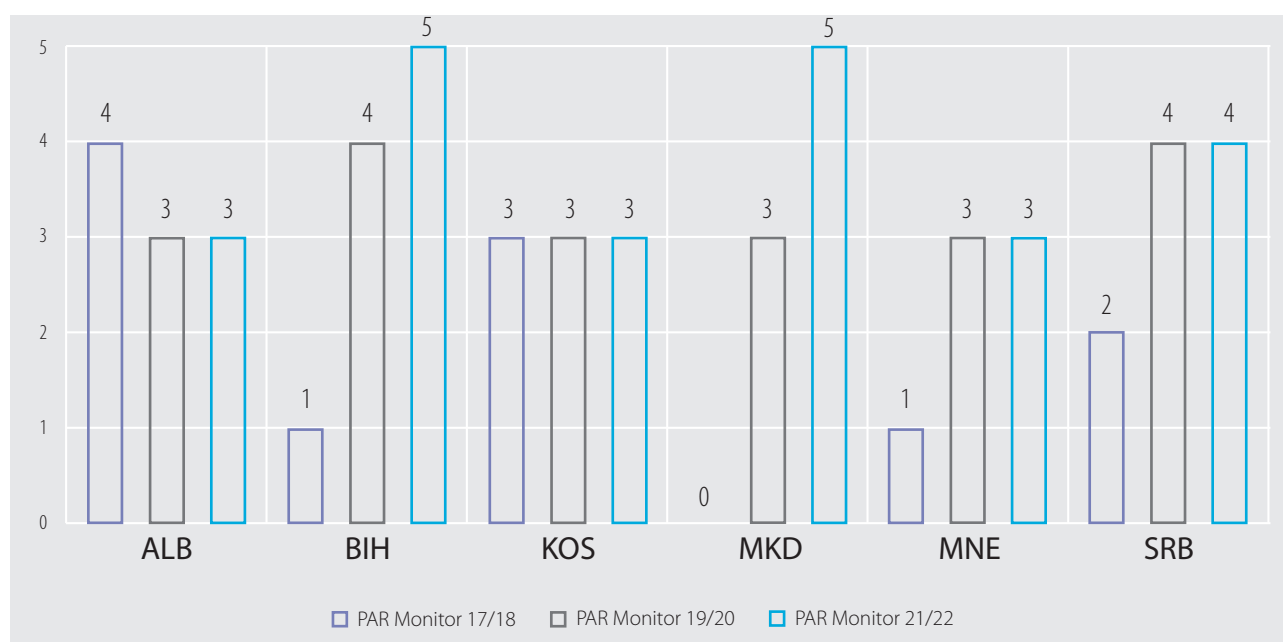214 Audit reports – section on the official website of the State Audit Office, https://bit.ly/3M4T4jD

front page of the website of the SAO.[215] Additionally, according to the Director of the SAO, while preparing its 2022 Annual Work Program, the SAO submitted a notification for filing requests/proposals for performing audits to over 380 stakeholders, while on its website it set up a Request for revision form.[216] As of the day of preparation of SAO's 2022 Annual Work Program, a total of 38 requests have been received, most of which are requests submitted by citizens or 47% and by LGUs or 21%.[217] Out of the received requests, during the preparation of SAO's 2022 Annual Work Program, 15 requests or 39% of the total received requests were accepted.

The SAO has continued to consult CSOs on their work for the purpose of identifying risks in the public sector. According to the 2021 Annual Report on the work of the SAO, Memoranda of Cooperation with specific CSOs were signed, and a detailed description of the cooperation between the SAO and said CSOs is also presented. According to the Director of the SAO, "CSOs represent a target group for communication and cooperation determined in the 2020-2023 Communication Strategy of the SAO. The cooperation with CSOs and the media aims to strengthen the pressure on the institutions to act more effectively upon recommendations under final audit reports. Consultative meetings enable CSOs to be informed about the state of play regarding final audit reports, being also a possibility for the SAO to update its findings based on research and analysis of the CSOs."[218]

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

WeBER indicator PFM P16 I1: Supreme Audit Institution's communication and cooperation with the public pertaining to its work

Legend: PAR Monitor 17/18, PAR Monitor 19/20, PAR Monitor 21/22

Regional PAR Monitor reports with results for all WB administrations are available at: www.par-monitor.org

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215 Official website of the State Audit Office http://dzr.mk/mk
216 Interview with the Director of SAO (21.09.2022)
217 Request for revision - section on the official website of the State Audit Office, https://bit.ly/3pbXMTj
218 Interview with the Director of SAO (21.09.2022)

VII.3 Summary results: Public Finance Management

In the area of PFM, the most positive results and progress were noted under the indicator regarding the Supreme Audit Institution's communication and cooperation with the public pertaining to its work, while regress has been evident regarding the availability of public procurement related information to the public and public availability of information on public internal financial controls and parliamentary scrutiny.

In terms of Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents, the Annual budgets for 2022 and 2021, in-year budget execution report and monthly economic reports are available and easily accessible on the website of the Ministry of Finance. At the same time, Mid-year budget execution reports are not easily accessible online. The last mid-year budget execution report that was found is for 2021 and it can be found only by internet browsing. It is also positive that as of 2017, the Ministry of Finance has been regularly (annually) publishing the Citizens' Budget.

As already mentioned, there has been regress in terms of public availability of information on public internal financial controls and parliamentary scrutiny. While, the Ministry of Finance has published consolidated annual reports on PIFC for 2021 and 2020, unfortunately, there are no quality reviews of internal audit reports regularly produced or published online whatsoever. On the other hand, it is positive to see that most of the ministries publish information related to financial management and control as 14 out of 16 ministries have at least one of the three required FMC information. As in previous years, no evidence of CHU's proactive engagement with the public was found as there have been no media appearances, press releases or organization of public events. Similarly, no evidence was found on the website of the Parliament that suggest that the Parliament reviews consolidated report on the PIFC.

There has also been regress in terms of the availability of public procurement related information to the public in comparison with previous years. The Public Procurement Bureau has been regularly publishing Annual Reports on the implementation of the overall public procurement policy, except for the 2021 report. Similarly, the State Commission for Public Procurement Appeals has been regularly publishing reports on procedures for protection of rights of bidders in public procurement, but the 2021 report has still not been published at the time of monitoring. However, it is positive that the reporting on public procurement done by central procurement authorities is citizen-friendly and accessible. The public procurement portal is also user friendly as anyone on the website can access and look through published contract notices, latest award decisions, assigned contracts, e-procurement, e-complaints, and anyone can have access to the complete tender documentation which is free of charge.

Annual public procurement plans are available on the National e-Portal for Public Procurement for both 2022 and 2021 for all Ministries and other state institutions, and most of the PP plans are published on the Ministries websites. However, it is concerning that no public procurement reports were found for any of the sampled central-level contracting authorities for the last two calendar years, neither on the websites of authorities, nor on the website of the National e-Portal for Public Procurement. It is positive to see that open and competitive procedures are the main method of public procurement, as only 2.45% of contracts have been concluded through the negotiated procedure, without publishing a call.

The most positive results under the PFM area indicators have been noted when analysing the Supreme Audit Institution's communication and cooperation with the public pertaining to its work. The SAO has a standalone communication strategy for the 2020-2023 period, along with a separate Action Plan for communication for each year separately. It also has a designated job position for proactive communication and provision of feedback towards the public. The SAO uses various means of communication with the public, and regularly communicates with CSOs. All audit reports have Citizen-friendly summaries, and the SAO also has an official channel for submitting complaints by any interested party.

■ Recommendations for [name of PAR Area]

Tracking recommendations from PAR Monitor 2019/2020

Recommendation	Status	Comment
The year-end budget report should provide non-financial information about the performance of the Government in terms of outputs and outcomes, covering all budget users.	Not implemented	
The administrative capacities of internal audit units on central and local level should be strengthened and quality reviews of internal audit reports should be regularly produced and published.	Not implemented	
The Ministry of Finance and the CHU should invest efforts to engage proactively with the public and the media on PIFC related matters, by, but not limited to organizing public events with participation of diverse stakeholders, publish press releases, and make media appearances.	Not implemented	
In addition to the Government reviewing the annual reports on PIFC, the Parliament should also have an active role in this process and should also review and discuss the consolidated reports on PIFC.	Not implemented	
While it is positive that the annual reports of the Public Procurement Bureau (PPB) contain a reader-friendly summary of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the public procurement market, it would be best if in the future, this summary is made available at the beginning of the report so that readers can easily have this information straight away instead of looking through the document	Not implemented	
Having in mind that no public procurement reports were found for any of the sample central-level contracting authorities; all contracting authorities should invest significant efforts to produce consolidated reports from the records of all their public procurement procedures.	Not implemented	
The SAO should start promoting its work through diverse initiatives and public campaigns. Along this line, the SAO should also consider activating social networks and engage more proactively with citizens and media by producing and publishing information brochures, leaflets, videos, multimedia presentations or similar promotional materials other than audit reports.	Implemented	
The newly introduced Audit Report Abstract should be published on the SAO website along with the audits.	Implemented	This recommendation was implemented right after the WeBER monitoring report was published.

1. The Ministry of Finance and the CHU should invest efforts to engage proactively with the public and the media on PIFC related matters, by, but not limited to organizing public events with participation of diverse stakeholders, publishing press releases, and making media appearances.[219]

2. In addition to the Government reviewing the annual reports on PIFC, the Parliament should also have an active role in this process and should also review and discuss the consolidated reports on PIFC.[220]

3. While it is positive that the annual reports of the Public Procurement Bureau contain a reader-friendly summary of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the public procurement market, it would be best if in the future, this summary is made available at the beginning of the report so that readers can easily have this information straight away instead of looking through the entire document.[221]
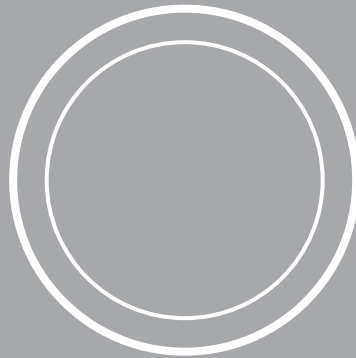
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219 Repeated from 2019/2020
220 Repeated from 2019/2020
221 Repeated from 2019/2020

METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

The PAR Monitor methodological approach

■ EU principles as a starting point and common framework of reference

WeBER approaches the monitoring of PAR in the Western Balkans from the perspective of uniform requirements posed by the EU accession process for the entire region. As the EU and SIGMA/OECD have developed a comprehensive set of principles for all countries to transform their administrations into modern, EU member states, WeBER has used these principles as the golden standard and a starting point for, firstly, developing and then implementing its own monitoring methodology. Moreover, in line with its overall rationale, WeBER has emulated SIGMA's methods to create its own indicators, using a similar compound-indicator structure and the same scoring approach, with the quantification of elements (sub-indicators) and total scores assigned to indicator values on a scale from 0 to 5.

This approach acknowledges that SIGMA's comprehensive approach cannot and should not be replicated by local actors, as it already represents a monitoring source independent from national governments in the WB. In this sense, WeBER does not seek to present a contesting (competitive) assessment of how these principles are fulfilled in the WB administrations, but rather offer a complementary view, based in local knowledge and complementary research approaches.

The PAR monitor methodology was developed by the WeBER research team and was thoroughly consulted among the WeBER expert associates. Overall, the methodology is based on 21 SIGMA principles within six key areas of PAR. These principles are monitored through 23 indicators that analyse different aspects of PAR key areas.

■ The regional approach

Since the baseline WeBER monitoring of PAR, an important facet is its regional character. The regional approach implies that all indicators are framed and phrased in a manner which enables application to six different systems that are assessed. Second, the regional approach means that findings are regionally comparable.

Such a regional approach admittedly results in some degree of loss of detail and national specificity in the monitoring work. However, it presents many benefits compared to nationally specific approaches. First and foremost is the potential to compare different national results, which allows the benchmarking of countries and their systems, the recognition of good, as well as the rise of positive competition between governments. Last, but not least, it allows for the creation and increase of regional knowledge and peer learning regarding PAR among CSOs, particularly useful for inspiring new initiatives and advocacy efforts at the national level.

■ Selection of principles "for and by civil society"

The PAR Monitor maintains a basic structure which follows the six chapters of the Principles of Public Administration. It does not attempt to monitor all the principles under each chapter, nor does it seek to monitor them in a holistic manner, but it rather adopts a more focused and selective approach. The criteria for selecting the principles to be monitored (and their sub-principles) were developed with three main ideas in mind:

- There are certain principles in which civil society is more active and consequently has more knowledge and experience.
- To gain momentum, the PAR Monitor will need to be relevant to the interests of the wider public in the region.
- The approach should ensure an added value to SIGMA's work and not duplicate it.

The WeBER monitoring approach utilises the experience and expertise accumulated within the civil sector in the region to the maximum extent possible. Therefore, a number of indicators rely on civil society as a core source of knowledge.

Focus on the citizen-facing aspects of administration

Another key criterion which has guided the WeBER's selection of principles (and sub-principles) is their relevance to the work and interests of the wider public. This means that both the selection of the principles and the design of the indicators included questions such as: "Does the public care about this?" or "Is this aspect of public administration visible to ordinary citizens?" In keeping with this approach, the WeBER methodology retains a focus on the points of interaction between the administration and its users (citizens and businesses), while leaving out issues that constitute the internal operating procedures of the administration invisible to the public.

WeBER indicator design

The WeBER research team designed a set of compound indicators in 2016, that was modified in 2019, with each indicator comprising several elements (essentially sub-indicators), elaborating various aspects of the issue addressed by the entire indicator. The entire design of indicators is quantitative, in the sense that all findings – based on both quantitative and qualitative research – are assigned numerical values. Findings are used to assess the values of individual elements, assigning them total element scores of either 0 or 1 (for less complex assessments, such as those where a simple yes or no answer is possible) or 0 or 2 (for more complex assessments). Only integer values are assigned to elements.

Furthermore, for each element a weight of either 1 or 2 is applied. In principle, a weight of 2 is assigned to those evaluated as basic, key requirements in relation to a certain practice. A weight of 1 is applied to more advanced requirements, i.e., higher and more complex standards. For example, a weight of 2 would be applied for an element assessing a basic government reporting practice, whereas a weight of 1 would be applied to an element assessing whether the data in a report is gender sensitive or whether it is available in an open data format. Moreover, as most indicators combine different research approaches and data sources, in cases where perception survey findings are combined with hard data analysis, a weight of 1 is assigned to the former and a weight of 2 to the latter.

For each indicator there is a conversion table for transforming total scores from analyses of individual elements into values on a common scale from 0 to 5. The final indicator values are assigned only as integers, meaning, for instance, there are no half points assigned. Scoring and methodology details for each indicator are available on the PAR Monitor section of the WeBER website - https://www.par-monitor.org/par-monitor-methodology/.

Finally, there were no methodological changes in the 2021/2022 monitoring cycle. WeBER research team has made noteworthy revisions ahead of the second PAR Monitor 2019/2020, pertaining to:

- Policy Development and Coordination, i.e., introduction of additional elements to the indicator on public participation in policymaking (extension from analysing solely CSOs perceptions, to assessing the quality of public consultations in practice), and exclusion from the monitoring framework an indicator on the accessibility of legislation and explanatory materials to the public

- Public Finance Management, i.e., introduction of a new indicator covering transparency of public procurement policy at the central level, which was measured for the first time in 2019/2020 cycle.

With the expected adoption of a new SIGMA Principles framework in 2023, the first step for the WeBER research team will be to revise the PAR Monitor methodology accordingly. It also means that starting from the next cycle, implementation of the PAR Monitor will depart from the methodological approach applied in this, and previous two PAR Monitor reports (the extent of such departure will be determined by WeBER research team subsequently). Due to expected revisions, familiarisation process, and testing of the new framework by the WeBER researchers, the next monitoring cycle is planned for 2024/2025 period.

◼ The PAR Monitor package

The PAR Monitor is composed of one regional, comparative report of monitoring results for the entire region and six national reports that elaborate the monitoring findings for each administration in greater detail. In line with this approach, the regional report focuses on comparative findings, regional trends, and examples of good or bad practices, but does not provide recommendations. The national reports, on the other hand, provide in-depth, country-specific findings and identify a set of recommendations for national policy makers for each PAR area.

The added value of the entire monitoring exercise is that it allows monitoring changes vis-à-vis indicator values from the baseline monitoring conducted in 2017/2018 as well as comparing progress between the three completed cycles to date. It also allows stakeholders to reflect on the most important developments and trends in the implementation of policy and in the perceptions of key targeted groups. In certain cases, this reflection allows for some comparisons of results over time, as in the case of public perception surveys on administrative service delivery practices conducted on a representative sample of citizens. In cases of surveys of civil servants and CSOs, the 2021/2022 PAR Monitor allows us to monitor prevailing trends in the opinions of these stakeholder groups as compared to the 2019/2020, and the baseline surveys.[222]

The "Master Methodology" document and the detailed indicator tables, all available on the WeBER website,[223] sshould also be considered as part of the entire PAR Monitor package and can be used to fully understand the details of all monitoring exercises implemented to date.

The entire package of reports is also accompanied by an online tool for viewing and comparing the findings from different WeBER monitoring cycles, the Regional PAR Scoreboard. This database of all indicator values and the tables and graphs presenting those values can be found on the project website, under the heading "PAR Monitor".[224] The scoreboard also includes a section for viewing and comparing SIGMA's latest monitoring results for the whole region.

◼ Quality assurance procedures within the monitoring exercise

The quality assurance approach, established at the start of the baseline monitoring, is still applied. WeBER team relies on a multi-layered quality assurance procedure to guarantee that the PAR monitoring findings are based on reliable and regionally comparable evidence. That process included both internal and external expert checks and reviews of data. The internal process of quality control comprised two main elements:

1. a peer-review process, which involved different collaborative formats, such as written feedback, online team meetings and workshops. ,
2. once the scoring for each administration was finalised, the WeBER lead researcher and team leader performed a horizontal cross-check of the findings to ensure their regional comparability and an alignment of assessment approaches, thus preparing the analysis for the external review.

The two phases of the external quality control process include:

● fact-checking by government institutions in charge of the given assessed area;

● Following the drafting of the regional report, members of the WeBER Advisory Council and recognised international experts performed an expert review of the regional PAR Monitor chapters in line with their areas of expertise.

The national reports also underwent standard internal review procedures by each WeBER partner organisation.

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222 In each monitoring cycle, it was not possible to create representative, random samples for the populations of CSOs and civil servants, and these two surveys were distributed throughout these two populations, and analysis was done on the received complete responses. Since the samples in the baseline, second, and third monitoring cycle are, thus, not identical, the results are not fully comparable.

223 PAR Monitor methodology, available at: https://www.par-monitor.org/par-monitor-methodology/.

224 Regional PAR scoreboards, available at: https://www.par-monitor.org/regional-par-scoreboards/.

■ PAR Monitor 2021/2022 timeframe

The monitoring exercise was conducted between January and November 2022. For the most part, monitoring focuses on practices implemented in 2021 and the first half of 2022. The exception are those indicator elements looking at regularity of governmental reporting practices, where 2020 or 2019 were included as the base years due to the governments' reporting cycles or the requirements of specific indicators.

The individual indicator scorings indicate the exact periods of measurement, kept comparable across the region as much as possible, which allow for the clear identification of timeframes of reference for all findings in the reports.

■ Limitations in scope and approach

As explained in the previous editions, the main limitation facing this project stems from the fact that the PAR Monitor does not cover the entire framework of SIGMA principles, but only those in which the interest of, and added value from, civil society is strongest in the pre-accession period. Moreover, selected principles are not always covered in every angle, but rather in those specific aspects which have been determined by the authors as the most relevant to approach them from the perspective of civil society monitoring. The specific WeBER approach used in all such cases is described in the project's methodology and individual indicator tables.

Lastly, some of the principles are still approached from a rather perception-based point of view. This is mainly the case for those principles thoroughly monitored by SIGMA, as the most useful way to complement its approach was deemed to be by monitoring perceptions of certain key stakeholder groups (such as public servants and CSOs). This is a deliberate component of the WeBER approach from the start, and those indicators should be looked at as complementary to the assessments conducted by SIGMA for the same principles. Nevertheless, as experience from the baseline monitoring cycle exposed limitations in certain cases when relying solely on perception data, the indicator on the inclusiveness and openness of policy making was complemented during the 2019/2020 cycle with hard evidence so as to have a more balanced assessment. WeBER team collects lessons learned from each monitoring cycle and deliberates internally on the necessity for potential changes or adjustments, with the view of improving the overall quality of its monitoring albeit keeping in mind the need to maintain a level of comparability between WeBER findings from different monitoring cycles.

In terms of geographical scope, the monitoring exercise and report cover the six administrations of the WB region, in accordance with the EU definition of the region.[225] For BIH, WeBER deliberately focuses on state level institutions wherever the structures and practices of institutions are analysed. The only exceptions to this are the service delivery indicators, where sampled administrative services include those provided by lower levels of governance (such as entities).

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225 European Commission's Enlargement package, and progress reports, are available at: https://neighbourhood-enlargement.ec.europa.eu/enlargement-policy/strategy-and-reports_en.

Data collection methods

The data from all six individual countries are used and compared. These data were collected through the following methods:

- Focus groups
- Interviews with stakeholders
- Public perception survey
- Survey of civil servants
- Survey of civil society organisations
- Analysis of official documentation, data, and government websites
- Requests for free access to information.

Focus groups

Focus groups were conducted for collecting qualitative inputs from stakeholders for certain indicators. Focus group data are most often use to complement or corroborate data collected by other research tools. When it was not possible to conduct focus groups, researchers held interviews with relevant target groups instead. More specifically, the PAR monitor methodology anticipated focus groups for:

- Strategic Framework of PAR, with civil society organisations (for indicators SFPAR_P1_I1, SFPAR_P2&4_I1);

- Policy Development and Coordination, with civil society organisations (covering PDC_P5_I2, PDC_P6_I1, PDC_P10_I1, PDC_P11_I1)

- Public Service and Human Resource Management, with former candidates who previously applied for a job in central state administration bodies (for indicator PSHRM_P3_I1; however, in this monitoring cycle, interviews were held with former candidates, instead of the focus groups);

- Accountability, with civil society organisations (for indicator ACC_P2_I1), and

- Service Delivery, with civil society organisations specifically dealing with accessibility issues, vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities (for indicator SD_P4_I1).

The selection of participants was based on purposive non-probability sampling which targeted CSOs with expert knowledge on the issue in question. These focus groups were held in all six countries:

Table: Focus groups conducted at the WB level

Country	Group	No. of FGs	PAR Area
ALB	Civil society	2	Service Delivery; Policy Development and Coordination
BIH	Civil society	2	Strategic Framework of PAR; Policy Development and Coordination; Service Delivery,
KS	Civil society	1	Policy Development and Coordination; Service Delivery
MKD	Civil society	1	Policy Development and Coordination; Service Delivery; Accountability
MNE	Civil society	1	Policy Development and Coordination; Accountability
SRB	Civil society	2	Strategic Framework of PAR; Policy Development and Coordination; Accountability

◼ Interviews with Stakeholders

Interviews were conducted to collect qualitative inputs from stakeholders on monitored areas. Similar to focus groups, interviews were largely used to complement and verify data collected by other methods.

Interviews were semi-structured, composed of a set of open-ended questions which allowed for a discussion with interviewees and on-the-spot sub-questions. Selection of interviewees was based on purposive, non-probability sampling and targeted experts relevant for a given thematic area.

Overall, a total of 64 interviews were held during the monitoring period. Interviewees were given a full anonymity in terms of any personal information, in order to ensure higher response rate and facilitate open exchange.

Table: Interviews conducted at WB level

Country	Interviewee (number of interviews)	PAR Area
ALB	Representative of the DoPA (3)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Former civil service candidate (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Former senior civil servant (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	PAR expert (1)	Policy Development and Coordination
	Representative of SAI (1)	Public Finance Management
BIH	Ministry of Finance and Treasury representative (1)	Public Finance Management
	PARCO representative (1)	Strategic Framework of PAR
	CSA representative (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Experts (2)	PSHRM
	Senior civil servants (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Candidates for civil service (9)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	AOI representative (1)	Public Finance Management
KS	NAO representative (1)	Public Finance Management
	Senior civil servant, former and current (3)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
MKD	Civil servants (3)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Experts (2)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Civil service candidates (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Agency for Administration representative (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	SAO representative (1)	Public Finance Management
MNE	Representatives of CSO (1)	Strategic Framework of PAR
	Senior civil servants (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management; Service Delivery; Public Finance Management
	Former civil service candidates (2)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
SRB	Civil servants (3)	Public Service and Human Resource Management; Public Finance Management
	Senior civil servants (2)	Public Service and Human Resource Management; Public Finance Management
	Former civil service candidate (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Experts (2)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	CSO representatives (4)	Service Delivery
	SAI representative (1)	Public finance management

◼ Public Perception Survey

The public perception survey is based on a questionnaire targeting the general public (18+ permanent residents) of 6 Western Balkan countries. The survey was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in combination with computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI), using a two-stage random representative stratified sampling (primary sampling unit: households, secondary sampling unit: household member).

The survey was conducted between 4th and 31st May 2022. At WB level, the margin of error for the total sample of 6093 citizens is ± 3.15%, at the 95% confidence level.

Table: Public perception survey methodology framework

Location	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia
Time	4 – 31 May, 2022
Data Collection Method	CATI in combination with CAWI
Sampling Frame	Entire 18+ population of permanent residents of target countries
Sampling	Two stage random representative stratified sample (PSU: Households, SSU: Household member)
Margin of error	Average margin of error per country is ± 3.15% at the 95% confidence level

Survey of Civil Servants

Civil servants survey was implemented based on a unified questionnaire targeting civil servants working in the central state administrations of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. In Albania, the 2022 survey of civil servants was not implemented since the Department for Public Administration (DoPA), a WeBER project associate, could not assist in dissemination due to technical issues involving their internal email communication system. The questionnaire was translated and adapted to local languages. It generally covered 5 main sections: recruitment of civil servants, temporary engagements in the administration, status of senior civil servants, salary/remuneration and integrity and anti-corruption**.** Data collection was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire on SurveyMonkey platform. At WB level, a total of 2682 civil servants participated in the survey.

Table: Breakdown of the sample for survey of civil servants

	N	% (of observations)
TOTAL	2682	100%
Key groups		
Civil service position		
Senior civil service manager – head of authority	60	2.24
Senior civil service manager – not a head of authority	455	16.96
Non-senior civil service manager (executorial)	538	20.06
Civil servant in non-managerial expert position	1079	40.23
Administrative support civil servant position	205	7.64
Civil servant on fixed-term contract or otherwise temporarily engaged	233	8.69
Political appointment (minister's cabinet or otherwise)	9	0.34
Other	103	3.84
State administration institution		
Ministry	1287	50.18
Subordinate agency	460	17.93
Centre-of-government institution (PM office, government office, government service)	286	11.15
Autonomous agency within the central state administration	415	16.18
Other	117	4.56
Gender		
Male	1000	37.29
Female	1603	59.77
Other	25	0.93
Do not want to respond	54	2.01
Years working in the administration		
Mean = 12.82 years; Range = 0-41 years		
Sector worked before joining the administration		
Local or regional administration	220	8.85
Other branch of power	148	5.96
Public services	359	14.45
International organization	69	2.78
Non-governmental organization	72	2.90
Media	78	3.14
Private sector	972	39.11
This was my first job	480	19.32
Other	87	3.50

Table. Margin of error (MoE) per question at the 95% confidence level

Question	MoE range (ALB)	MoE range (BIH)	MoE range (KOS)	MoE range (MKD)	MoE range (MNE)	MoE range (SRB)
Civil servants in my institution are recruited on the basis of qualifications and skills	2.42-2.86	2.9-3.25	2.92-3.16	2.58-2.81	3.14-3.27	3.16-3.28
In the recruitment procedure for civil servants in my institution all candidates are treated equally (regardless of gender, ethnicity, or another personal trait which could be basis for unfair discrimination)	2.51-3.07	3.11-3.46	3.08-3.32	2.95-3.22	3.59-3.72	3.62-3.74
To get a civil service job in my institution, one needs to have connections	3.51-4.0	3.43-3.75	3.52-3.78	3.25-3.48	3.06-3.21	3.08-3.20
Hiring of individuals on a temporary basis (on fixed-term, service and other temporary contracts) is an exception in my institution	2.89-3.41	3.17-3.58	2.81-3.09	2.67-2.91	2.44-2.57	2.60-2.72
Individuals who are hired on a temporary basis perform tasks which should normally be performed by civil servants	2.68-3.29	3.70-4.05	3.85-4.10	3.37-3.65	3.28-3.44	3.77-3.94
Such contracts get extended to more than one year	2.49-3.16	3.88-4.22	4.12-4.35	3.87-3.38	3.75-3.9	3.61-3.73
When people are hired on a temporary basis, they are selected based on qualifications and skills	2.54-3.18	2.98-3.38	3.23-3.54	2.62-2.92	3.12-3.28	3.39-3.53
Individuals hired on a temporary basis go on to become civil servants after their temporary engagements	2.83-3.43	3.24-3.63	3.55-3.81	3.17-3.41	3.29-3.42	3.18-3.29
The formal rules for hiring people on a temporary basis are applied in practice	3.36-3.95	3.34-3.72	3.89-4.16	3.19-3.52	3.52-3.69	3.67-3.80
Procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs in my institution	2.01-2.55	2.67-3.07	2.76-3.02	2.22-2.47	2.83-3.0	2.88-3.01
In my institution, senior civil servants would implement illegal actions if political superiors asked them to do so	2.66-3.25	3.42-3.79	3.45-3.75	2.73-3.0	2.69-2.87	3.74-3.93
Senior civil servants can reject an illegal order from a minister or another political superior, without endangering their position	2.87-3.39	3.28-3.67	3.54-3.80	3.01-3.31	3.03-3.20	3.03-3.15
Senior civil service positions are subject of political agreements and "divisions of the cake" among the ruling political parties	3.77-4.20	3.54-3.91	3.79-4.06	3.91-4.12	3.34-3.51	3.36-3.49
Senior civil servants are at least in part appointed thanks to political support	3.69-4.20	3.80-4.11	4.03-4.27	4.07-4.29	3.49-3.66	3.53-3.66
In my institution, senior civil servants participate in electoral campaigns of political parties during elections	1.86-2.57	3.68-4.07	4.10-4.39	3.12-3.48	2.51-2.73	2.45-2.60
In my institution senior civil servants get dismissed for political motives	1.5-2.06	3.51-3.91	3.32-3.67	3.45-3.76	2.45-2.67	2.43-2.58
Formal rules and criteria for dismissing senior civil servants are properly applied in practice	3.07-3.97	3.29-3.72	4.29-4.54	2.87-3.22	3.15-3.37	3.39-3.52
In my institution, bonuses or increases in pay grades are used by managers only to stimulate or reward performance	2.27-2.83	2.76-3.22	3.20-3.50	2.55-2.82	3.02-3.17	2.95-3.08
In my institution, political and personal connections help employees to receive bonuses or increases in pay grades	2.65-3.32	3.30-3.80	3.62-3.91	3.46-3.76	2.72-2.92	2.76-2.90
Integrity and anti-corruption measures in place in my institution are effective in achieving their purpose	2.60-3.12	3.27-3.69	3.68-3.96	2.65-2.91	3.29-3.44	3.38-3.49
Integrity and anti-corruption measures in place in my institution are impartial (meaning, applied to all civil servants in the same way)	2.62-3.18	3.17-3.58	3.51-3.80	2.76-3.04	3.26-3.42	3.37-3.49
If I were to become a whistle-blower, I would feel protected	1.74-2.28	2.89-3.34	3.44-3.79	1.86-2.11	2.31-2.48	2.23-2.35
How important do you think it is that the civil society organisations (NGOs) monitor public administration reform	1.9-2.47	1.81-2.12	2.41-2.66	1.90-2.14	2.54-2.70	2.67-2.81
How important do you think it is that the public (citizens) perceive the administration as depoliticised	1.22-1.54	1.27-1.48	1.24-1-38	1.2-1.34	1.37-1.47	1.37-1.46

■ Survey of Civil Society Organisations

CSO survey results are based on a standardized questionnaire targeting representatives of CSOs working in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia. The questionnaire included nine sections covering:

1. CSOs' involvement in evidence-based policy-making,
2. Participation in policy- and decision-making,
3. Exercising the right to free access of information,
4. Transparency of decision-making processes,
5. Accessibility and availability of legislation and explanatory materials,
6. CSO's perceptions on government's planning, monitoring and reporting on its work,
7. Effectiveness of mechanisms for protecting the right to good administration,
8. Integrity of public administration, and
9. The accessibility of administrative services.

Data collection was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire on SurveyMonkey platform.

At the WB level, a total of 515 CSOs participated in the surveys conducted between 23rd March and 14th July 2022.

ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB
23/03 – 21/06	07/04 – 11/07	13/04 – 14/07	04/04 – 01/06	11/04 – 13/06	23/03 – 28/06

Table: Breakdown of the CSO survey sample in at WB level

	N	% (of observations)
TOTAL	515	100
Key groups		
Type of organization[226]		
Policy research/Think-tank	125	13.87
Watchdog	97	10.77
Advocacy	230	25.53
Service provider	160	17.76
Grassroot	152	16.87
Other	137	15.21

Field of operation		
Governance and democracy	143	6.01
Rule of law	143	6.01
Human rights	257	10.81
Public administration reform	107	4.50
European integration	123	5.17
Gender issues	153	6.43
Children and youth	213	8.96
Environment and sustainable development	215	9.04
Education	206	8.66
Culture	137	5.76
Health	96	4.04
Media	86	3.62
Economic development	118	4.96
Civil society development	177	7.44
Social services	133	5.59
Other	71	2.99

Year of registration of the CSO		
Mean= 2005; Range=1869-2022		

Position of the respondent in the organization*		
Senior-level management	314	59.81
Mid-level management	71	13.52
Senior non-management	35	6.67
Mid-level non-management	34	6.48
Other	71	13.52

Years working with the organization		
Mean=9.89 years; Range=0-41 years		

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226 Multiple answers may be selected

■ Analysis of official documentation, data and official websites

Monitoring heavily relied on the analysis of official documents publicly available on the websites of the administration bodies. The analysed documents include:

- legislation (laws and bylaws);
- policy documents (strategies, programmes, plans, action plans, etc.)
- official reports (implementation reports, public consultation reports etc.);
- analytical documents (impact assessments, explanatory memorandums to legislation, policy concepts, policy evaluations etc.);
- individual legal acts (decisions, conclusions etc.);
- other documents (agendas, meeting minutes and reports, announcements, guidelines, directives, memorandums etc.);

Additionally, official websites of public authorities were used as sources of data and documents for all indicators, except for the ones completely based on survey data. In certain cases, the websites of public authorities were closely scrutinised as they were the key sources of information and units of analysis.

■ Requests for free access to information (FOI)

The PAR monitor methodology relies on publicly available data. Researchers sent FOI requests in cases where methodology asks for certain institutional practices that could not easily be covered by online available data, but, in certain cases, it was necessary to send additional FOI request to obtain clarification, even though not foreseen by the methodology. Therefore, when an indicator did require information available online, FOI requests were not sent.

That said, the researchers widely used FOI requests as a data collection tool primarily in three areas:

1. Policy Development and Coordination (indicators PDC_P6_I1, PDC_P10_I1).
2. Public Service and Human Resource Management (PSHRM_P3_I1, PSHRM_P2_I1).
3. Accountability (ACC_P2_I2).

Table: FOI requests per country (110 total)

Albania	14
Bosnia and Herzegovina	17
Kosovo	27
Montenegro	16
North Macedonia	15
Serbia	21

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