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NORTH MACEDONIA

2019/2020



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Empowerment for a
Reformed Public Administration **2.0**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	6
ABOUT WeBER 2.0.....	7
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	9
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	14
I. PAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK.....	15
I.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN PAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR NORTH MACEDONIA.....	16
I.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS.....	18
I.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: PAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK.....	21
II. POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION.....	23
II.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR NORTH MACEDONIA.....	24
II.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS.....	27
II.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION.....	35
III. PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT.....	39
III.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR NORTH MACEDONIA.....	40
III.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS.....	43
III.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT.....	58
IV. ACCOUNTABILITY.....	61
IV.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN ACCOUNTABILITY AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR NORTH MACEDONIA.....	62
IV.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS.....	65
IV.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: ACCOUNTABILITY.....	70
V. SERVICE DELIVERY.....	73
V.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA.....	74
V.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS.....	76
V.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: SERVICE DELIVERY.....	85
VI. PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT.....	87
VI.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA.....	88
VI.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS.....	91
VI.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT.....	101
METHODOLOGY.....	105
LIST OF REFERENCES.....	113

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ABOUT WeBER 2.0

The Western Balkan Civil Society Empowerment for a Reformed Public Administration (WeBER2.0) is a three-year project principally funded by the European Union (EU). For activities related to the preparation and printing of the PAR Monitor 2019/2020 and the organisation of the second regional “Citizens First” conference in February 2021, co-funding was provided by the “Protecting Civic Space – Regional Civil Society Development Hub” project, financed by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and implemented by the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN). WeBER2.0 represents a 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.

The first WeBER project has contributed to increasing the relevance, participation, and capacities of civil society organisations (CSOs) and the media in the Western Balkans (WB) to advocate for and influence the design and implementation of public administration reform (PAR). WeBER2.0 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.

A combination of activities is conducted in WeBER2.0, contributing to the achievement of the project’s objective, namely:

- Through the Regional WeBER Platform and its National PAR Working Groups, which gather more than 130 CSOs, WeBER2.0 is facilitating dialogue on PAR for creating and implementing inclusive and transparent policy, as well as contributing to the sustainability of administrative reforms to the benefit of the citizens.
- Through its research and monitoring work and production of PAR Monitor reports, WeBER2.0 has created and gathered evidence for a meaningful dialogue.
- Through the CSO PAR Knowledge Centre, WeBER2.0 provides a searchable database of analyses and reports on PAR produced by the region’s civil society.
- 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/>), WeBER2.0 is collecting 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, WeBER2.0 aims to improve the embeddedness of PAR across the region’s administrative systems, thus increasing the sustainability of these reforms.
- Through a small grants scheme, WeBER2.0 works on improving the capacity of CSOs in the Western Balkans to participate in PAR.

WeBER2.0 products and further information about them are available on the project’s website, at www.par-monitor.org.

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



institut alternativa



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



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 2019/2020 is the result of monitoring work performed in 2020 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 LPCCI. 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
APRFAP	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



**PAR STRATEGIC
FRAMEWORK**

I.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

The 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 as well an annual report to the Government. Following the publication of reports on the MISA website, and prior to discussions within 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.

As noted in the EC North Macedonia 2020 Report: “a number of state institutions and civil society organisations were pro-active in the implementation, monitoring and reporting of the 2018-2022 public administration reform strategy and the 2018-2021 public financial management reforms programme. The high-level PAR Council and the Public Financial Management Council continued to ensure the political support for and supervision of reforms”.¹

In 2020, a Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy was conducted. However, as regards consultations with CSOs the preparation process was not that transparent and open. It took place in the late stages of the preparation, which was not the case in the process of development of the PAR Strategy and the previous Action Plan (AP) deriving from the Strategy.

In addition, there is no practice of preparing minutes from the consultation processes and the 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 PFM Programme.

The 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.

■ 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.

¹ EC North Macedonia 2020 Report, https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf, p. 13

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 from the baseline PAR Monitor 2017/2018 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 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.

I.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
Consultations with civil society are conducted when the document(s) are developed	0/4
Consultations with civil society are conducted in an early phase of the development of the document(s)	2/4
Invitations to the civil society to participate in the consultations are open	2/4
Responsible government bodies are proactive in ensuring that a wide range of external stakeholders become involved in the process	0/2
Civil society is provided complete information for preparation for consultations	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
Responsible government bodies publicly provide feedback on the treatment of received comments	0/2
Responsible government bodies engage in open dialogue with civil society on contested questions	0/2
Consultations in the development of strategic PAR documents are open to the public	2/4
Total score	10/30
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)²	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	2

The research below presents the analysis under the WeBER project of monitoring the Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy and the Action Plan for the 2018-2021 PFM Programme. The public consultation on the Revision of the Action Plan lasted 15 days and an open call for comments and suggestions was published on the ENER³ on 21 December 2019. However, although the document had been published on the ENER, representatives in the focus group stated that this document was prepared in a non-inclusive process, unlike the process of preparation of the PAR Strategy and the AP.⁴

The two interviewees from the MISA agreed that inclusiveness, as an imminent principle of cooperation, was one of the key commitments of the MISA from the moment of starting the preparation of the (2018-2022) PAR Strategy and AP⁵. However, CSOs representatives in the focus group stated that the consultations were not inclusive from the very beginning. Furthermore, they disagreed that the document went through minor changes, but considered that there had been significant interventions.⁶ CSOs consider this example to be a deviation from the previously established good practice in the consultative process for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy.

Regarding the 2020 Action Plan for the 2018-2021 PFM Programme, the researchers could not find online information about the consultative process for this document. Hence, in reply to FOI requests⁷ 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 Ministry's response, two CSOs submitted comments, which upon assessment by in-line institutions were included in the final document. This was confirmed by the CSO representatives in the focus group.⁸ Yet, a conclusion of the focus group discussion was also that CSOs' participation in the Sectoral Group is strictly formal and their comments are usually not taken into consideration.

As far as invitations to the civil society to participate in the consultations are concerned, an open invitation was published only for the Revision of the Action Plan for the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy. CSOs were provided with complete information about both documents, required for preparing for the consultative process.

2 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

3 Electronic National Register of Regulations of the Republic of North Macedonia <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx>

4 Focus group with 5 CSOs was held on 6 November 2020 on the Zoom platform

5 Interviews with two representatives from the MISA on 2 November 2020

6 A focus group with 5 CSOs was held on 6 November 2020 on the Zoom platform

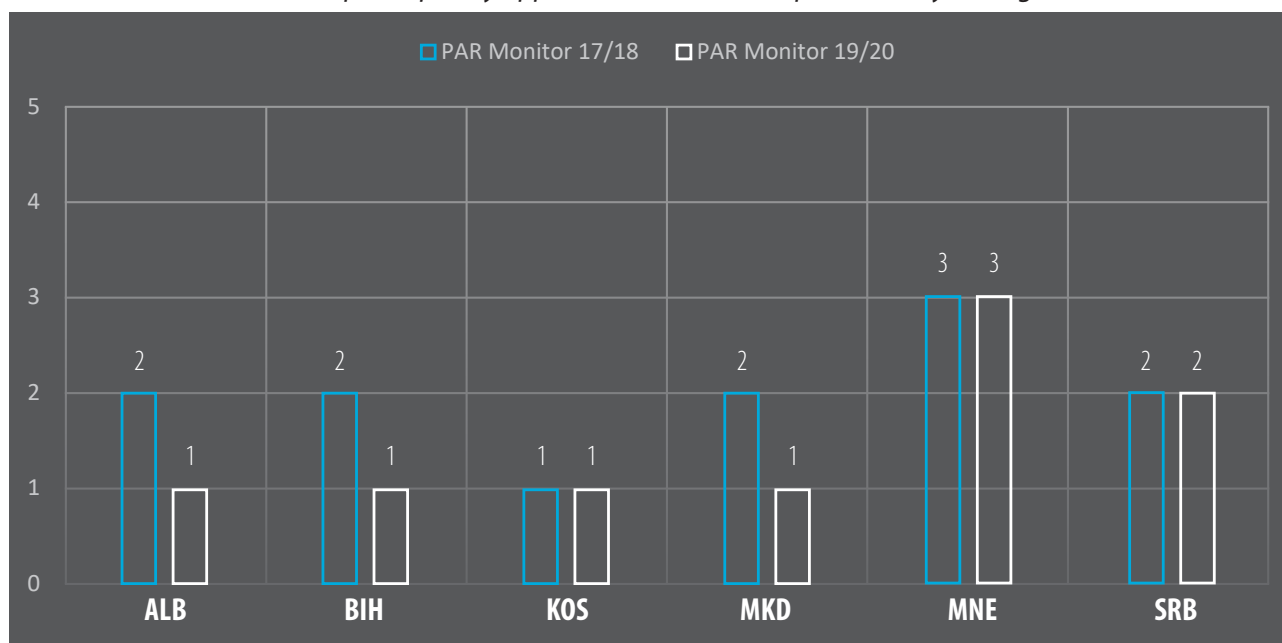
7 FOI request reply from the Ministry of Finance, received on 3 November 2020

8 Focus group with 5 CSOs was held on 6 November 2020 on the Zoom platform

A general comment about the overall consultative process deriving from the research indicates that consultations usually take place in the very late stages, when the documents are already prepared. The responsible (In-line) government bodies were not proactive in ensuring that a wide range of external stakeholders be involved in the process. Moreover, there is no evidence (minutes, or reports) found regarding the consideration of individual comments, remarks, or proposals by CSOs regarding both strategic documents, or regarding the open dialogue about contested issues.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



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
Administrative structures for PAR coordination and monitoring foresee an involvement of CSOs	0/2
Political level structures for PAR coordination foresee an involvement of CSOs	0/2
Format of CSO involvement in administrative structures for PAR coordination and monitoring	0/4
Format of CSO involvement in political structures for PAR coordination and monitoring	0/4
Involvement of CSOs is achieved based on an open competitive process	0/4
Meetings of the PAR coordination and monitoring structures are held regularly with CSO involvement	0/4
The format of meetings allows for discussion, contribution and feedback from CSOs	0/4
CSOs get consulted on the specific measures of PAR financing	0/4
Total score	0/26
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)⁹	0
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

⁹ 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

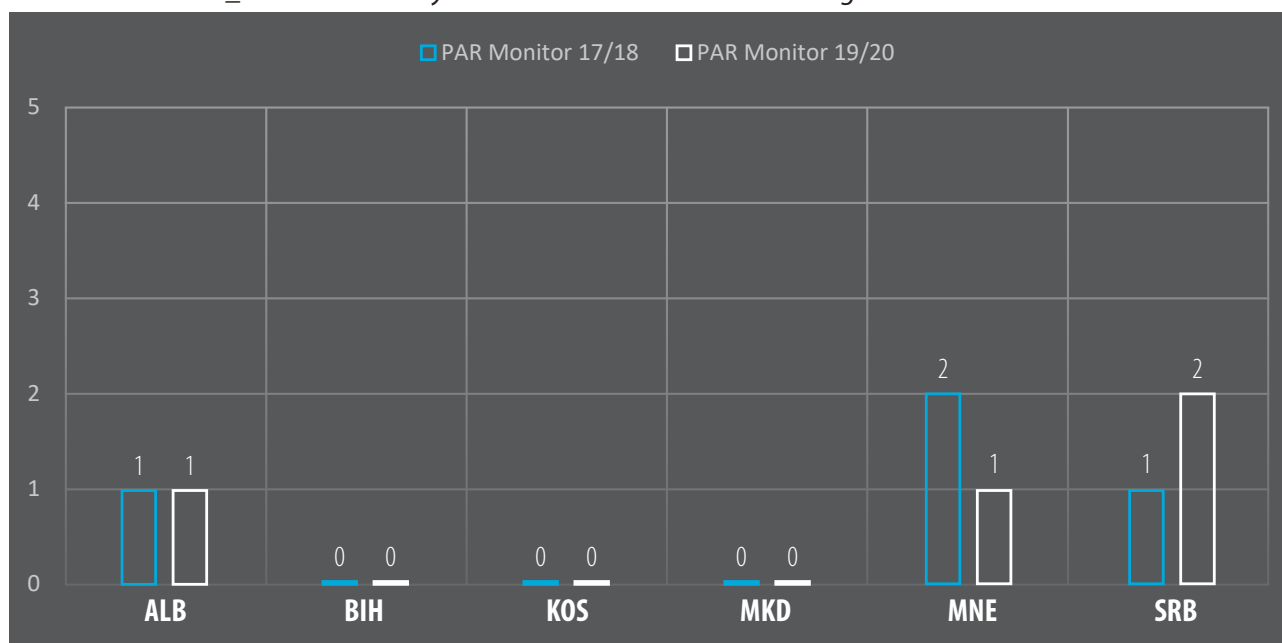
The PAR Strategy does not foresee involvement of CSOs in the administrative structures for PAR coordination and monitoring. The Strategy indicates that in order to monitor and coordinate the PAR, a 'PAR Team' has been established at the MISA. Furthermore, the Strategy stipulates that the PAR Secretariat provides technical and professional support, but it does not include any CSO members. At the political level, the PAR Council has been established with a view to monitoring and coordination the overall PAR process, which nonetheless does not have CSO members aboard.

PAR monitoring and reporting is done by the MISA, which each six months delivers a report on its implementation to the PAR Council and once a year to the Government. Following the publication of reports on the MISA website, and prior to discussions within 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. The Strategy also foresees that an evaluation will be made every second year by independent experts. In the Action Plan of the 2018-2022 PAR Strategy, the civil sector is mentioned once, in terms of consultations 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 on specific measures for financing of the reform within the PAR coordination and monitoring structures.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



I.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: PAR STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

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.

■ Recommendations for PAR Strategic Framework

Tracking recommendations under the 2017/2018 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 on 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.	Partially implemented	As far as invitations to the civil society to participate in the consultations are concerned, there have been open invitations for CSOs on the ENER. CSOs have been provided with complete information required for preparing for the consultative process.
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.
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 the 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 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 both at the political and administrative levels.	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 strictly formal, and their comments are usually not taken into consideration.

2019/2020 PAR Monitor Recommendations¹⁰

- 1. The MISA and the MoF should continuously 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 continuously include the public/CSOs in the early stages of consultations regarding modifications/revisions of the PAR Strategy and its Action Plan.*
- 3. The MISA should continuously keep detailed records and documentation about the PAR Strategy consultations and timely publish them on its website in order to inform the public about the issues discussed, proposals and remarks given and whether proposals and remarks have been accepted and the ratio behind the decision to accept or not to accept them.*
- 4. The ministries/state administration bodies should continuously provide feedback to the CSOs about their contributions and comments given in the process of the consultations.*
- 5. The ministries/state administration bodies should continuously ensure an open dialogue about contested issues and questions with a view to defining common conclusions and solutions accepted and owned by all stakeholders included in the process.*
- 6. The MoF should continuously include all stakeholders early in the consultation process, when defining the strategic priorities and directions, i.e. it should in timely manner invite the CSOs and provide them with all relevant documentation required for the consultation process.*
- 7. MISA should in long term include the CSOs in the PAR coordination bodies, both at the political and administrative level in the phase of preparation the new PAR Strategy.*
- 8. MISA should in long term ensure clear systematic approach, defining the format of consultations within sector groups established under the PAR Strategy.*

¹⁰ The recommendations are taken from the previous PAR Monitor 2017/2018 but are reformulated with deadline for realization and responsible institution.



**POLICY DEVELOPMENT
AND CO-ORDINATION**

II.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

The Government regularly publishes its press releases, agendas and minutes in a citizen-friendly manner which has not been the case previously. The practice of regular publication of government press releases continued, despite the challenges connected with the caretaker Government and the 2020 elections. Government reports are available online and have detailed information regarding Government activities, objectives, and results. However, documents adopted at Government sessions are not published.

The European Commission (EC) underlined that “public scrutiny of government work continued to improve thanks to an increase in published government monitoring reports and improved communication”.¹¹

Evidence-based findings produced by CSOs are rarely referenced in the adopted government policy documents, policy papers and *ex-ante* impact assessments. Even though the legislation on public consultations¹² stipulates that the process of public consultations is open to the public, and that each policy or legislative document should be the subject of public consultations in the early stages, reporting by the central administration on this matter is lacking. In addition, there is no evidence in the form of minutes, or reports which would refer to comments, proposals and suggestions given by stakeholders, as well as whether their input has been accepted or not.

Hence, the quality of the consultation process cannot be assessed, as well as the impact of public consultations. In that respect, the EC has noted that the quality of regulatory impact assessments needs to be further improved, as well as the quality control of the public consultation.¹³

¹¹ European Commission, North Macedonia 2020 Report, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xdgREF>

¹² Methodology for Regulatory Impact Assessment, available at: <https://bit.ly/3cr83BW>

¹³ European Commission, North Macedonia 2020 Report, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xdgREF>

■ 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 second edition of the PAR Monitor, five WeBER indicators are used for the analysis in the Policy Development and Coordination. Compared to the baseline PAR Monitor 2017/2018, SIGMA Principle 12 was not part of the monitoring this time and consequently corresponding indicator was not measured.¹⁴ The decision for such change was reached at the beginning of this monitoring cycle as a result of internal discussion on learning experience from previous monitoring exercise, whereby it was concluded that monitoring this principle did not constitute a significant addition to the key values of WeBER monitoring i.e. it did not represent issue of significant concern for the civil society and the public in the region.

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 between the second half of June and the beginning of August 2020.¹⁵ 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 its 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.

The third indicator measures the transparency of decision-making by the Government (in terms of the Council of Ministers), 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 (2019), and first three months in the monitoring year (2020), 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 March until beginning of June 2020).

¹⁴ SIGMA Principle 12: Legislation is consistent in structure, style, and language; legal drafting requirements are applied consistently across ministries; legislation is made publicly available. WeBER indicator used for monitoring this principle in 2017/2018: Perception of availability and accessibility of legislation and related explanatory materials by the civil society.

¹⁵ The survey of CSOs was administered through an anonymous, online questionnaire. In North Macedonia, the survey was conducted in the period from 25 June to 27 July 2020. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). The survey sample was N=92.

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 civil society perception data. In relation to the former, the frequency of referencing CSOs' evidence-based findings is 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.¹⁶

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 2019), availability and quality of reporting on public consultations, functionalities of the public consultation portals, and proactiveness of informing by the responsible institutions.

¹⁶ 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.

II.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
The Government regularly publishes written information about its activities	4/4
The information issued by the Government about its activities is written in an understandable way	2/2
The information issued by the Government is sufficiently detailed, including both quantitative data and qualitative information and assessments	2/2
The information issued by the Government includes assessments of the achievement of concrete results	2/4
The information issued by the Government about its activities and results is available in open data format(s)	0/2
The information issued by the Government about its activities and results contain gender segregated data	0/2
Share of reports on Government strategies and plans, which are available online	½
Total score	11/18
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹⁷	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

The Government regularly publishes press releases.¹⁸ The press releases are published on a daily (in some cases even multiple times a day) and weekly basis. They are published in the section of the Government website „Media centre“.¹⁹ In this section, there is a filter added to select what type of announcements and press releases a visitor would like to read (e.g., a filter on EU integration or service information).

Although 2020 was an election year, and from the start of the year (as of 3 January) a caretaker Government was in place in order to prepare the elections, this practice of regular publication of press releases continued.

As regards annual reports, the Government has published two reports about the implementation of the Government Annual Work Plan (GAWP) - one for the June 2017 - June 2018 period²⁰ and the other one for the June 2018 - June 2019 period.²¹

Press releases are written in an understandable manner and using simple language, in a journalistic manner, without bureaucratic or formal language.

When it comes to annual reports, the first report for 2017-2018 period has a “web publication”, and its content is laid under the publication link itself, which is in bullet points and citizen friendly for reading.²² There is also a video presentation of the report, which is presented as the “Expose of the Prime Minister”.

The second report does not have a “web publication”, but same as in the first annual report its content is provided in bullet points²³, and includes a video presentation of government officials presenting the report.

Government reports have detailed information regarding activities, objectives, and results. Although these reports contain many details, not all information is followed with quantitative and qualitative data as there are not many pieces of information about the targets or the baseline values, which should correspond to the government working plans.

However, the reports contain information about the achievement of results, on a more general level.²⁴ The reports are not published in an open data format, and they do not contain gender segregated data.

17 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.

18 Government press releases in the January-December 2019 period

19 https://vlada.mk/media-centar?tid=4&sort_by=created&sort_order=DESC

20 <https://vlada.mk/1godinapromeni>

21 <https://vlada.mk/2GodiniOdgovorno>

22 <https://vlada.mk/1godinapromeni>

23 <https://vlada.mk/2GodiniOdgovorno>

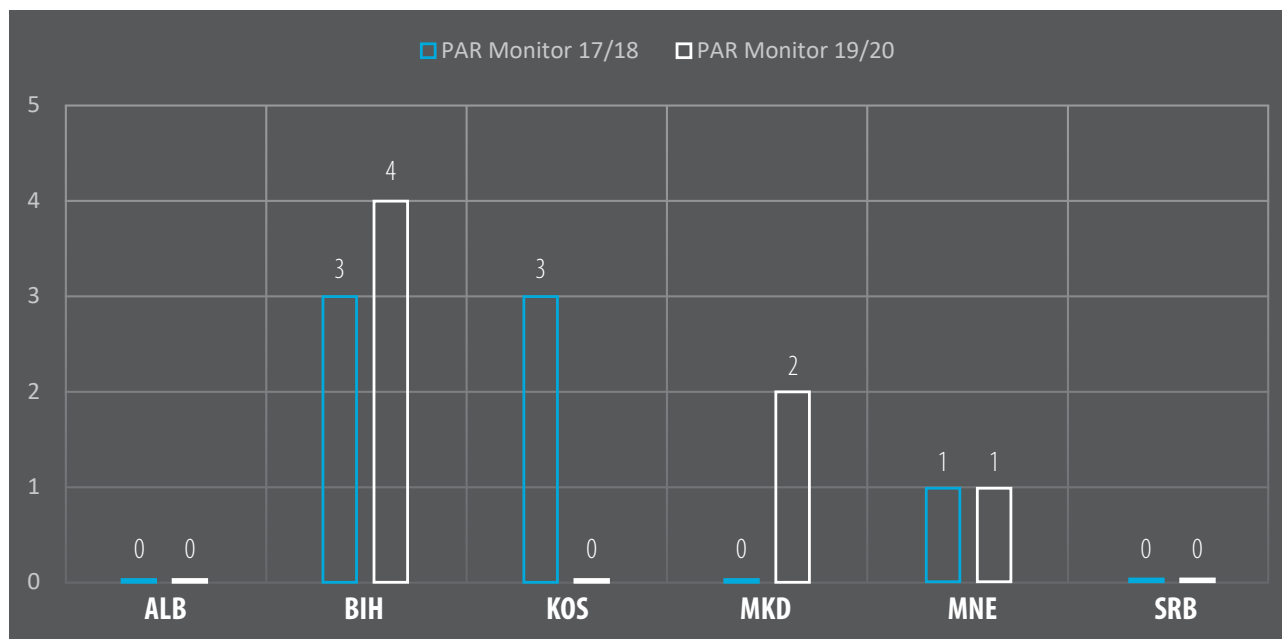
24 For example: “We have raised the minimum wage to MKD 12,000, with 90,000 of our fellow citizens receiving higher salaries”.

In the context of availability of 2019 reports about major whole-of-government plans and strategies, out of five documents monitored, reports are available for the GAWP 2019²⁵, the 2019-2021 Economic Reform Programme (included in the 2020-2022 ERP)²⁶ and for the 2019-2021 Fiscal Strategy (included in the 2020-2022 Fiscal Strategy)²⁷, but not for the National Programme for the Adoption of the Acquis (NPAA)²⁸ and the Plan 18 (Government EU Accession Reform Plan).²⁹

The score in this Monitoring Report has significantly increased in comparison with the previous 2017/2018 PAR Monitor, considering that Government work plans and reports on the plans were not published previously.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



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

Indicator elements	Scores
CSOs consider the Government's formal planning documents as relevant for the actual developments in individual policy areas	0/2
CSOs consider that the Government regularly reports to the public about progress against set objectives	0/4
CSOs consider that official strategies determine government's or ministries' actions in specific policy areas	0/2
CSOs consider that ministries regularly publish monitoring reports about their sectoral strategies	0/4
CSOs consider that EU accession priorities are adequately integrated in the Government's planning documents	0/2
CSOs consider that Government's reports incorporate adequate updates on the progress against the set EU accession priorities	0/2
Total score	0/16
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)³⁰	0
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	1

In the context of the CSOs' perception³¹ of the Government reporting about its work, not much has changed in the past two and a half years from the previous monitoring cycle. In this monitoring cycle, the survey results point out that CSOs have expressed slightly more negative views, thus lowering the final score and the indicator value.

25 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Strategic Priorities: <https://vlada.mk/strateshki-prioriteti?ln=mk>

26 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Economic Reform Program 2019-2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3pT5duV>

27 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021-2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TyPk0U>

28 National Program for the Adoption of the EU Acquis (NPAA), available at: <https://www.sep.gov.mk/post/?id=13#XnNiz2hKiUk>

29 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Plan 18, available at: <https://vlada.mk/plan18>

30 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

31 The survey of CSOs has been administered through an anonymous online questionnaire. The data collection methods have included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). For North Macedonia, 92 respondents from CSOs have been surveyed. The base for questions in this indicator is 68 respondents.

Less than a third (28%) of the CSOs surveyed agree that there is a direct connection between the workplan of the Government and actual developments in specific policy areas. On the other hand, a higher number of CSOs (37%) disagree with the same statement. Only a quarter (25%) of CSOs think that the Government regularly reports to the public about the progress in the achievement of objectives set in its working programme. Interestingly, most of them were “neutral” on this statement (40%).

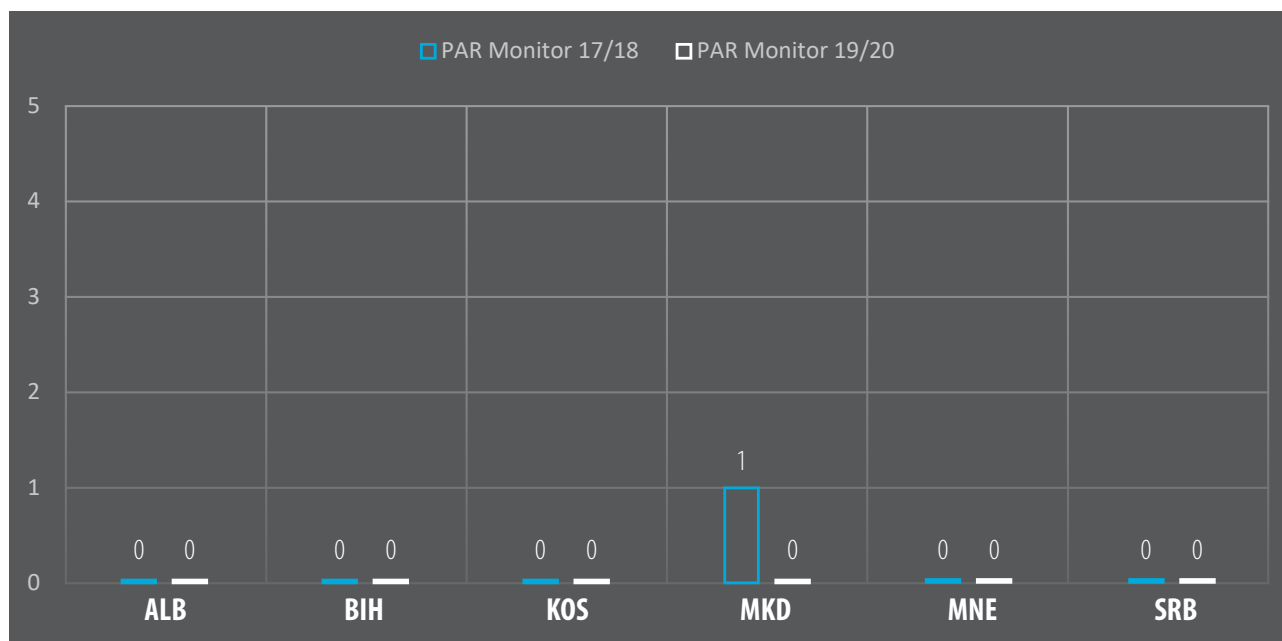
Regarding the national strategies, again a quarter of surveyed CSOs (25%) agree that the strategies determine the Government’s or ministries’ actions in certain areas, and 41% were neutral regarding this statement. In addition, 19% of CSOs consider that Ministries regularly publish monitoring reports about their sectoral strategies, in contrast to the 54% which disagree.

When it comes to the EU accession related activities, 28% of surveyed CSOs agree that in the policy area of their work, priorities under the EU accession process are adequately integrated in the Government plans, while less than a quarter (23%) of them think that Government reports incorporate adequate updates on the progress against the set of EU accession priorities. By contrast, a total of 40% disagree.

In this monitoring cycle, surveyed CSOs disagree that the Government regularly reports to the public about the progress against the set objectives and disagree that official strategies determine the Government’s or the Ministries’ actions in specific policy areas, lowering thus the overall indicator value.

■ 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



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
CSOs consider the Government decision-making to be generally transparent	0/2
CSOs consider the exceptions to the rules of publishing Government decisions to be appropriate	0/2
The Government makes publicly available the documents from its sessions	2/4
The Government communicates its decisions in a citizen-friendly manner	4/4
The Government publishes adopted documents in a timely manner	0/4
Total score	6/16
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)³²	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	2

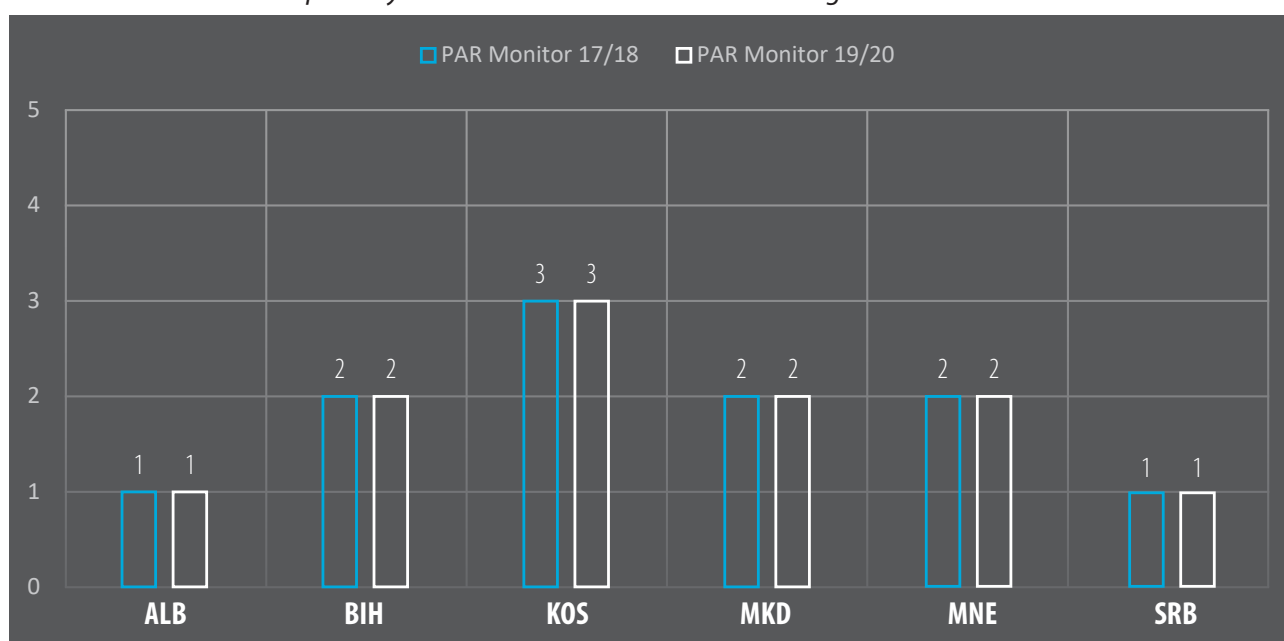
Agendas, minutes, and press releases regarding Government sessions in the entire monitoring period were made publicly available (October 2019- March 2020) on the website of the Government in a timely manner.³³ However, documents adopted at Government sessions were not published.

The Government communicates its decisions in a citizen-friendly manner.³⁴ Press releases are published after each Government session and are written using clear and simple, non-bureaucratic language. These press releases explain the decisions made by the Government, and they are easily accessible, with not more than 3 clicks away from the homepage of the website.

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

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



32 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.

33 Government website - <https://vlada.mk/vladini-sednici>

34 E.g., in the press-release about the 3rd Government Session this year, it is stated, "adopted the Information regarding the procedure for nomination of the site Dlaboka Reka in the Lavrov National Park on the UNESCO Preliminary List" and description on why this location is important – "The locality Dlaboka Reka as part of the National Park Lavrov, has exceptional natural values presented through great biological and landscape diversity. One of the basic characteristics of this locality is the old (virgin) beech forest (Fagus sylvatica), which develops in the valley of Dlaboka Reka on the mountain massif Korab, with almost no human intervention in the last 100 years. The locality Dlaboka Reka is characterized by great biological diversity with the presence of numerous endemic plant and animal species, which is in the zone for strict protection of the Lavrov National Park and only scientific research activities are allowed in it."

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
Frequency of referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in the adopted government policy documents	2/4
Frequency of referencing of evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and ex ante impact assessments	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
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	½
Representatives of relevant ministries participate in policy dialogue (discussions, round tables, closed door meetings, etc.) pertaining to specific policy research products	½
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
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
Ministries accept CSOs' policy proposals in the work of working groups for developing policies and legislation	0/4
Total score	6/24
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)³⁵	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

Based on the document analysis, evidence-based findings produced by CSOs are rarely referenced in the sample of adopted government policy documents (strategies, plans, programmes, or other types of documents that are formally adopted, and which can reference information directly). All in all, 19 policy documents in three areas,³⁶ which are currently being implemented have been analysed, out of which only 6 contain references to findings produced by CSOs.³⁷

With respect to referencing evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and ex-ante impact assessments (such as ex-ante regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), policy concept documents, policy papers, annotations/reasoning of legislation and policy documents etc.) 21 documents were analysed, but only one document had a reference to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs.³⁸ In all three examined policy areas, no ex-post analysis was found, and the research team did not receive any ex-post analysis in answer to FOI requests.³⁹

Regarding the opinion of the civil society in North Macedonia about the use of evidence in policy making, 44% of surveyed CSOs agree that when they are addressing policy problems or developing policy proposals, government institutions invite their respective organizations to prepare or submit policy papers, studies, or impact assessments. The percent of those who disagree with this statement is 23%. Furthermore, 57% of surveyed CSOs have state that upon inviting government institutions to partake in their events, these invitations are often or always accepted, while 17% of CSOs have replied that this practice happens rarely or never. 35% of CSOs say they have been invited ("often" or "always") in working groups/task forces for drafting policy or legislative proposals, when having specific evidence-based proposals and recommendations. However, it is concerning that 29% of respondents perceive that this practice happens rarely or never.

As regards the issue of the Government giving feedback on policy proposals, 21% of CSOs answered that they are often or always provided with feedback, which explains the reasons on either the acceptance or rejection of their evidence-based proposals and recommendations during participating in working groups. 53% perceive that this practice happens rarely or never.

As regards how much relevant Ministries generally consider the policy proposals made by their organisations, 18% of surveyed CSOs have answered that this happens often or always, while 39.7% have said that this happens rarely or never.

35 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

36 Anti-discrimination policy; environment and social welfare

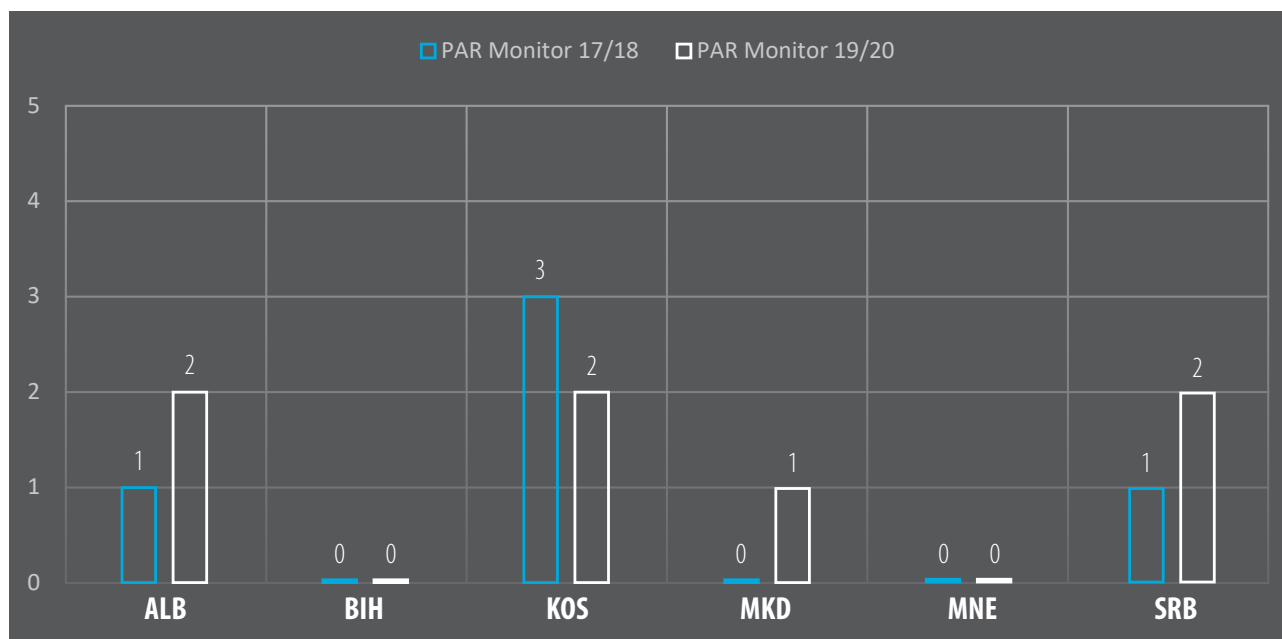
37 2018-2023 National Strategy on Biodiversity - (6 references) <https://bit.ly/333s6mi>; 2020-2022 National Strategy for Concept Development for a Society and Inter-Culturalism - (18 references) <https://bit.ly/3JJeSAW>; 2012-2041 National Strategy for Waters - (3 references) http://www.moepp.gov.mk/?page_id=3197; National Strategy (2020-2025) and Action Plan (2020-2022) for Prevention and Protection of Children against Violence - (1 reference) <https://bit.ly/333E0fQ>; 2018-2020 Strategy for Formalization of the Informal Economy in the Republic of Macedonia - (5 references) <https://bit.ly/2X4k0WD>; 2014-2020 Strategy for the Roma in the Republic of Macedonia - (7 references) <https://bit.ly/3g86nxc>;

38 RIA on the Law on Protection against Harassment in the Workplace – the Helsinki Committee has been referenced. In the "Report on the Consultation Process"; it is stated which suggestions were accepted and rejected.

39 FOI requests were sent on 8 April 2020 to the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP) for the following RIAs on: the Family Law; the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection; the Child Protection Law; the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men; the Law on the Environment; the Law on Ambient Air Quality; the Law on the Protection of Nature; the Environmental Noise Protection Law; the Law on Battery and Battery management and Waste Batteries and Accumulators; the Water Law; the Law on Genetically Modified Organisms.

■ 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



PRINCIPLE 11: POLICIES AND LEGISLATION ARE DESIGNED IN AN INCLUSIVE MANNER THAT ENABLES THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIETY

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

Indicator elements	Scores
Scope of public consultations on policy documents in central administration	4/4
Scope of public consultations on legislation in central administration	4/4
Availability of reporting on public consultations on policy documents by the central administration	0/4
Availability of reporting on public consultations on legislation by the central administration	0/4
Basic functionality of a national public consultation portal	2/4
Advanced functionality of a national public consultation portal	2/2
Proactiveness of informing on public consultations	0/4
Embeddedness of early public consultations in practice	0/2
Quality of reporting on public consultations	0/2
Impact of public consultation results on policy making	0/2
CSOs consider formal consultation procedures create preconditions for effective inclusion of the public in the policy-making process	1/2
CSOs consider formal consultation procedures are applied consistently	0/2
CSOs consider that they are consulted at the early phases of the policy process	0/2
CSOs consider consultees are timely provided with information on the content of legislative or policy proposals	0/2
CSOs consider consultees are provided with adequate information on the content of legislative or policy proposals	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
CSOs consider ministries (sponsors of policy and legislative proposals) provide written feedback on consultees' inputs/comments	0/2
CSOs consider ministries (sponsors of policy and legislative proposals) accept consultees' inputs/comments	0/2
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
Total score	13/50
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)⁴⁰	2
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

40 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.

The process of public consultations in North Macedonia is to a great extent open to the public, with legislation stipulating that each policy document or legislation should be open for public consultations in the early stage. However, reporting by the central administration about public consultations held regarding legislation and policy documents is lacking. With that said, when it comes to the scope of public consultations, in the period of gathering relevant data (second half of 2019) there were only one policy document⁴¹ and 17 legislative documents adopted by the Government, for which public consultations had been launched.⁴²

The quality of reporting cannot be assessed, considering that overall reporting about public consultations, whether it is for policy documents or legislation is lacking. In this context, the impact of public consultations also cannot be measured, since there were no reports identified.

The national public consultations portal - ENER⁴³ has a searchable database of consultations going back to 2008 in 72 policy areas, with information on: which is the competent (in-line) body; type of document; release date; status of a document (whether it is open or closed for consultations); and short description. In addition, users can search by key word. Although institutions are obliged to publish a report about the consultation process, they publish them rarely, or do not publish them at all. The ENER has also the following options: notification if a public consultation is opened by a certain institution/sector; submission of comments directly in the text of the proposal; seeing comments submitted by other participants in the public consultation process, and comprehensive documentation published for each public consultation process (mostly RIA sheets), in addition to the text of the proposal. There is no option for users to be notified that the feedback to submitted comments has been given. However, sometimes the answers are cumulative and refer to several reactions by the citizens and are published under the comments. Furthermore, the ENER contains a section for analysis of legislative documents, number of comments by Ministries, number of legislative documents by year, type of legislative documents, initiatives, and accompanying documents.

For each legislative document, the process of consultations starts in the early stage by publishing a notification on the ENER about the start of preparation of the respective draft law, which contains information about the following: the name of the law; in-line institution; short description of the issue addressed; the objective of the law; time-period for the preparation of the law; the manner of involvement of stakeholders (e.g. written opinions; participation in WGs, etc.); announcements for public debates; email of the responsible person. After the notification, the stages/versions of the legislative documents are as follows: draft text of the law accompanied by draft text of the RIA, and proposal of the law accompanied by the RIA proposal.

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

41 Draft Strategy for Development of the Energy Sector (consultations in November 2019 and December 2019), adopted by the Government on 28 December 2019 (<http://www.economy.gov.mk/doc/2705>; <https://bit.ly/3gBlxwt>)

42 Draft Law on Material Compensation for Persons Unemployed Due to the Privatization of State-Owned Enterprises, <https://vlada.mk/node/19059> endorsed by the Government in September 2019; Amendments to the Law on Wage Payment- <https://bit.ly/3pQKpo0> ; consultations opened in July 2019; endorsed by the Government in September 2019; Draft Law on Subsidizing Compulsory Social Security Contributions due to Salary Increases - <https://bit.ly/2XMj20l> (consultations opened in September 2019), <https://bit.ly/3guV03D> adopted by the Government in October 2019; <https://vlada.mk/sednica/158>; Draft Law Amending the ID Card Law - <https://bit.ly/2TWLWkq> consultations opened in September 2019, endorsed by the Government in October 2019 <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Draft Law Amending the Citizenship Law in the Republic of Macedonia - <https://bit.ly/2XIMifD> consultations opened in September 2019; endorsed by the Government in December 2019 <https://vlada.mk/sednica/172>; Amendments to the Law on Border Control - <https://bit.ly/3dnyYx5> consultations opened in September 2019, endorsed by the Government in October 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Amendments to the Law on Passports - <https://bit.ly/2SpbrGZ>; endorsed by the Government in October 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Amendments to the Law on Public Gatherings - <https://bit.ly/2XMT4KF> consultations opened September 2019, endorsed by the Government in October 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Amendments to the Law on Misdemeanours Against the Public Order and Peace - <https://bit.ly/2XVOJ86> consultations opened in September 2019, endorsed by the Government in October 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Amendments to the Law on Trading in Explosive Materials - <https://bit.ly/3gOxHBs> consultations opened in September 2019, endorsed by the Government in October 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Amendments to the Law on Detective Activity - <https://bit.ly/3eG0vKh> consultations opened in September 2019, endorsed by the Government in October 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/161>; Amendments to the Law on Construction - <https://bit.ly/3gKlfkV> consultations opened in October 2019, endorsed by the Government in December 2019, <https://vlada.mk/node/19805>; Amendments to the Law on Metrology - <https://bit.ly/2XmIGkC> consultations opened in October 2019, endorsed by the Government in December 2019, <https://vlada.mk/node/19805>; Amendments to the Law on the Control of Items Made of Precious Metals - <https://bit.ly/3gKkoNv> consultations opened in October 2019, endorsed by the Government in November 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/167>; Amendments to the Industrial Property Law - <https://bit.ly/300YFjg> consultations opened in October 2019, endorsed by the Government in December 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/174>; Amendments to the Catering Law - <https://bit.ly/35guiGH> consultations opened in November 2019, endorsed by the Government in December 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/172>; Amendments to the Temporary Residence Tax Law - <https://bit.ly/3dq2LoT> consultations opened in November 2019, endorsed by the Government in December 2019, <https://vlada.mk/sednica/172>

43 Electronic National Register of Regulations of the Republic of North Macedonia <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx>

34% of CSOs consider that the formal consultation procedures ensure conditions for an effective involvement of the public in the policy-making processes. It should also be noted that around the same number of CSOs have a neutral opinion on this matter. According to 42% of CSOs, government institutions do not consistently apply formal consultation procedures when developing policies within their purview and more than a half (53%) believe they are not consulted or are consulted only sporadically in the early stages of policy and legislative processes.

18% of CSOs believe that government institutions provide CSOs with information about policy proposals in a timely manner, and 22% of them have answered that they have been provided with adequate information about the content of these proposals.

CSOs have also predominantly negative impressions regarding the Ministries' approach to consultation processes. The majority of CSOs (43%) have answered that Ministries rarely or even never ensure that diverse interest groups are represented in the public consultation processes. It is also worrying that more than a half of CSOs (57%) share the opinion that Ministries rarely or never provide written feedback on whether their inputs have been accepted or rejected. 42% consider that Ministries do not accept their feedback in the consultation process, while one third of CSOs believe this happens sometimes. Finally, 51% of the CSOs do not believe that Ministries conduct additional consultations with CSOs outside the formal scope of public consultations.

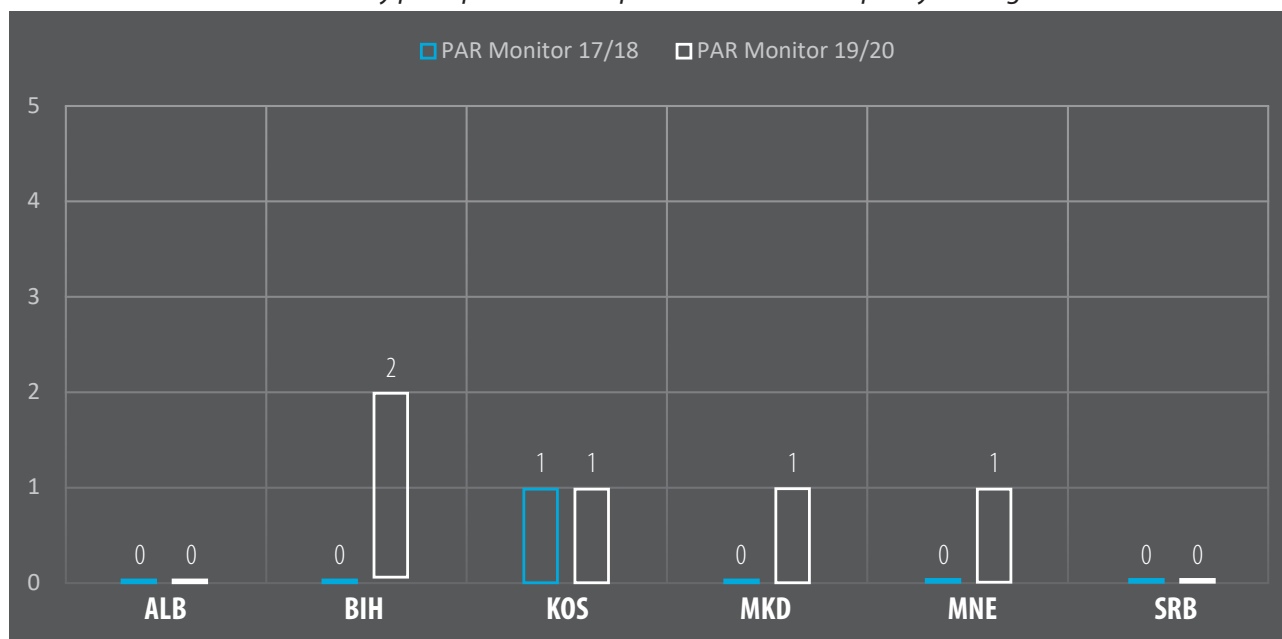
Considering that this indicator has been changed since the 2017/2018 monitoring cycle, the results from these two cycles are not entirely comparable. In other words, in the previous monitoring cycle, the point allocation was based entirely on the CSOs perception survey, while this time it is based on 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.

However, the survey-based part of the indicator is comparable and demonstrates a slightly more negative perception of CSOs of the consultation processes regarding specifically: consultation procedures providing conditions for an effective involvement of the public in the policy-making processes (34% agree compared to 36% in 2017/2018 cycle), CSOs' involvement in early stages of developing policy proposals (roughly 5% agree there is such involvement now, as compared to 10% in the previous monitoring cycle).

On the other hand, CSOs demonstrate a slightly more positive perception of the approach of Ministries regarding: the provision of necessary information by the Ministries in a timely manner (18% compared to 15% in 2017/2018), the adequacy of the information about the content of policy proposals (22% compared to 17%), the representation of diverse interest groups in the public consultation process (13% compared to 6%), the provision of written feedback by Ministries (9% compared to 6%), the acceptance of consultees' input by Ministries (13% compared to 10%), and the extent to which Ministries convene discussions on how consultees' inputs have influenced the policy-making process (9% compared to 5%).

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



II.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: POLICY DEVELOPMENT AND CO-ORDINATION

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.

Recommendations for Policy Development and Co-ordination

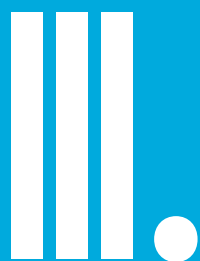
Tracking recommendations from PAR Monitor 2017/2108

Recommendation	Status	Comment
1. The Government should start regularly publishing reports about the degree of fulfilment of the Government Annual Work Plan, and reports are to cover all the activities and measures under the Annual Work Plan. The Government and its Secretariat should not consider the Prime Minister's addresses to the public as a substitution, of reports about the degree of fulfilment of the Government Annual Work Plan since it is a matter of two different documents. In fact, the report is an overarching document accounting for the performances of the entire Government.	Implemented	The Government has published two reports on the implementation of the GAWP - one for the June 2017 - June 2018 period and the other for the June 2018 - June 2019 period. The score for this indicator in this monitoring report has significantly increased in comparison with the last 2017/2018 PAR Monitor, since the Government work plans and reports on those plans were not published previously.
2. Institutions should prepare and appropriately publish reports about all their respective strategies and plans. This is especially important in terms of the implementation of the NPAA, considering the ongoing screening process and prior to the opening of accession negotiations.	Partially implemented	As regards the availability of 2019 reports about major whole-of-government plans and strategies, out of five such documents monitored, they are available for the 2019 GAWP, the 2019-2021 Economic Reform Programme (included in the 2020-2022 ERP) and for the 2019-2021 Fiscal Strategy 2019-2021 (included in the 2020-2022 Fiscal Strategy), but not for the NPAA and the Plan 18 (Government EU Reform Plan).
3. 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	NPAA has not been adopted yet.
4. All decisions adopted at Government sessions should be made publicly available on the Government website.	implemented	The Government communicates its decisions in a citizen-friendly manner. Press releases are published after each government session, written using a clear and simple, non-bureaucratic language. These press releases explain the decisions made by the Government, and they are easily accessible, with not more than three clicks away from the homepage of the website.
5. The access to the Official Gazette should be free of charge for all citizens so that they can be adequately informed about their rights, obligations and about decisions adopted by the Government.	Not implemented	Only the old editions are free of charge.
6. Institutions should make efforts to make references adequately and systematically to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in all their adopted policy documents, policy papers, <i>ex ante</i> impact assessments, <i>ex post</i> policy analyses and other assessments the institutions produce.	Partially implemented	Based on the documentation analysis, evidence-based findings produced by CSOs are rarely referenced in the sample of adopted government policy documents (strategies, plans, programmes, or other types of documents that are formally adopted, and which can reference information directly). 19 documents have been analysed which are currently being implemented in three policy areas: anti-discrimination policy; environment, and social welfare. Out of the 19 documents analysed, only 6 contain references to findings produced by CSOs.

<p>7. The RIA's that are available online are scarce, hard to find and without any adequate references to CSOs findings and proposals. The RIA's should be published under the adequate tab on the ENER, as well as on all of websites of in-line ministries. When developing the RIA's, the Government should take into account CSOs findings and adequately make reference to them in the documents.</p>	<p>Partially implemented</p>	<p>As regards referencing to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs in policy papers and <i>ex-ante</i> impact assessments (such as <i>ex ante</i> regulatory impact assessments (RIAs), policy concept documents, policy papers, annotations/reasoning of legislation and policy documents, etc.) 21 documents were analysed, and only one document had a reference to evidence-based findings produced by CSOs. Within all three examined policy areas, no <i>ex-post</i> analysis has been found and the research team has not received any <i>ex-post</i> analysis replies to the FOI requests.</p>
<p>8. Institutions should proactively and systematically provide feedback about evidence-based proposals and recommendations presented by CSOs in the policy-making process.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p>	<p>The quality of reporting cannot be assessed, considering that overall reporting about the public-consultations, whether about policy documents or legislation is lacking. In this context, the impact of public consultations also cannot be measured, as there were no reports identified.</p>
<p>9. Institutions should consult CSOs in the early stages of the policy-making processes with a view to developing the priorities and objectives in partnership with CSOs, instead of delivering ready-made documents, which CSOs are invited to comment.</p>	<p>Partially implemented</p>	<p>For each legislative document, the process of consultations starts in the early stage by publishing a notification on the ENER about the start of preparation of the respective draft law. However, there is no evidence of early consultations in 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 were accepted or not.</p>
<p>10. Institutions should provide adequate and timely information to CSOs; the same applies to information about the content of legislative or policy proposals; pertinent information in this context should be provided to CSOs preferably at least 20 days ahead of any deadlines.</p>	<p>Partially implemented</p>	<p>Only a small share of CSOs (18%) believe that government institutions provide CSOs with information on policy proposals in a timely manner, and slightly above one-fifth (22%) of them report that they have been provided with adequate information about the content of these proposals.</p>
<p>11. 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.</p>	<p>Not implemented</p>	<p>The ENER does not contain such information</p>
<p>12. Explanatory materials relevant to the legislation should be made visibly available on both the ENER and the website of the in-line institution. These materials should be worded in a citizen friendly and comprehensible manner so that everyone can understand the purpose and goal of the legislation.</p>	<p>Partially implemented</p>	<p>Usually only the ENER contains such information, but sometimes such information can be found on the web sites of the Ministries as well.</p>

1. *The ministries/state administrative bodies should continuously prepare and publish the reports about realisation of their strategic documents.*
2. *The General Secretariat of the Government should continuously prepare reports containing up-to-date information on the progress in the implementation of the priorities in the context of the European integration process and they should be properly integrated in all subsequent strategies that should contain indicators, deadlines and fiscal implications.*
3. *The Government of the Republic of North Macedonia should in the long run ensure that the access to the Official Gazette is free of charge for all the citizens.*
4. *The ministries/state administrative bodies should continuously, adequately and thoroughly reference the evidence-based findings by the CSOs in the adopted policy documents, policy papers, ex-ante impact assessments, ex-post policy analyses, etc.*
5. *MISA should continuously publish the RIA under the appropriate tab on the ENER website, as well as on all websites of the competent ministries.*
6. *The Government when preparing RIAs, should continuously consider CSOs findings and adequately refer to them in the documents*
7. *The ministries/state administrative bodies should continuously CSOs at an early stage of the policy-making process, instead of providing them with ready-made documents, for which CSOs are invited to comment.*
8. *The ministries / state administration bodies should continuously provide the CSOs with appropriate and timely information (at least 20 days in advance) regarding the content of legislative acts or policy proposals*
9. *The ministries/state administration bodies should continuously provide adequate and timely information (at least 20 days ahead) to CSOs regarding the content of legislative or policy proposals.*
10. *The ministries/state administration bodies should in the long run create a database with contact information to ensure that various interests are represented in the consultation process (women groups, minority groups, trade unions, employers' associations, etc.) and should appropriately invite them to take part in the consultations by adequately understanding their area of interest.*
11. *MISA should continuously provide that materials relevant to the legislation to be made visibly available on ENER and on websites of the respective institutions. These materials should be prepared in a citizen friendly manner.*

⁴⁴The recommendations are taken from the previous PAR Monitor 2017/2018 but are reformulated with deadline for realization and responsible institution.



PUBLIC SERVICE AND THE HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

III.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

The Law on Administrative Servants (LAS) and the Law on Public Sector Employees (LPSE) are in force and set solid basis for ensuring merit-based criteria. The utilisation of agencies for temporary employments can be 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. However, the recruitment procedure has to be improved and is to be made more transparent mostly regarding temporary employments.

Having in mind that a new Law on Senior Civil Service is being prepared, senior civil service 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 the recruitment and dismissal of senior civil servants.

The use of the human resource management information system (HRMIS) has been improved in the public administration overall. However, although the system has various functionalities/modules, data have not been regularly entered and updated by institutions across the administration.

Even though there is regular reporting about the public service by in-line institutions the Agency of Administration (AA) and the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA)) in the reporting period the AA Annual 2019 Report was not publicly available as it was in parliamentary procedure. The reports of the AA and of the MISA contain data on recruitments, disciplinary procedures, assessments and trainings. However, the reports do not include substantiated information concerning the quality and/or the outcomes of the public service, being instead mostly statistics-focused.

As regards the improvements of the LAS, as stated by in the European Commission (EC) North Macedonia 2020 Report, the remuneration system needs to be revised to ensure more consistent levels of pay and to promote mobility.⁴⁵

Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are formally established in the central administration under the Law on the Prevention of Corruption and Conflicts of Interest (LPCCI), under the Law on Protection of Whistle Blowers, as well as under the LAS, the Ethical Code for Administrative Servants and under the Criminal Code. The scope of the integrity policy covers the entire public service, and the policy sets out clear objectives.

⁴⁵ European Commission, North Macedonia Report, 6 October 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf, p.14

Moreover, a deputy prime minister for fight against corruption and crime has been appointed to coordinate institutions in charge of the fight against corruption.

A new State Program for the Prevention of Corruption is developed, considering that the previous one expired in 2019. Furthermore, there was a vacuum period, i.e., the period until the election of new members of the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption. However, as stated in the EC North Macedonia 2020 Report, no data are available on how the integrity mechanisms and whistle-blower legislation are implemented in practice.⁴⁶

■ 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.

Monitoring of these principles combines the findings of SIGMA's assessment within specific sub-indicators. However, having in mind that there is no SIGMA assessment for 2020, WeBER researchers performed their own calculation of SIGMA sub-indicators in this PAR Monitor cycle, on the basis of SIGMA's methodology. SIGMA/OECD cannot be held responsible for the result of such calculation, but only the authors of this report.

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.

⁴⁶ European Commission, North Macedonia Report, 6 October 2020 https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/north_macedonia_report_2020.pdf, p.15

Surveys of civil servants and CSOs in the six Western Balkan administrations were implemented using an online survey tool, between the second half of June and the beginning of August 2020.⁴⁷ 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.⁴⁸ 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.⁴⁹ 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 from 5 to 30 May 2020.⁵⁰ 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.

47 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 2-24 July 2020, and the CSO survey in the period from 25 June to 27 July 2020.

48 For North Macedonia, the survey sample was N=580. The base for questions within Principle 2 was n=534 respondents, Principle 3 had n=580 respondents, Principle 5 had n=506 respondents and Principle 7 had n=495 respondents.

49 For North Macedonia, the survey sample was N=92. The base for questions in PS&HRM area was n= 68 respondents.

50 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 2020. For North Macedonia, the margin of error for the total sample of 1005 citizens is $\pm 3.15\%$, at the 95% confidence level.

III.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
E1. The Government keeps reliable data pertaining to the public service	2/4
E2. The Government regularly publishes basic statistical data pertaining to the public service	4/4
E3. Published statistical data include data on employees other than full-time civil servants in the central state Administration	2/4
E4. Published statistical data on public service is segregated based on gender and ethnic structure	½
E5. Published official data is available in open data format(s)	0/1
E6. The Government comprehensively reports on the public service policy	0/4
E7. The Government regularly reports on the public service policy	0/2
E8. Reports on the public service include substantiated information concerning the quality and/or outcomes of the public service work	0/2
E9. Data and information about the public service are actively promoted to the public	2/2
Total score	11/25
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)⁵¹	2
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	2

The LPSE introduces and defines the competence of the MISA to establish and maintain a single Register of all employees in the public sector institutions, as part of the HRMIS.⁵²

Data on civil servants are available per institution and type of institution in annual reports from the Register of employees in the public sector, published by the MISA. In such reports, the MISA also informs the public about the number of employees in state-owned companies.⁵³ These reports are published regularly, i.e., on annual basis on the MISA website in the section “Documents” and they are but three clicks away.⁵⁴

According to the HRMIS, in 2019, 1,358 employed administrative servants had their employment terminated.⁵⁵ The reasons for termination of the employment are as follows: at his/her request; by force of law due to loss of working capacity; by force of law due to being convicted of a crime related to performance of official duties; by force of law, i.e. if the employee does not return to work within three working days after the end of unpaid leave due to professional training or development; retirement; by force of law, i.e. if he/she is unjustifiably absent from work for at least three working days in a month; by force of law, i.e. serving a prison sentence longer more than six months, as of the day of start of the prison sentence; cancellation; death; early retirement; redundancy; mutual agreement and other cases regulated by law or collective agreement.⁵⁶

In 2019, a total of 3,165 vacancies of administrative servants were filled in with persons who did not have previous employment in public sector institutions. These 3,165 jobs were in 417 public sector institutions. Using services of temporary employment agencies, 3,222 people are employed in the public sector and they do not have the status of public sector employees and are not part of analyses contained in this Report.⁵⁷

The HRMIS contains the following data: name, date of birth, gender, incumbent position, education, and termination of employment. Regarding public service positions held, the HRMIS has the functionality to keep track of

51 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

52 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.

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

54 Annual reports from the Register of Employees in the Public Sector for 2017; 2018; 2019 (<https://bit.ly/2MKdqyR>; <https://bit.ly/2MGMY9r>; <https://bit.ly/2BRWNPT>)

55 2019 Annual Report from the Register of Employees in the Public Sector <https://bit.ly/3qiMUii>

56 2019 Annual Report from the Register of Employees in the Public Sector <https://bit.ly/2MZLkni>

57 The LPSE stipulates the grounds for engaging employees on temporary basis. The head of the public institution may fill a position by concluding a contract for employment on a fixed term basis, by publishing announcements in accordance with the general Law on Labour Relations or by concluding a contract for leasing/transfer of an employee with the private employment agency.

previous employees' jobs. The historical data for previous jobs is partially kept, given that the system has been established and maintained at the MISA as of 2016.⁵⁸ It contains a module for calculation of salaries and bonuses, which is actively used by 27 public sector institutions. Based on data for those 27 institutions, about a total number of 4,992 employees, the average annual gross salary paid by category of administrative servant is as follows: Category A – MKD 975,895; Category B- MKD 620,222; Category B- MKD 424,657; Category G – MKD 275,769.⁵⁹

The HRMIS has the functionality for data entry for performance assessment results and disciplinary sanctions. However, although the system has various functionalities/modules, data have not been regularly entered and updated by institutions.⁶⁰ The 2019 Report offers detailed information about the ethnic and gender structure of employees and presents crosscutting data where possible, per type of institution. Data on the ethnic structure are provided per institution of the central administration, as well. However, data are not fully segregated, considering that the data are not divided per rank and position.⁶¹

The latest Report for 2019 has not been published in an open data format. However, there is an available Report on employees in the public sector in an open data format for 2017, which was not available in the previous 2017-2018 monitoring cycle.⁶² The open dataset for 2016 contains data on public sector employees, based on gender, age group, education level, type of and employee, type and name of institution, as well as institutional level (state or local). This practice of publishing open datasets on public sector employees should be continued for each annual reporting period, in order that it become a good practice.

On 30 March 2020, the 2019 Report was promoted for the public on the MISA website⁶³ and on the Facebook page of the Minister.⁶⁴ Reports for the previous years were also promoted on the MISA website.⁶⁵

As regards reporting about the public service policy, the in-line institutions are AA and the MISA. In its Annual Report, the AA reports on the following key issues: recruitments (job announcements, selection procedures and exams); disciplinary procedures and decisions; corruption/integrity issues and measures. Furthermore, the Annual Report contains information about activities for improvement of the work of the AA, measuring the service user satisfaction level, etc. The 2018 Annual Report was published.⁶⁶

Since the 2019 Annual Report was not available/published in the monitoring period due its parliamentary review⁶⁷, researchers sent a FOI request for the said Report.⁶⁸

The MISA is responsible for the Register of Assessments and for providing generic trainings, in following with an Annual Programme.

In light of the fact that the 2019 Assessment Report was not available online in the monitoring period, a FOI request was sent for the said Report.⁶⁹ The Report contains statistical data on the assessment process. Furthermore, a FOI request was sent for the Annual 2019 Programme of Generic Trainings because it was not available online.

However, the Annual Programme does not provide analytical data on delivered trainings (number of trained administrative servants, evaluation of the trainings, etc.), providing only information about the topics, the manner of conducting the training, categories of servants for which trainings are intended, time-period for conducting the training and budget. Moreover, there is no Report about the implementation of the Annual Programme of Generic Trainings.

Even though there is quite comprehensive reporting about the public service,⁷⁰ there have been no publicly available reports about the entire public service policy for three consecutive years prior to the measurement, including for 2019. The reports do not include substantiated information concerning the quality and/or outcomes of the public service.

58 Reply of the MISA to a FOI request (received on 10 September 2020 and 7 October 2020).

59 Ibid

60 Ibid

61 2019 Annual Report from the Register of Employees in the Public Sector, <https://bit.ly/37ibBE5>

62 Open data portal - <http://www.otvorenipodatoci.gov.mk/dataset/bpa6otehn-bo-jabhnot-cektop-ha-pm-bo-2017-rod>

63 On 30 March 2020, the MISA published the 2019 Report and issued a press statement: <http://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/2882>

64 shorturl.at/cflzG

65 <http://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1682>; <http://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/2882>

66 Annual Report on the Work of the Administration Agency For 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/3wtVT4>

67 The Parliament was dissolved in February 2020 due to announced early elections

68 FOI requests were sent on 20 June 2020

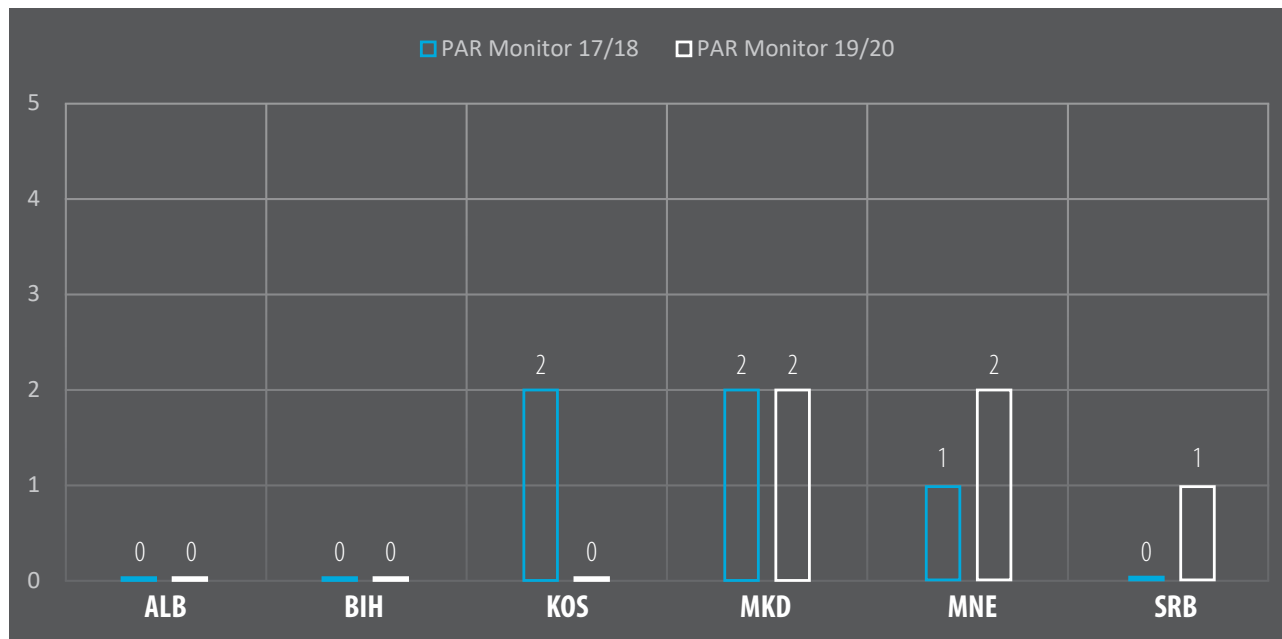
69 The Parliament was dissolved in February 2020 due to announced early elections

70 For 5 out of 7 key issues, as defined by the indicator methodology

There is no institution, which reports about the career development (promotions and demotions) and salaries. The reports about career development should be delivered by the MISA and data on salaries should be reported by the Ministry of Finance.

■ 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



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

Indicator elements	Scores
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
E2. There are specific criteria determined for the selection of individuals for temporary engagements in the state administration.	0/4
E3. The hiring procedure for individuals engaged on temporary contracts is open and transparent	0/4
E4. Duration of temporary engagement contracts is limited	2/4
E5. Civil servants perceive that temporary engagements in the administration are an exception	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
E7. Civil servants perceive that appointments on a temporary basis in the administration are merit-based	0/2
E8. Civil servants perceive that the formal rules for appointments on a temporary basis are applied in practice	1/2
E9. Civil servants perceive that individuals hired on a temporary basis go on to become civil servants after their contracts end	0/2
E10. Civil servants perceive that contracts for temporary engagements are extended to more than one year	0/2
Total score	3/28
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)⁷¹	0
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	1

The head of the public institution may fill a position by concluding a contract for employment on a fixed term basis on the grounds of: 1. replacement of a temporarily absent employee, who is absent for more than one month; 2. temporarily increased workload; 3. seasonal work; 4. unpredictable short-term activities that occur during the performance of the predominant activity of the employer; 5. project work, or 6. filling in special positions/special advisors in the offices of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia, the Speaker of the Parliament, the Vice Speakers of the Parliament, the Prime Minister, the Deputy Prime Ministers, the Ministers and the Secretary General of the Government.⁷²

⁷¹ 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

⁷² Law on Public Sector Employees, Article 22 para. (1), <https://bit.ly/2VAx9Ga>

As regards unpredictable short-term activities that occur during the performance of the predominant activity of the employer, for duration of up to 30 days, the head of the institution announces the need for employment with the Employment Agency, free of charge, by referring persons for employment from the records of unemployed persons, in accordance with the Labour Law. This can be done maximum 2 times a year and the number of persons employed in this manner cannot exceed 5% of the number of the total employees in the institution.⁷³

The maximum allowed number of positions of special advisors in the offices is as follows: Office of the President of the Republic of North Macedonia (5 positions), Office of the Speaker of the Parliament (5 positions), the Offices of Vice Speakers (VS) of the Parliament (one for each VS), Office of the Prime Minister (15), Offices of Deputy Prime Ministers (3 for each DPM), Offices of 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 Office of the Secretary General of the Government (3 positions).⁷⁴

The LPSE does not prescribe limitations for employments under items 1, 2, 3, 5 of Article 22 para. 1.

Nevertheless, the lack of limitation is reasonable for item 1 since it refers to replacement of temporarily absent employee. Additionally, Article 8 of the Law on Transformation into Regular Employment⁷⁵ states that institutions must not hire persons to temporarily perform physical and/or intellectual work, more than 1% of the total number of employees at the end of the previous year, i.e., more than three persons at institutions in which the total number of employees is less than 300 persons.⁷⁶

However, the overall system is not transparent and does not provide for the 10% limitation. There is no single limit at the level of the administration, but only at the institutional level, and the criteria allow 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.

The employment under item 1, lasts until the expiration of the approved leave of the absent employee, and for a maximum of two years. The employment under items 2, 3 and 4 shall last as long as the needed by the institution, and for a maximum period of one year. The employment referred to under item 5 shall last until the completion of the project, and for a maximum of five years. The employment under item 6 shall last until the end of term of office of the official to whose Office the employee has been assigned. Namely, the duration is limited, but lasts longer than a year.⁷⁷

Under items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6, the head of the institution publishes an announcement in accordance with the Labour Law⁷⁸ or concludes a contract for leasing/transfer of an employee with the agency for temporary employment.

The private employment agency is not allowed to lease/transfer a worker to perform the same tasks with the same employer for more than two years, with or without interruption. The LPSE (Article 22) stipulates that the duration of the contract for assignment of employees for the performance of the same temporary works may be concluded for a period until the need lasts, but not longer than a year. For employment under item 4, for up to 30 days, the head of the institution announces the need for employment with the service responsible for mediation in employment (Employment Agency), free of charge, by referring persons for employment from the records of unemployed persons, in accordance with the Labour Law. This can be done maximum 2 times a year and the number of persons employed in this manner cannot exceed 5% of the number of the total employees at the institution.

Employment in the public sector is done 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.⁷⁹ Article 17, para. 2 of the LPSE stipulates that the document on the systematization of jobs determines the general and special conditions and the description of duties and working tasks for each job position. For example, for employment of forestry police officers, the public announcement contains general and specific conditions, as well as tasks and duties based on those conditions and description of duties as set forth in the Rulebook on the systematisation of jobs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management⁸⁰ and in the special

73 Law on Public Sector Employees, Article 22 para. (10), <https://bit.ly/2VAx9Ga>

74 Law on Public Sector Employees, Article. 22 para. (11), <https://bit.ly/2VAx9Ga>

75 This Law refers to the agencies for temporary employment

76 Law on Transformation into Regular Employment - <https://bit.ly/2BUU8oD>

77 Law on Public Sector Employees, Article 22, <https://bit.ly/2VAx9Ga>

78 Labor Law <https://bit.ly/3gQ1yu7>

79 Law on Public Sector Employees, Article 6, <https://bit.ly/2VAx9Ga>, (the principle of expertise and competence)

80 Rulebook on systematisation of jobs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management: <https://bit.ly/2U9pTzW>

law for this area - the Law on Forests⁸¹). The three public announcements that can be found online contain the conditions/elements which are proscribed by the LPSE.⁸²

For temporary employment on grounds referred in items 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 the head of the institution shall publish an announcement in accordance with general regulations for employment or conclude an agreement with the agency for temporary employment to engage an employee through the agency.⁸³

The utilisation of agencies for temporary employments although legalised under the LPSE can be assessed as a deviation from the LPSE, since the employees are not obliged to meet criteria and enter the public service without an announcement, which is a breach of the merit-based principle.

The review of legislation has not shown references to the criteria for temporary engagement. In terms of temporary engagement through agencies specifically, no evidence has been found about the criteria that agencies apply. The documents on systematisation of jobs and special laws provide for criteria for employment of administrative servants on permanent basis, but no evidence has been found that the same conditions are applied regarding temporary employment.

The procedure in which private employment agencies are used is performed without publishing announcements. The assignment of workers to perform temporary work is done based on a contract for assignment of a worker concluded by the private employment agency with a license for temporary employment and the employer - beneficiary,⁸⁴ which can be assessed as a deviation.

When it comes to the perception of civil servants⁸⁵ of the merit in hiring people on a temporary basis, 31.28% of surveyed civil servants agree that at their respective institutions, the formal rules for hiring people on a temporary basis are applied in practice. 16.86% of civil servants consider that individuals hired on a temporary basis rarely or never go on to become civil servants after their temporary engagements. 25.10% of them think that people hired on a temporary basis are selected based on their qualifications and skills (merit).

15.4% of civil servants think that temporary engagements in the administration are an exception, showing an enormous level of temporary employments. Only 21.6% of civil servants think that those hired on a temporary basis rarely or never perform tasks, which should normally be performed by civil servants, showing that many consider that those temporarily hired perform tasks normally performed by civil servants.

As mentioned above, the duration of temporary engagement contracts is limited. This is confirmed by surveyed civil servants where 10% answered that such contracts rarely or never get extended to more than a year, meaning that a considerable number of temporary contracts get extended for more than a year. 16.68% of civil servants consider that individuals hired on a temporary basis rarely or never go on to become civil servants after their temporary engagement, meaning that 83% consider that temporary employment often or always leads to a civil service position.

The difference in scores between this and the last monitoring is due to factual deficiencies found regarding employment using agencies for temporary employment, having in mind that in practice there are no public announcements, which makes the process not open and lacking transparency. The provisions of the LPSE are not precise and can be interpreted that announcements are published without exception, whenever engaging public servants.

81 Law on Forests: <http://www.mzsv.gov.mk/cms/Upload/images/oglas02.2018.jpg>

82 Article 23 of the Labour Law stipulates the obligatory elements, which the public announcement should contain: name of the job; the conditions required for performing the work; daily and weekly working hours; schedule of working hours; the amount of the basic net salary or the amount from the lowest to the highest amount of the net salary for the job for which a worker is required; the application deadline, which must not be shorter than five working days; the deadline within which the selection will be made and accurate data about the employer (name, seat, telephone, contact person and address to submit applications).

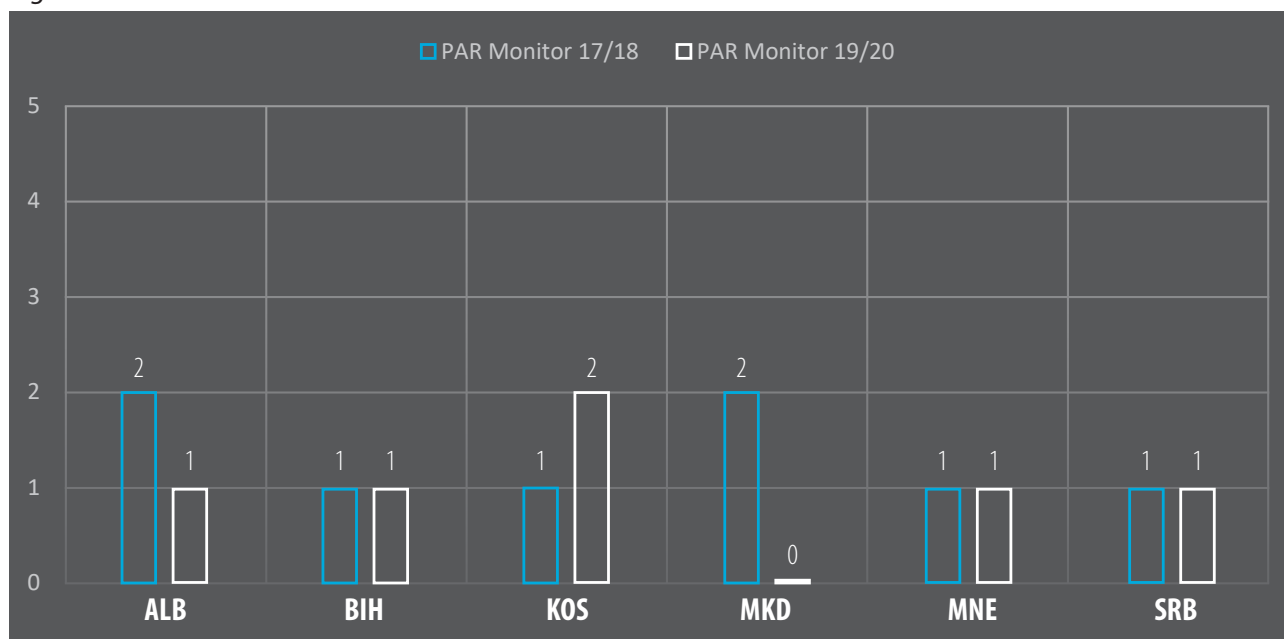
83 Law on Public Sector Employees, Article 22, para. 8 <https://bit.ly/2VAx9Ga>

84 Law on Agencies for Temporary Employment, Article 4, <https://bit.ly/3u1cNVZ>

85 The WeBER survey was conducted from 2 to 24 July 2020, with 580 respondents/civil servants

■ 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



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

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

Indicator elements	Scores
E1. Information about public competitions is made broadly publicly available	4/4
E2. Public competition announcements are written in a simple, clear and understandable language	2/4
E3. During the public competition procedure, interested candidates can request and obtain clarifications, which are made publicly available	0/4
E4. There are no unreasonable barriers for external candidates, which make public competitions more easily accessible to internal candidates	0/2
E5. The application procedure imposes minimum administrative and paperwork burden on candidates	0/4
E6. Candidates are allowed and invited to supplement missing documentation within a reasonable Timeframe	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
E8. Information about annulled announcements is made publicly available, with reasoning provided	0/4
E9. Civil servants perceive the recruitments into the civil service as based on merit	0/2
E10. Civil servants perceive the recruitment procedure to ensure equal opportunity	½
E11. The public perceives the recruitments done through the public competition process as based on Merit	0/2
Total score	9/36
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)⁸⁶	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	1

Public announcements for recruitment of administrative servants⁸⁷, 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. In which newspapers the announcement is published 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.

⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁷ Replies to FOI requests obtained from the AA about 5 institutions for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019: 1. Ministry of Finance, 2. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; 3. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; 4. General Secretariat and 5. Secretariat for European Affairs (reply to FOI request obtained on 25 August 2020)

Interviewees from the AA mention that the announcements are broadly publicly available.⁸⁸ However, publishing announcements in newspapers is a financial burden for institutions with a small budget (it costs about EUR 1,500 to publish an announcement in the daily newspapers), especially when it comes to advertising for a number of positions.⁸⁹

The fact that announcements are broadly publicly available was also confirmed by two interviewed candidates for administrative servants, who had been rejected for a job post.⁹⁰

One of the interviewed candidates considered that the announcements are not broadly available, but anyone interested in employment in the public administration knows where they are published (on the AA web site) and can follow them.

Internet portals also publish announcements by downloading ads from the AA web site. Regarding the legal possibility/obligation of each institution to publish the announcements, the AA has answered that the entire public sector has over 1,300 institutions, but 20% of them are not bound by preconditions for publication because they do not have web sites (e.g., kindergartens, nursing homes, small municipalities). However, in such cases, there is a possibility to publish announcements on their bulletin board.⁹¹

Public announcements⁹² are written using clear and understandable language, meaning they have stated the following: the institution which has the need for an employee; the sector in the specific institution and the position which is to be filled/announced; general conditions; specific conditions; general work competencies; specific work competencies; working hours; and net amount of salary.⁹³ However, they lack job descriptions.⁹⁴

At the end of each announcement, there is a clarification section, where it is pointed out that the announcement is envisaged for a concrete ethnic community, according to the institutions' Annual Employment Plan. Furthermore, the application procedure is clarified, as well as the stages of the selection. Representatives of the AA mentioned that announcements contain even too much information, except for the description of the job position,⁹⁵ which was also confirmed by one of the interviewees.⁹⁶ The other interviewees stated that the announcements are written using simple, clear, and understandable language.⁹⁷

During the public competition procedure, clarifications are possible and provided in practice, but replies are not made publicly available, except in the form of FAQ, which can be found on the AA web site.⁹⁸ In addition, information about the possibility to send requests for clarifications is not included in announcements. Most often, there are dilemmas and ambiguities regarding the medical certificate - who issues it, the validity period, etc. and consequently candidates have dilemmas and each of them submits a different type of medical certificate.⁹⁹

However, the AA has taken the standpoint that it accepts the same certificate for several different job positions the applicant has applied for, it is attached to the candidate's profile and is valid for a year. Interviewees believe that the issue of calculation of the work experience should be regulated precisely, as well as the classification of jobs, since data of the Employment Agency and the AA do not correspond.

Moreover, it has been mentioned that during the administrative selection, if the AA establishes the need for submission of additional documents, it notifies the candidate by e-mail on his/hers created profile and he/she should submit them on the day of the interview. The AA has pointed out that there is no question that has not been answered.¹⁰⁰

88 Interview with representatives from AA (conducted on 12 August 2020)

89 Ibid

90 Interviews with four rejected candidates or administrative servants (conducted on 18 August 2020, 10 September 2020 and 17 September 2020)

91 Ibid

92 Replies to FOI requests obtained from the AA for 5 institutions for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019: 1. Ministry of Finance, 2. Ministry of Labour and Social Policy; 3. Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Water Management; 4. General Secretariat

93 Rulebook on the Mandatory Elements of the Public Announcement for Filling a Position in the Public Sector - <https://bit.ly/3l4mKNe>

94 Interview with representatives from the Agency of Administration (conducted on 12 August 2020)

95 Ibid

96 Interview with 4 rejected candidates for administrative servants (conducted on 18 August; 10 September; 16 September; and 17 September 2020)

97 Ibid

98 Interview with representatives from the Agency of Administration (conducted on 12 August 2020)

99 Ibid

100 Ibid

Candidates for administrative officers fill in the electronic application posted on the AA website, where the applicant must create a personal profile.¹⁰¹ The mandatory requirements are set, such as: proof of citizenship; medical certificate; internationally recognized certificate of proficiency in one of the three most commonly used languages in the European Union (English, French, German); certificate/diploma for completed degree of education; proof of an unspecified ban on performing a profession, activity or duty; etc.¹⁰² There are also optional documents that candidates can attach, such as: recommendations from previous employers; certificates of attended trainings, professional certificates proving other professional qualifications and specializations, papers and publications; an internationally recognized certificate of proficiency in one of the six official languages of the United Nations, etc.¹⁰³ Having completed the application, applicants receive an identification code linking them with the results in the selection stages.¹⁰⁴

The Selection Panel prepares a final ranking list of candidates, who have successfully passed the selection stages and announces it on the AA web site within three days following the interviews, according to the points allocated for: administrative selection, the administrative servant exam and the interview, for candidates, who have acquired minimum 60% of the total i.e., maximum number of points in all previous stages of the selection procedure. The Panel selects the best ranked applicant and gives the proposal to the secretary/manager of the institution. The secretary (or managers of institutions, where no secretary is appointed) decides on the selection within five days from the day of receipt of the proposal.

Namely, 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). Hence, the procedure is cumbersome at the very beginning and it discourages the interest of external candidates. The list of required documents, which should be submitted in the early stage should be revised and narrowed down and only selected candidates should be obliged to provide the required documents. This is seen as an unnecessary barrier for external candidates.¹⁰⁵

Furthermore, there is no possibility of supplementing required obligatory documents, this being possible only for documents that candidates may optionally attach with the online-application and which can be required from the AA during the evidence reliability verification and the interview stage.¹⁰⁶ Namely, if the AA establishes the need for submission of additional documents, it notifies the candidate by e-mail on his/her created profile and he/she should submit them on the day of the interview (scheduled after the exam, within 10 days). At the interview, the candidate is obliged to bring all the documents he/she has attached and possibly an additional document for which the AA considers that a dilemma should be clarified. So, if the candidate has attached a diploma/certificate to the profile and does not provide it on the day of the interview, the candidate will be eliminated.¹⁰⁷

Decisions on appointments are available on the website of the AA.¹⁰⁸ Reasoning is not provided for in the decisions, except for a formal statement on the appointment, available on the AA website.

The LAS only states the grounds for annulment of public announcements but has no provisions on the reasoning and public availability. However, information about annulled announcements is made publicly available. If the announcement is stayed, the AA informs the candidates on their profiles that the procedure has been stayed at the request of the institution.¹⁰⁹

Based on the survey of civil servants¹¹⁰, it can be noted that in total 27% agree that civil servants are recruited based on qualifications and skills and 24.5% disagree that political or personal connections are necessary to get a civil service job. In addition, almost 40% of surveyed civil servants agree that the recruitment procedure is equal for all candidates. When it comes to citizens' perception, 21% agree that public servants are recruited through public competitions based on merit, but more than two thirds believe that this is not the case (73.5%) by disagreeing with this statement.¹¹¹

101 Agency for Administration, Manual for creating an account and applying for a job advertisement <https://bit.ly/2Ssh7jv>

102 LAS <https://bit.ly/3jQWMgN>, Article 36

103 Ibid

104 Ibid

105 Interview with four rejected candidates in a public competition for administrative servants (conducted on 18 September 2020, 10 September 2020 and 17 September 2020)

106 LAS, <https://bit.ly/3b62DuT>, Article 35

107 Interview with representatives from the AA (conducted on 12 August 2020)

108 LAS, <https://bit.ly/3b68xfx>, Article 41, para. 10

109 Ibid

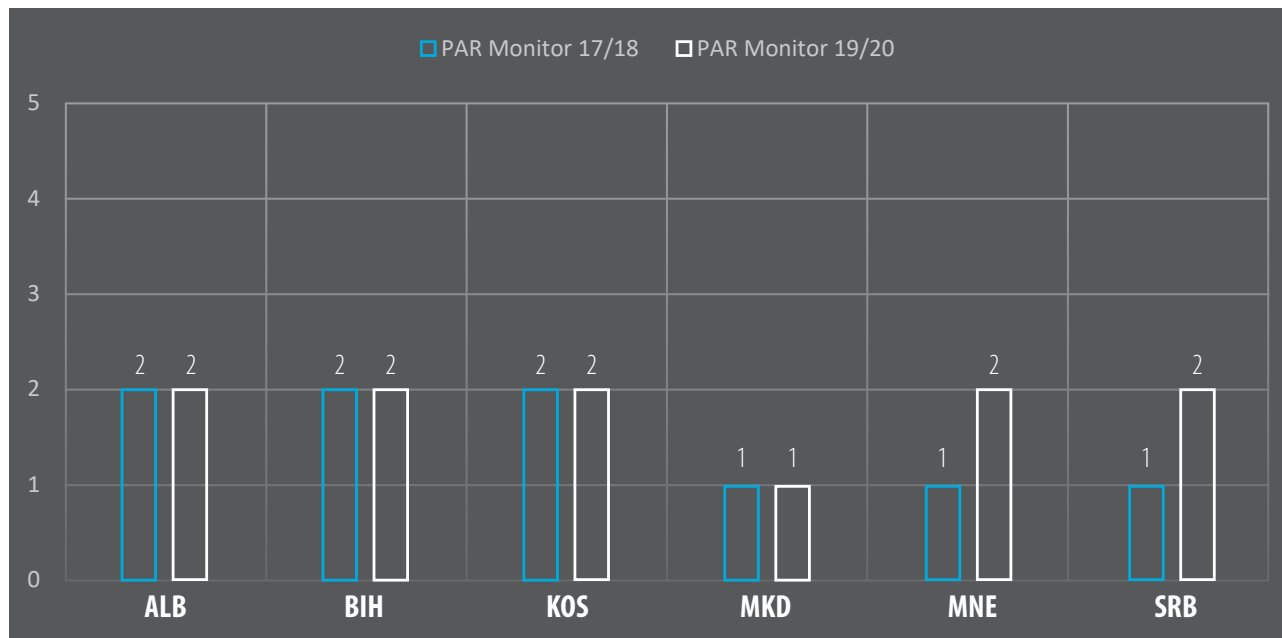
110 The WeBER survey was conducted in the period from 2 to 24 July .2020, on 580 respondents/civil servants

111 The WeBER survey was conducted in the period from 2 to 24 July .2020, on 1022 respondents/citizens

The slight difference in the score compared with the previous PAR Monitor is a result of the higher number of respondents (civil servants), who agreed with the statement that the recruitment procedure for civil servants ensures equal opportunity for all candidates.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



PRINCIPLE 4: DIRECT OR INDIRECT POLITICAL INFLUENCE ON SENIOR MANAGERIAL POSITIONS IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE IS PREVENTED

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

Indicator elements	Scores
E1. The Law prescribes competitive, merit-based procedures for the selection of senior managers in the civil service	0/2
E2. The law prescribes objective criteria for the termination of employment of senior civil servants	0/2
E3. The merit-based recruitment of senior civil servants is efficiently applied in practice	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
E5. Ratio of eligible candidates per senior-level vacancy	0/4
E6. Civil servants consider that the procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs	0/2
E7. CSOs perceive that the procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs	0/2
E8. Civil servants perceive that senior civil servants are appointed based on political support	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
E10. Civil servants consider that senior civil servants would not implement and can effectively reject illegal orders of political superiors	1/2
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
E12. Civil servants perceive that senior civil servants are not dismissed for political motives	1/2
E13. Civil servants consider the criteria for dismissal of senior public servants to be properly applied in the practice	0/2
E14. CSOs consider senior managerial civil servants to be professionalised in practice	0/2
E15. Civil servants perceive that senior civil servants do not participate in electoral campaigns of political parties	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
Total score	2/40
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹¹²	0
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

¹¹² 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

The principle of merit is included in the civil service legislation as a criterion for access to senior civil service positions. Namely, according to the LAS, the senior civil servant, who is an administrative servant of the category B, i.e. (B4 - head of unit), shall be appointed by the minister/head of the institution/mayor. He/she should meet the special conditions for the job position of head administrative servant of level B4. Hence, he/she enters the civil service on the principle of merit. However, the system is only to a certain extent based on merit regarding senior civil servants, being still highly discretionary: the sole condition for an individual to be appointed as a state secretary or secretary general of an institution is to hold a B4 job position level.¹¹³ This was also confirmed in the conducted interviews, as was the necessity of introducing clearer and more precise regulations for appointment of senior civil servants.¹¹⁴

The secretary, who is an administrative servant under category B, i.e., a managerial employee is appointed by the minister and he/she should meet the special conditions for the job position of head administrative servant of level B4.¹¹⁵

The legislation does not provide for a possibility of appointing acting senior managers, which has been confirmed by the 3 interviewees.¹¹⁶ One of the interviewees mentioned that in practice it happens (very rarely, mainly due objective reasons), that another senior administrative officer is authorized to perform some or all of the secretary's duties for a period that is not regulated. An example of such a situation occurred in 2019, when the State Secretary of the MISA was detained on suspicions of corruption (and since such a situation is not provided for in the regulations) he was not dismissed, but in his absence, a senior administrative officer was authorized to partially perform the duties of the Secretary, but in such a case the official designation of the officer is not State Secretary. Moreover, one of the interviewees responded that according to their experience there have been acting Secretaries, even in his institution for some time, because the preferred candidates did not meet the minimum legal requirements for appointment to the given position, which is another example of circumventing legal norms and procedures.

The civil service legislation contains unobjective criteria for the termination of employment of senior civil servants. Namely, their term of office expires along with the term of the appointing political authority. After the expiry thereof, he/she shall be assigned to a job position at a level equal to the job position he/she has held prior to his/her appointment as a senior civil servant.¹¹⁷ This was confirmed by interviewees, along with the statement that the decision for termination of employment of state secretaries is complementary to their (political) appointment, hence their employment terminates politically.

Regarding the ratio of eligible candidates per senior-level vacancy, since there is no specific procedure for recruitment of senior civil servants and considering the high degree of discretionary powers in the appointments, there is basically one candidate per position and this is not applicable in the system, as confirmed by interviewees.

Moreover, there are no additional vetting/deliberation procedures outside the civil service legislation, the appointment is discretionary in the Law itself. The legislation does not provide for a possibility for appointing acting senior managers, which has been confirmed by 3 interviewees, but such appointments can be identified in practice.

When it comes to the perception, only 17% of surveyed civil servants agree that procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs at their respective institutions. This perception is even more negative among surveyed CSOs, where an astonishingly high percent of CSOs - 81% disagree with this statement, and only 1.5% of them agree. Moreover, only 9% of CSOs agree that senior managerial civil servants are professional in the practice, but 57% disagree with the statement.

The selection and dismissal of senior civil servants are assessed as politically motivated in North Macedonia. Only 8.5% of surveyed civil servants believe that senior civil servants are "rarely" or "never" appointed due to political support, while 60% agree with this statement. In addition, 32% of civil servants disagree that senior civil servants would conduct illegal actions if political superiors asked them to, and 32% agree that they can reject an illegal order from a Minister or other political superior, without endangering their own position.

113 LAS, <https://bit.ly/2Zkh5K0>, Article 30

114 Three interviews with: an expert-former state secretary; 2 state advisors (conducted on: 24 September 2020; 25 September 2020; 29 September 2020)

115 According to the LAS, (Article 23), Category A is composed of secretaries. A1 – State Secretary; A2 – Secretary General; A3 – Secretary of the City of Skopje; A4 – Municipal secretary with a seat in a city, and A5 – Municipal secretary with a seat in a village. State Secretaries are appointed at Ministries and the Secretariat for European Affairs. Secretaries General at the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Macedonia, the Judicial Council of the Republic of Macedonia, the Public Prosecutor's Council of the Republic of Macedonia, the Ombudsman, the Public Attorney of the Republic of Macedonia, the Inspection Council, the State Audit Office, the State Election Commission, the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption, the Data Verification Commission, the Commission for the Protection of Competition, the Commission for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, the State Commission Deciding in Second Instance Administrative Procedures and Labour Relations Procedures, the Agency for Administration and the Directorate for Personal Data Protection. A Secretary of the City of Skopje is appointed in the City of Skopje. Municipal secretaries are appointed at municipalities, with a seat in a city and in municipalities with a seat in a village.

116 Three interviews with: an expert-former state secretary; 2 state advisors (conducted on: 24 September 2020; 25 September 2020; 29 September 2020)

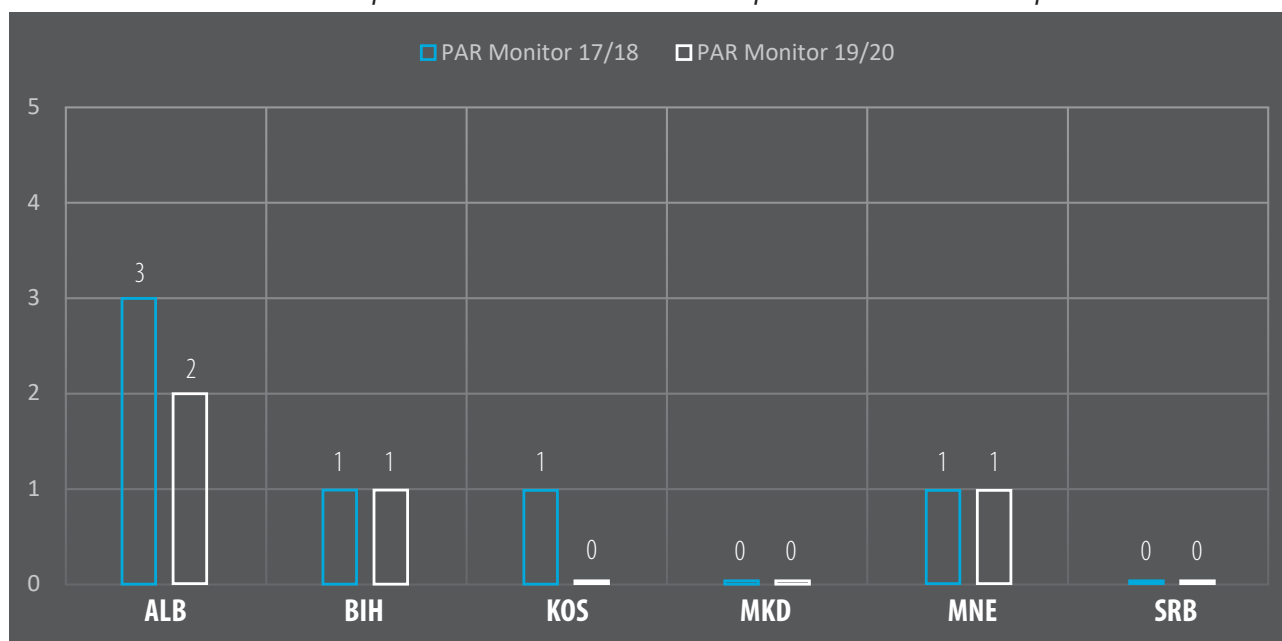
117 LAS, <https://bit.ly/3dgeQzU>, Article 23, paras. 9 and 10

In terms of dismissal of civil servants, only 16% of surveyed civil servants agree that formal rules and criteria for dismissal of senior civil servants are properly applied in practice, and 43.5% say they do not know the answer. 47% think that senior civil servants rarely or never get dismissed for political motives. However, only 16% of them disagree that senior civil servants' positions are subject of political agreements and "division of the cake" among ruling political parties, while 50% agree with this statement. Moreover, only 10% think that senior civil servants at their respective institutions rarely or never participate in electoral campaigns of political parties during elections, while 21.06% think that this happens "often", and additional 16% think that it happens always, or almost always.

According to the latest 2019 Sigma Monitoring Report, the state of play is as follows: "Senior civil service positions are under a highly discretionary system, based on political appointment and dismissal. The MISA is working on a new law that will introduce merit and open competition in the recruitment and termination of employment at top management positions. The legislative framework is very weak, as recruitments and dismissals are discretionary for secretaries and heads of agencies."¹¹⁸

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



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
E1. The civil service remuneration system is simply structured	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
E3. Information on civil service remuneration system is available online	4/6
E4. Citizen friendly explanations or presentations of remuneration information are available online	1/2
E5. Discretionary supplements are limited by legislation and cannot comprise a major part of a civil servant's salary/remuneration	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
Total score	13/22
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹¹⁹	3
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	3

118 SIGMA Monitoring Report, The Principles of Public Administration, North Macedonia, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3v6MBIX>

119 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

The LAS is available online on the MISA's website and as mentioned above it stipulates that the salary of an administrative servant is composed of the basic and the extraordinary component. It also provides for a clear structure of the basic salary components, with tables for relevant categories. The salary components are expressed in points and there is a method of determination of the point value.¹²⁰

The salary of an administrative servant is composed of the general and the extraordinary component.¹²¹ The general salary components consist of: part of the salary for degree of education¹²²; position supplement¹²³; and working experience supplement¹²⁴ with tables for relevant categories.¹²⁵

The extraordinary component¹²⁶ is comprised of salary supplement for special working conditions; salary supplement due to adjustment to the labour market; and/or salary supplement for work at night, work in shifts and overtime work.

The salary components are expressed in points, and Article 88 envisages the manner in which the value of a point is determined. The value of the point for calculation of salaries of civil servants, is determined each year on the basis of a decision of the Government, adopted upon the proposal of the Minister of Finance, which is adopted within 10 days from the day of adoption of the Budget, and it is within the framework of the envisaged budget and on the basis of the total number of administrative servants assigned to the appropriate levels in the current year.

The Government decision on the value of the point for calculation of the salary of civil servants is a publicly available document. It is published in the Official Gazette.¹²⁷

There are three types of supplements, which constitute the extraordinary part of the salary of an administrative servant: supplement for special working conditions; supplement for labour market adjustment and supplement for night work, work in shifts and overtime work.¹²⁸

The LAS clearly defines and limits the amounts for supplements for special working conditions (two types): work at high-risk jobs and work in an office of an appointed/elected official.¹²⁹ It vaguely defines the conditions under which a 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 Article 91 (para.3) has been annulled by the Constitutional Court, and para. 2 refers to the annulled para.3 and it is still in the Law, which is an omission that should be corrected under the next amendments to the LAS.¹³⁰

There are also five additional types of supplements: for night work; for work in shifts; for work on weekends; for work on a public holiday; and for overtime work. The LAS sets out the rules for awarding these supplements and their upper limit.¹³¹ These supplements are not mutually exclusive, which is not a shortcoming having in mind that these supplements are cumulative. (e.g., one can work in shifts and that could be during a weekend and on a public holiday). The lack of an upper limit for the labour market adjustment supplement makes the rationale for awarding 1 point.

120 LAS, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

121 LAS, Article 86, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

122 The part of the salary for degree of education, which has been acquired by the administrative servant is valued as follows: Level of Qualifications VI A, 240 ECTS points or completed VII/1 level – 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.

123 The part of the salary for the position to which the administrative servant is assigned 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.

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

125 The part of the salary for the degree of education, which has been acquired by the administrative servant is valued as follows: Level of Qualifications VI A, 240 ECTS points or completed VII/1 level – 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.

126 LAS, Article 89, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

127 Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia, 28 December 2019 <https://bit.ly/3vsJBGW>

128 LAS, Article 89, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

129 LAS, Article 90, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

130 LAS, Article 91, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

131 LAS, Article 92, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

Public announcements contain information about the salary for each announced job post. Job announcements on web sites contain information about the net salary, and this is also the case with job announcement samples received from the AA for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019.

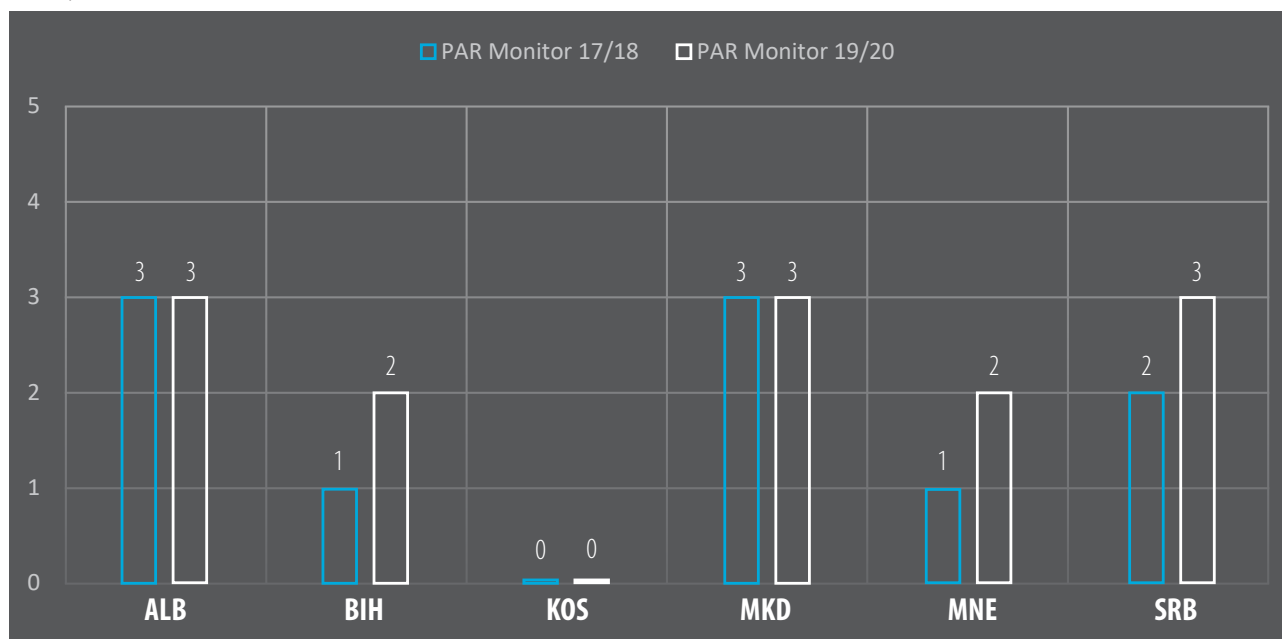
The administrative servant who has been evaluated with an annual “A” grade shall be awarded a bonus for successful operation in the amount of the salary received in the last month of the year in which the evaluation has taken place, provided that the budget of the institution has funds allocated for such purpose.¹³² However, there is no data whether the percentage of bonuses in the total remuneration is below 20%. FOI requests have been sent to the MoF, but it has been answered that there is no information about paid bonuses and that such information should be requested from each individual institution.

As for the perception of public servants, 8.20% of respondents strongly agreed and 15.98% agreed (22.95% chose not to respond) that bonuses or increases in pay grades are used by managers only to stimulate or reward performance, and 9.02% of respondents replied with “never or almost never”, whereas 8.20% replied with “rarely” (17.21% opted for “don’t know/ don’t want to respond”) to the statement that political and personal connections help employees receive bonuses or increases in pay grades.

The remuneration system is assessed as simply structured, considering that 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 percentage of the basic salary.

■ 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



¹³² LAS, Article 92, <https://bit.ly/3gDfE02>

PRINCIPLE 7: POLICIES AND LEGISLATION ARE DESIGNED IN AN INCLUSIVE MANNER THAT ENABLE THE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION OF SOCIETY

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

Indicator elements	Scores
E1. Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are formally established in the central administration	4/4
E2. Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are implemented in the central administration	2/4
E3. Civil servants consider the integrity and anti-corruption measures as effective	½
E4. CSOs consider the integrity and anti-corruption measures as effective	0/2
E5. Civil servants consider that the integrity and anti-corruption measures are impartial	½
E6. CSOs consider that the integrity and anti-corruption measures in the state administration are impartial	0/2
E7. Civil servants feel they would be protected as whistle blowers	0/2
Total score	8/18
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹³³	2
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	1

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, as well as the Criminal Code. The scope of the integrity policy covers the entire public service, and the policy contains clear objectives based on the analysis of the current situation under the LPCCI. A new State Programme for the Prevention of Corruption is developed, considering that the last one expired in 2019. Furthermore, there was a vacuum period until the election of new members of the SCPC.

According to the last 2019 Sigma Assessment: the new LPCCI is strong, and the policy documents and action plans in this area are solid. However, the Assessment underlines that: “the practical results on the public service are weak, because the SCPC is not a key actor for the integrity of civil servants and the MISA is not performing in this area. According to the PAR Strategy, the MISA should play a role in promoting integrity amongst civil servants, alongside the SCPC. The actions foreseen for the MISA were not undertaken and the ministry has not resources devoted to this issue.”¹³⁴

The Report on the implementation of the State Programme for Prevention and Repression of Corruption and Reduction of Conflicts of Interest, accompanied with an Action Plan covering the 2016-2019 period shows that only 31% of the activities have been implemented. None of the measures related to integrity and ethics have been implemented.¹³⁵

As regards the civil servants’ and CSOs’ perception of integrity and anti-corruption measures in state institutions, their opinions differ. As to the issue whether these measures are effective in achieving their purpose at their respective institutions, 32% of surveyed civil servants agree with this statement, while only 16% of surveyed CSOs’ agree.

There is an even greater difference in their opinions when asked whether these measures are impartial with 31% of civil servants agreeing, then only about 4% of surveyed CSOs agreeing, and 71% disagreeing with this statement.

Only 9% agree that they would feel protected if they were to become a whistle blower, in contrast to 50% disagreeing with this statement.

The difference in points between this and the previous Report is owed to the fact that there is variance in the civil servants’ responses, being now more positive regarding the effectiveness of the integrity and anti-corruption measures, as well as regarding their protection as potential whistle blowers.

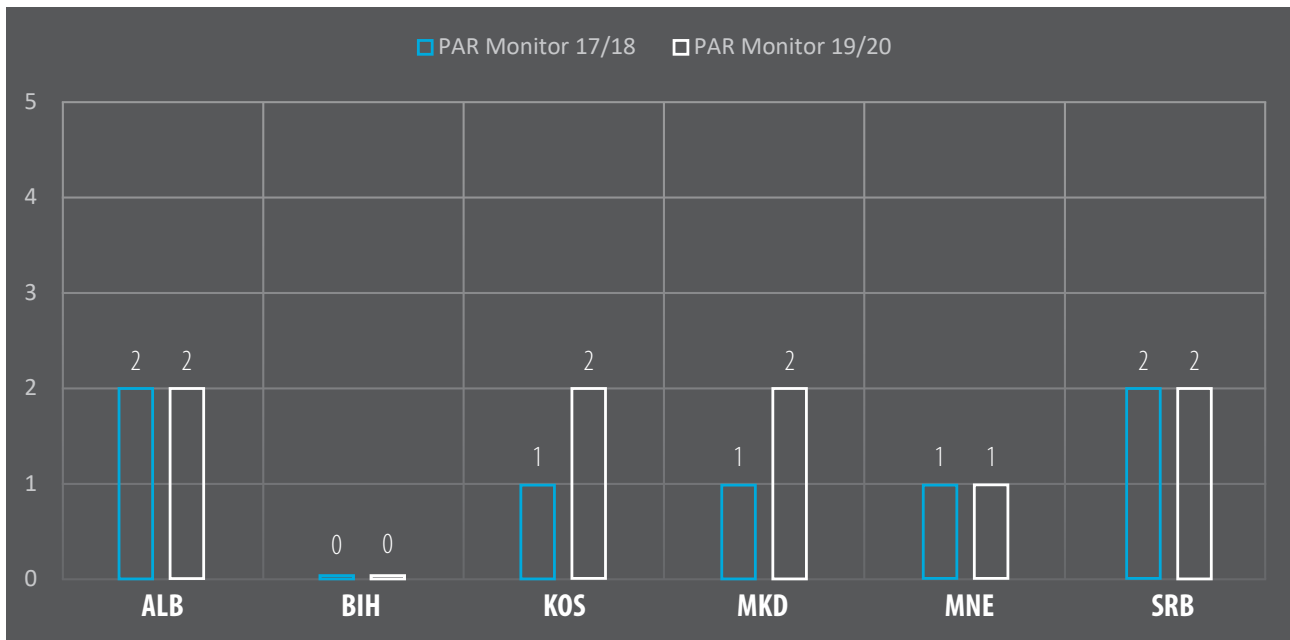
¹³³ Conversion of points: 0-3 points = 0; 4-6 points = 1; 7-9 points = 2; 10-12 points = 3; 13-15 points = 4; 16-18 points = 5

¹³⁴ SIGMA Monitoring Report, The Principles of Public Administration, North Macedonia, 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3v6MBIX>

¹³⁵ Report on the Implementation of the State Programme for the Prevention and Repression of Corruption and Reduction of Conflicts of Interest and the 2016-2019 Action Plan

■ 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



III.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.

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 LPPCCI, 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.

Recommendations for Public Service and the Human Resources Management

Tracking the 2017/2018 PAR Monitor Recommendations

Recommendation	Status	Comment
1. The report presenting official data about civil service employees should make a clear distinction between career civil servants and fixed term employees, reporting how many have been engaged under contracts and in which state bodies and institutions.	Not implemented	The Report does not contain such classification. In addition, temporary employments are not part of the Report.
2. Reports about trainings provided for the civil service; salaries and assessment of employees; information about disciplinary proceedings, should also be produced or such information should be contained in reports that have already been published.	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.
3. The number of temporary engagements for performance of tasks characteristic of civil service in the central state administration should be limited by law.	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.
4. The LPSE should determine specific criteria for the selection of individuals to be employed in the state administration under fixed-term contracts.	Partially implemented	There are no specific criteria for fixed-term contracts.
5. The Law on Agencies for Temporary Employment should be revised and aligned with the provisions of the LPSE.	Not implemented	This has been assessed as a deviation from the LPSE.
6. The announcement for employment in the civil sector should contain information and a focal point so that potential candidates can request clarifications.	Not implemented	No such information in the announcement.
7. The approach and language of the announcements should be more citizen friendly, explaining what the position in question entitles and elaborating on the activities and work of the institution/body/sector hiring.	Not implemented	No such information in the announcement.
8. In order to avoid excessive administrative and financial burden on candidates, only essential documents should be demanded in the first stage (CV, motivational letter, and optionally a recommendation letter).	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
9. Medical certificates, secondary school diplomas and similar unnecessary documents should not be required at any stage in the process.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
10. Documents such as proof of citizenship should be acquired by the institution <i>ex officio</i> .	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
11. When publishing the decision for the selection procedure, the AA should provide better and more comprehensive reasoning as to why a certain candidate has been selected.	Not implemented	No improvements since the last PAR Monitor.
12. The appointment of category A (Secretaries) employees should be reviewed. There is significant room for political influence considering the fact that the Minister/head of Institutions appoints the Secretary.	Partially implemented	A new Law on Senior Civil Service is being prepared
13. Requirements and qualifications for the appointment of Secretaries should be reviewed and set higher.	Partially implemented	A new Law on Senior Civil Service is being prepared
14. There is a lack of an upper limit for the labour market adjustment supplement and lack of mutual exclusiveness and therefore Article 91 of the LAS should be revised.	Partially implemented	Article 91 defines the conditions under which labour market adjustment supplements can be requested. It does not set an upper limit and partially regulates the conditions, having in mind that part of the Article (para.3) has been annulled by the Constitutional Court, and para. 2 refers to the annulled para. 3 and it is still in the Law, which is an omission, which should be corrected under the next amendments to the LAS. However, this Article vaguely covers the issue of the labour market adjustments and has never been used.

15. The effectiveness of integrity and anticorruption measures should be analysed and monitored. Based on the results, measures should be reviewed and adapted to also ensure that both the civil sector and CSOs trust the system and believe that measures are applied impartially.	Partially implemented	Integrity and anti-corruption measures for the civil service are formally established. However, their implementation is lacking.
16. Measures protecting whistle blowers should be strengthened, with a focus on employees from the public sector.	Implemented	The legislative framework is formally established, and it contains measures for protection. There have been 12 reports from whistle blowers.

2019/2020 PAR Monitor Recommendations¹³⁶

1. *MISA should continuously provide data on temporary employments which should be contained in the Report on Public Employees.*
2. *MISA should continuously provide qualitative and comparative data that should be contained in the reports derived in accordance with LAS.*
3. *MISA in short term should publish reports on the career development (promotions and demotions) of public sector employees.*
4. *MoF should in short term publish reports on salaries (and awarded bonuses) of public service employees.*
5. *MISA should in short term provide that the number of temporary engagements in the central state administration should be limited by law and its usage should be revised.*
6. *MISA should in short term provide that the LPSE determines specific criteria (as those in the LAS) for the selection of candidates to be employed in the state administration under fixed-term contracts.*
7. *MLSP and MISA should in short term provide that 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.*
8. *MISA should in short term provide that the announcement for employment in the public sector should contain information about a contact person for clarification requests in relation to the announcements.*
9. *MISA should in short term provide that the approach and language of the announcements should be more citizen friendly, explaining what the position in question entitles and should elaborate on the activities and work of the institution/body/sector hiring, i.e., there should be a job description.*
10. *MISA should in short term provide avoiding of excessive administrative and financial burden on candidates, i.e. only essential documents should be demanded in the first stage (CV, motivational letter, and optionally a recommendation letter).*
11. *MISA should in short term ensure that medical certificates and other ancillary documents not be required at any stage in the process.*
12. *MISA should in short term ensure that documents such as proof of citizenship to be acquired by the institution ex officio.*
13. *MISA should in short term ensure that when publishing the decision of the selection procedure, the AA should offer a comprehensive reasoning as to why a certain candidate has been selected, or not.*
14. *MISA should in short term revise the appointments in the category A (secretaries) employees having in mind that there is significant room for political influence considering that the minister/head of institutions appoints the secretary, i.e., the Law on Senior Civil Service should be adopted.*
15. *MISA should in short term provide clear defining the conditions under which labour market adjustment supplements can be requested, having in mind that part of the article (par. 3) has been annulled by the Constitutional Court, and par. 2 refers to the annulled par. 3, which is still in the LAS.*
16. *MISA and SCPC should continuously analyse and monitor the effectiveness of integrity and anticorruption measures.*

¹³⁶ The recommendations (except recommendation no.16) are taken from the previous PAR Monitor 2017/2018 but are reformulated with deadline for realization and responsible institution.

IV. ACCOUNTABILITY

IV.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

In the reporting period, the country achieved several important milestones in terms of access to public information. The Government adopted the 2019-2021 Transparency Strategy, started the implementation of the 2018-2020 Open Data Strategy and the operationalization of the open government data portal, adopted the new Law on Free Access to Public Information, and after numerous delays appointed the heads of the Directorate for Personal Data Protection, of the Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information (APRFAPI) and of the State Audit Office (SAO).¹³⁷

According to the annual report on the implementation of the PAR Strategy published in May 2019, 57.89% of the activities planned in the area of responsibility, accountability and transparency were implemented.¹³⁸ The report underlines that with a view to improving the accountability and transparency of institutions, the institutions prepared an analysis of the Law on Free Access to Public Information and the mandate of the APRFAPI.¹³⁹ This process identified the main challenges in the access to public information and provided grounds for evidence-based legislative amendments. This resulted in amendments to the Law as elaborated below.

The new Law on Free Access to Public Information¹⁴⁰ was adopted in May 2019 introducing several novelties. Namely, under the Law, the grounds upon which requests for public information may be rejected are reduced, the Commission for protection of the right to free access to public information was transformed into the APRFAPI, holders of information are more precisely defined; political parties are added as holders of information in terms of revenues and expenditures; the public interest in exercising the right to access public information is clarified and the APRFAPI is authorised to monitor the compliance with the rules on proactive disclosure of information.¹⁴¹ However, the most important step that was taken with this Law is the introduction of a new competence of the APRFAPI, allowing it to institute misdemeanour proceedings.

In the past two years, the APRFAPI faced several challenges and restrictions, including working without a director from May 2018 until January 2020. This stalemate caused an increase in unprocessed requests for public information.¹⁴² Finally established in December 2019, the APRFAPI started operating in January 2020, dealing with a backlog of over 750 cases from 2018 and 2019.¹⁴³ In 2019, 755 complaints were submitted to the APRFAPI, out of which the large majority (677) were filed due to the silence of the administration, and out of these most were submitted by citizens' associations and foundations (621).¹⁴⁴ It is also worrying that the percentage of compulsory annual reports submitted by holders of public information is dropping. The Commission reported that in 2019, out of 1,257 public information holders, 1,047 or 83.29% submitted their annual reports. In comparison, the percentage of submitted annual reports in 2016 and 2017 was 95.30%.¹⁴⁵

¹³⁷ European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 12

¹³⁸ Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the 2018-2022 Strategy for Public Administration Reform <https://bit.ly/37jV4iT> page iii

¹³⁹ Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the 2018-2022 Strategy for Public Administration Reform <https://bit.ly/37jV4iT> page 33

¹⁴⁰ Law on Free Access to Public Information <https://bit.ly/3rSytSk>

¹⁴¹ European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 15

¹⁴² European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 15

¹⁴³ Agency for Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, 2019 Annual Report <https://bit.ly/3b9ig5j>

¹⁴⁴ As stated in the Commission's Report, it is important to underline that most of the complaints (411) were filed by the same association of citizens against health care organizations, within the implementation of its project activities. <https://bit.ly/2ZnVOiC>

¹⁴⁵ Agency for the Protection of the Right to Free Access to Public Information, Annual Report 2019 <https://bit.ly/2Zi5JGC> page 5

Important steps were taken in the area of transparency of expenditures by officials with the introduction of the accountability tool. The tool for which a citizen-friendly guide was published,¹⁴⁶ may be used to look up and compare expenditures of the Prime Minister of the Republic of North Macedonia, Deputy Prime Ministers, Ministers, Ministers without portfolio, Deputy Ministers, the Secretary General of the Government, and State Secretaries at Ministries.¹⁴⁷

The Government adopted the 2019-2021 Transparency Strategy, which aims to encourage all institutions to *“offer citizens as much information as possible beyond the instrument for free access to public information and to facilitate the right to free access to information according to the law”*; *“to harmonise their practices in terms of sharing information”* and *“to offer access to their documents and provide active assistance to citizens in finding specific data.”*¹⁴⁸ While the Transparency Strategy elaborates on how citizens will be assisted to obtain access to data, the (2018-2020) Open Data Strategy sets forth methods by which data will be shared and sets the measures to be undertaken to encourage the release and use of public data to contribute to raising transparency and accountability of state institutions.¹⁴⁹ This document also envisages the Strategy for deployment of a central government open data portal, as well as development of a methodology for data inventory, the introduction of a licensing model for data, the establishment of a management structure and the development of guidelines to facilitate the release of datasets.¹⁵⁰ These documents are complementary to the (2018-2022) PAR Strategy and the Open Government Partnership National Action Plan 4.¹⁵¹ The Government also adopted the 2019-2020 Communication Strategy that elaborates the communication plan with respect to *“transparent and accountable institutions”*.¹⁵² However, this Strategy does not have an Action Plan, or concrete activities and indicators.

When it comes to open data information there was an improvement in comparison with the last WeBER monitoring report. As planned under the PAR Strategy and the Open Data Strategy, the MISA has launched a new platform¹⁵³ for institutions to publish their open datasets. However, much work remains to be done in this respect, as many institutions have one or even zero datasets published.¹⁵⁴ The platform and its features also require further improvement and continuous updates (e.g., the organogram is not updated and user friendly; the group of datasets are not updated).

As identified in the Open Data Strategy *“large portion of the current datasets is rather obsolete since updated data is not published. The practice shows that institutions are generally pushed to publish open data following decisions adopted at Government sessions, where institutions are instructed at the highest level to publish certain data. Afterwards, the process of publishing open data dramatically decreases, since there is no established coordination mechanism that will steer this process and provide high level support.”*¹⁵⁵ This was identified in the EU country progress report.¹⁵⁶

In December 2020, the MISA promoted the online platform for Open Government Partnership (OGP).¹⁵⁷ The platform is to serve as a central point for interaction and exchange of information in four areas: *“consultations about the preparation of the National Action Plan (NAP), monitoring the implementation of the NAP, as well as monitoring the work of the OGP Council and the Network of CSOs, while also offering the opportunity to convene online virtual meetings with live chats and video links by participants.”*¹⁵⁸

146 Guidelines for Application of the Public Accountability Tool <https://vlada.mk/node/14298>

147 Accountability Tool for Expenditures of Officials <https://vlada.mk/node/18865?ln=en-gb>

148 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019-2021 Transparency Strategy <https://bit.ly/3jPBsZa>

149 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2018-2020 Open Data Strategy, <https://bit.ly/3b4KvkY>

150 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2018-2020 Open Data Strategy, <https://bit.ly/3b4KvkY>

151 The Government joined the Open Government Partnership in 2011, pledging to promote open, transparent, and efficient institutions and prepared fourth consecutive action plans, the last one covering the period from 2018 to 2020. <https://www.opengovpartnership.org/members/north-macedonia/>

152 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2019-2020 Communication Strategy <https://bit.ly/3ber6ho>

153 Open Data portal <https://data.gov.mk/en/>

154 For example: the Ministry for Education and Science - 1 dataset, Ministry of Culture 0 datasets, Ministry of Local Self Government 0 datasets.

155 2018-2020 Open Data Strategy, Government of the Republic of North Macedonia <https://bit.ly/3psCtaC> page 20

156 European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 15

157 <https://ovp.gov.mk>

158 <https://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/3203>

■ 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.

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

This Principle bears the utmost significance in terms of increasing the transparency of the administration and holding it accountable by the civil society and citizens, but also in terms of safeguarding the right-to-know by the general public, as a prerequisite for better administration. The WeBER approach to this Principle does not make an assessment of regulatory solutions foreseen in free access to information acts, but it focuses on the practice of reactive and proactive information provision by administration bodies. On one hand, the approach examines the experience of civil society with the enforcement of the legislation on access to public information, and on the other, it is based on direct analysis of websites of administration bodies.

Monitoring is performed by using two WeBER indicators, the first one entirely focusing on civil society perception of the scope of the right to access public information and whether its enforcement enables the civil society to exercise this right in a meaningful manner. With a view to exploring perceptions, a survey of civil society organisations in the Western Balkan was implemented, using an online surveying platform, in the period between the second half of June and the beginning of August 2020.¹⁵⁹ The uniform questionnaire with 28 questions was used in all Western Balkans countries ensuring an even approach in survey implementation. It was disseminated in local languages through 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 of cooperation with civil society. In order 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 its representativeness as much as possible, additional boosting was done, where needed, to increase the overall response. Finally, a focus group with CSOs was organised to complement survey findings with qualitative data. However, the focus group results are not used for point allocation for the indicator.

The second indicator has proactive public informing by administration bodies as its focus, particularly by monitoring comprehensiveness, timeliness and clarity of the information disseminated on official websites. In total, 18 pieces of information are selected and assessed against two groups of criteria: 1) basic criteria, looking at completeness, and whether information is up to date, and 2) advanced criteria, looking at the accessibility and citizen friendliness of the information.¹⁶⁰ A search of information is made on official websites of the sample of seven administration bodies, consisting of three in-line ministries - a large, a medium, and a small ministry in terms of thematic scope, a ministry with a general planning and coordination function, a government office with centre-of-government function, a subordinate body to a minister/ministry and a government office in charge of delivering services.¹⁶¹

¹⁵⁹ The survey of CSOs was done using an anonymous, online questionnaire. In North Macedonia, the survey was conducted in the period from 24 June to 27 July 2020. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). The survey sample was N=92

¹⁶⁰ Exceptions being information about accountability lines within administration bodies, which is assessed only against the first group of criteria, and information available in open data format which is assessed separately.

¹⁶¹ For North Macedonia, the sample included the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning, the Ministry of Culture, the Ministry of Finance, the Office of the Prime Minister of Republic of North Macedonia, Office for the Management of Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths and the Education Development Bureau.

IV.2 WEBER MONITORING RESULTS

PRINCIPLE 2: THE RIGHT TO ACCESS PUBLIC INFORMATION IS ENACTED IN LEGISLATION AND CONSISTENTLY APPLIED IN PRACTICE

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

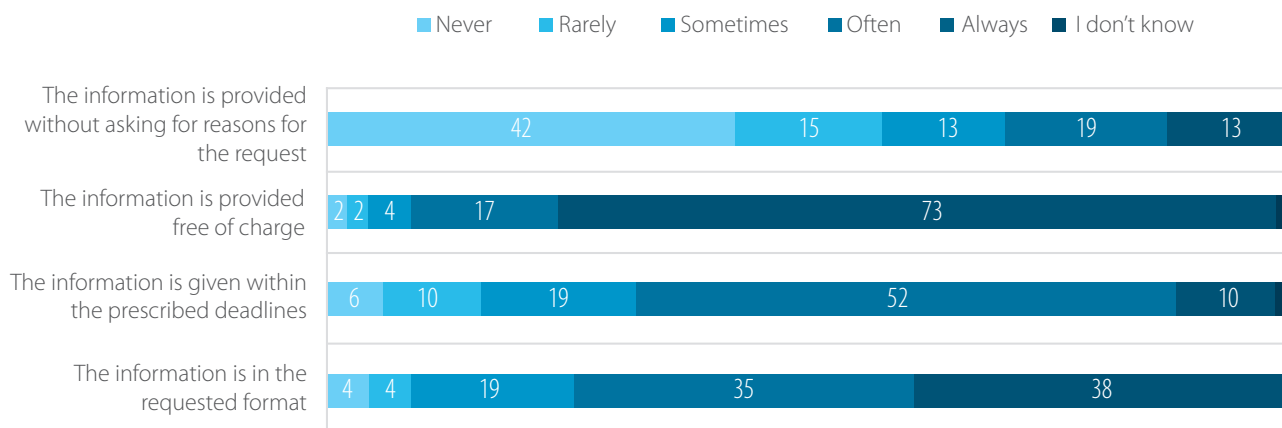
Indicator elements	Scores
E1. CSOs consider that the information recorded and documented by public authorities is sufficient for the proper application of the right to access public information*	0/4
E2. CSOs consider exceptions from the presumption of public character of information to be adequately defined	1/2
E3. CSOs consider exceptions from the presumption of public character of information to be adequately applied	0/4
E4. CSOs confirm that information is provided in the requested format	2/2
E5. CSOs confirm that information is provided within prescribed deadlines	2/2
E6. CSOs confirm that information is provided free of charge	2/2
E7. CSOs confirm that the person requesting access is not obliged to provide reasons for the request for public information	1/2
E8. CSOs confirm that in practice the unclassified portions of otherwise classified materials are released;	0/2
E9. CSOs consider that requested information is released without portions containing personal data	1/2
E10. 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
E11. CSOs consider that the designated supervisory body* has, through its practice, set sufficiently high standards of the right to access public information	0/2
E12. CSOs consider the soft measures* issued by the supervisory authority to public authorities to be effective	0/2
E13. 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
Total score	9/34
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹⁶²	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	1

CSOs in North Macedonia perceive that the right to access to public information does not enable the civil society to exercise this right in a meaningful manner. According to the survey conducted during the late summer of 2020, 14% of surveyed CSOs agree that public authorities record sufficient information to enable the public to fulfil the right to free access to information of public importance, whereas 39% of surveyed CSOs think that the legislation prescribes adequate exceptions to the public character of information produced by public authorities, while only 10% believe that these exceptions are adequately applied in the practice.

In the context of experiences of CSOs with requests for public information, large number of surveyed CSOs have little to no problem with the access to information in the requested format and within prescribed deadlines, with 73% of them stating that the information is often or always in the requested format, while 62.5% report that requested information is given almost always within prescribed deadlines. Roughly 90% of surveyed CSOs confirm that often or always the information is provided free of charge, and 56% report that the person requesting access is almost never asked to provide the reasons for such a request.

¹⁶² 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.

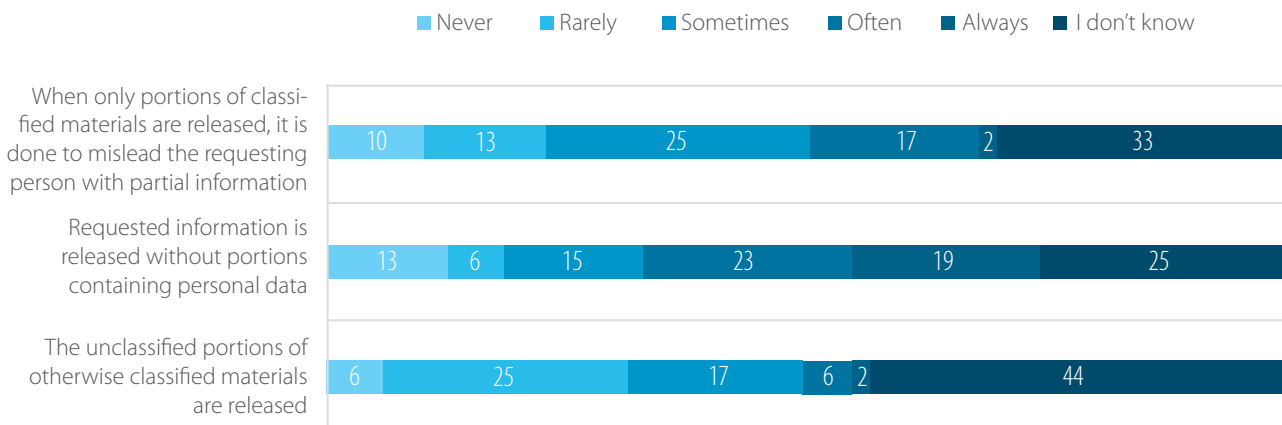
Experiences of civil society organizations for requesting access to public information



CSOs were also surveyed regarding their experiences in requesting access to information that contains classified materials. Only 8% of the surveyed CSOs confirm that in the practice the unclassified portions of otherwise classified materials are released. 42% of surveyed CSOs consider that most of the time, requested information is released without portions containing personal data. A considerable portion or 19% of CSOs also think that when only portions of classified materials are released, it is done to mislead the requesting person with partial information.

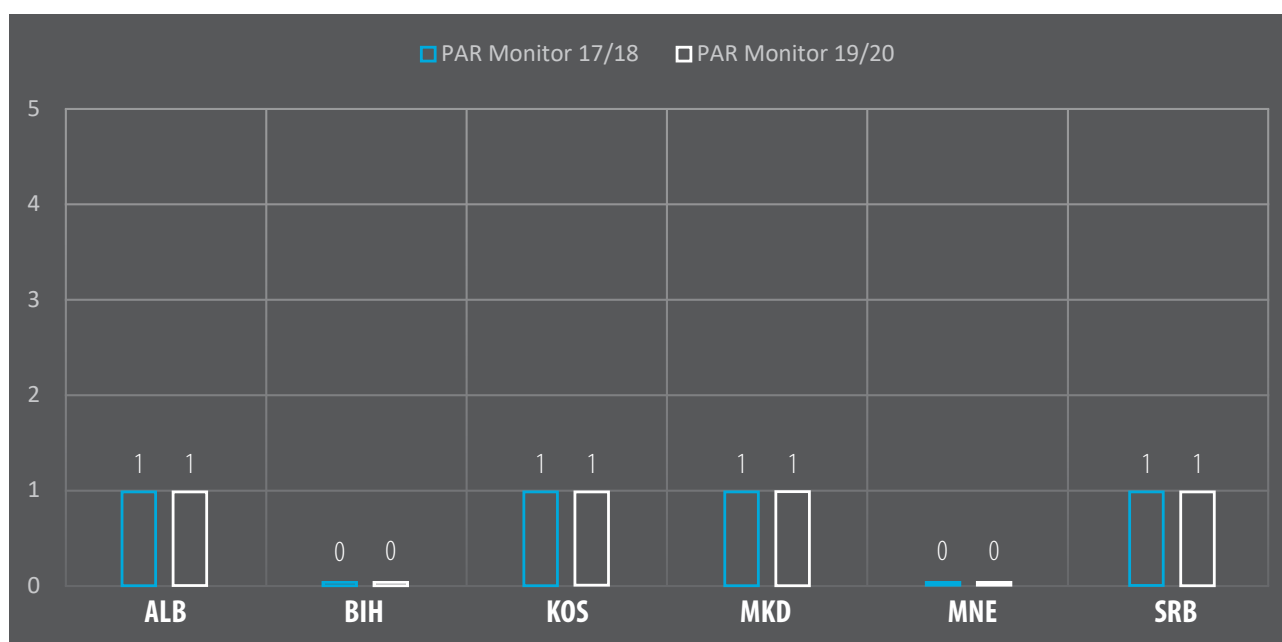
29% of surveyed CSOs agree that the Ministry of Justice sets sufficiently high standards for the right to access public information in its practice, the same as those citizens who answered that they “do not know”. In terms of soft measures issued by the Ministry and whether they are effective in protecting the access to information, 23% of surveyed CSOs believe that this is true. 21% of CSOs agree that sanctions prescribed for the violation of the right to free access to information led to sufficiently grave consequences for the responsible persons at non-compliant authorities.

Experiences of CSOs asking for access to public information containing classified materials



■ 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



PRINCIPLE 2: THE RIGHT TO ACCESS PUBLIC INFORMATION IS ENACTED IN LEGISLATION AND CONSISTENTLY APPLIED IN PRACTICE

WeBER indicator ACC P2 I2: Proactive informing of the public, by public authorities

Indicator elements	Scores
E1 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on the scope of work	2/4
E2 Websites of public authorities contain easily accessible and citizen-friendly information on the scope of work	1/2
E3 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on accountability (who they are responsible to)	0/4
E4 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on relevant policy documents and legal acts	4/4
E5 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on relevant policy documents and legal acts	0/2
E6 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under competence	0/4
E7 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under competence	0/2
E8 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date annual reports	0/4
E9 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly annual reports	0/2
E10 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date information on the institution's budget	0/4
E11 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly information on the institution's budget	0/2
E12 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date contact information	2/4
E13 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly contact information	2/2
E14 Websites of public authorities contain complete and up to date organisational charts which include the entire organisational structure	2/4
E15 Websites of public authorities contain accessible and citizen-friendly organisational charts which include the entire organisational structure	2/2
E16 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
E17 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
E18 Public authorities proactively pursue open data policy	0/4
Total score	15/56
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹⁶³	1
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

¹⁶³ 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.

In terms of the proactive approach of public authorities to informing the public about the way they work, it can be underlined that accountability was enhanced compared with the previous monitoring cycle. However, the analysis of the indicator was conducted on a sample of seven state administration bodies¹⁶⁴, so it cannot reflect the overall situation with respect to the prevailing practice, at the central level in the country.

More than a half of monitored institutions have information about their scope of work and they regularly update such information. The information about the scope of work is easily accessible and citizen-friendly, except for the Ministry of Culture (MC) and the Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning (MEPP), which have only published information about their Minister on their website.

However, more than half of the institutions do not state to whom they are accountable. Three institutions that provide such information are: the Ministry of Interior, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Office for the Management of Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths.

All monitored institutions have a list of documents and legislative materials relevant for policies under their purview and all documents are downloadable. The MEPP is the only institution that has a separate section with ratified international conventions, which is a good practice. However, these documents are not downloadable, they only contain reference to the Official Gazette, which is not accessible to all citizens since it requires a paid subscription. The mentioned documents are easily accessible, but none of them are citizen-friendly. None of the institutions explain, in a simple sentence or a paragraph, to what the list of documents refers. The Ministry of Finance has a good practice of organizing documents on their website, and they explain in a sentence what the documents are about and the purpose they serve.

More than a half of monitored institutions publish policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under their competence. The remaining institutions do not publish any policy papers. When it comes to accessibility and citizen-friendliness of policy papers, studies, and analyses, not all of the sampled institutions publish these documents, and the ones that do, do not explain them in least a sentence or a paragraph.

A considerable concern deriving from sampled institutions is that six out of the total seven institutions do not publish their annual work report. Only the Ministry of Interior published its 2019 annual report (there is also the 2018 report of this Ministry), which is easily accessible and can be found on the front page of the Ministry's website, as a banner. Even though the annual report is available, it is not citizen-friendly, as it is not introduced in a simple sentence.

Out of seven monitored institutions, only the Ministry of Interior has both its 2019 financial report and its 2020 financial plan online. The Ministry of Culture, the MEPP, the Office of the Prime Minister and the Office for the Management of Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths do not have any of these documents online. The Ministry of Finance does not publish its own budget, as it is framed within the annual State Budget. However, it has a financial report for 2019. The Education Development Bureau (EDB) has a financial report for the previous year, but it has not published a financial plan for 2020. None of the budgets that are published by sampled institutions are citizen-friendly. Additionally, the Ministry of Finance has started publishing the Annual State Budget, as a comprehensive Citizen Budget.

Four out of seven institutions have complete and up to date contact information, while the remaining three institutions – the Ministry of Interior, the EDB and the Office of the Prime Minister of Republic of North Macedonia, have most of the information, but lack e-mail addresses and are therefore considered as incomplete. On the positive side, all sampled institutions regularly update their contact info. The contact information is accessible and citizen-friendly. However, the website of the Office of the Prime Minister should be more visible, since at the moment it is embedded on the official website of the Government.

Most of the institutions have their organizational charts available online, with such charts being in line with the latest job systematization, which in most cases are also available on the websites of the institutions. The Ministry of Culture is an exception considering that it does not have an organogram published, while the EDB and the Ministry of Interior do not have documents on job systematizations available online.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁴ Ministry of the Interior; Ministry of Culture; Ministry of Environment and Physical Planning; Ministry of Finance; Office of the Prime Minister; Office for the Management of Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths; Education Development Bureau

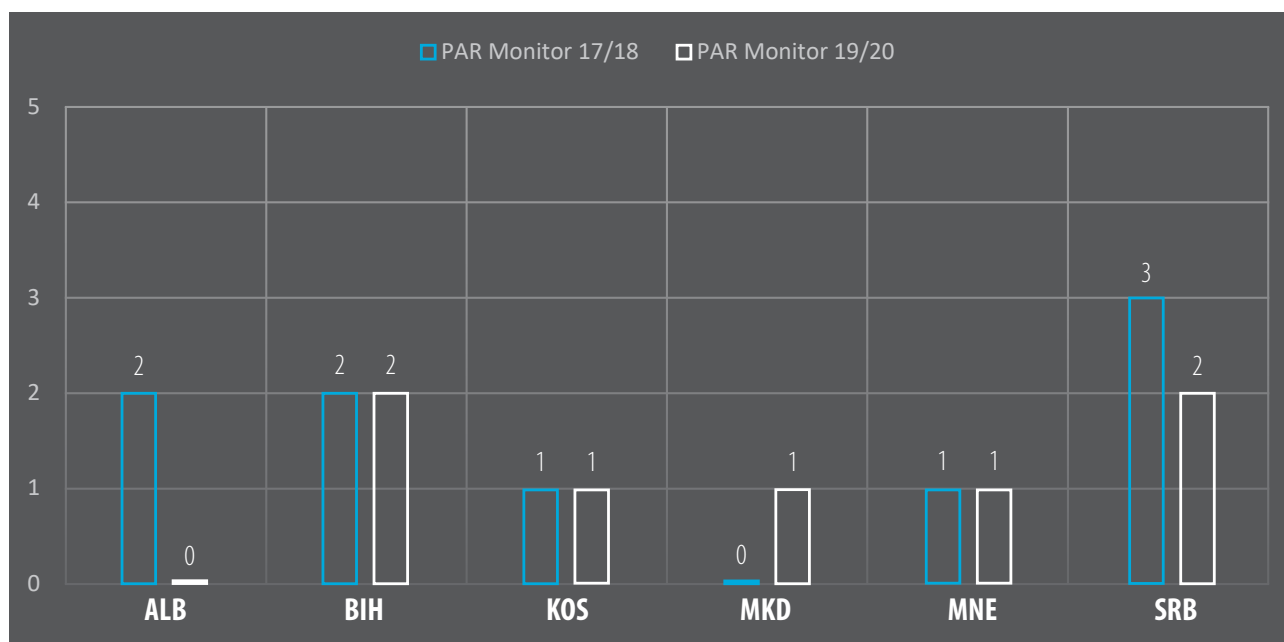
¹⁶⁵ In that regard, requests for free access to public information were sent to the EDB and the MoI. The EDB replied to the freedom of information request and it was concluded that the organogram is up to date with the latest job systematization, while the Ministry of the Interior declined to respond to the FOI request, stating that this information has been classified as highly confidential. All of the organizational charts, which are available are easily accessible and citizen-friendly

Most of the sampled institutions have media contacts and officers for requests for free access to public information, but no contacts or information on cooperation with the civil society and other external stakeholders. An exception in this context is the MEPP, which has a separate section pointing to, and explaining the cooperation with CSOs, and it has appointed a contact person. The public consultation process in North Macedonia is conducted on the ENER,¹⁶⁶ but none of the institutions have references to the ENER or have a separate banner on their website referring to ENER. As mentioned above the exception is the MEPP.

Finally, monitored Ministries have documents in an open data format, while the other subordinate institutions do not have documents in an open data format. None of the ministries have a dataset relevant from the FOI aspect and only the Government portal refers to the open data national website.

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator ACC P2 I1: Proactive informing of the public by public authorities



¹⁶⁶ Electronic National Register of Regulations of the Republic of North Macedonia <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx>

IV.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: 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.

Recommendations for Accountability

Tracking the 2017/2018 PAR Monitor Recommendations

Recommendation	Status	Comment
<p>There is a need to raise the awareness of the administration about the obligation to provide information requested by applicants and the administration should understand the importance of delivering that information as soon as they are able to. The only way that the administration silence can be avoided is by giving more power to the responsible Commission to monitor the implementation of the provisions of the pertinent Law, the mandate to institute misdemeanour proceedings, and strengthen its capacity to monitor whether institutions proactively publish public information.</p>	Implemented	The Law on free access to public information has been amended and has introduced several novelties. The Law has introduced a new competence for the Agency, allowing the Agency to conduct misdemeanour proceedings.
<p>All holders of information should refrain from asking about the reasons for the submitted request for certain information of public character.</p>	Implemented	Holders of information gradually develop better practice when it comes to the provision of information of public character. The survey conducted for this year's monitor shows that 56% of CSOs report that the person requesting access is almost never asked to provide reasons for such a request.
<p>A positive practice that has been noticed in North Macedonia is to make certain information publicly available, after having received and provided information under a specific request.</p>	Not implemented	This practice has still not been instituted. Holders of information still reply only upon a specific request for free access.
<p>Despite the positive development, i.e., the request for all institutions to publish 21 documents, this should not be done on an <i>ad hoc</i> basis. All institutions should regularly update these documents and signal if any changes have occurred.</p>	Partially implemented	Institutions have started regularly updating documents on their websites. However, they rarely signal if changes have occurred.
<p>The majority of institutions do not have any information about the person in charge of communication and cooperation with CSOs. This leaves room for suspicion whether institutions have appointed any civil servants to this office. All institutions should appoint such officers and should make their contact details public. Moreover, all announcements regarding consultations and debates with the civil society should be visibly, publicly available on websites of institutions.</p>	Partially implemented	Even though the majority of the institutions have a person in charge of communication with the public, they do not have a position specifically designated for communication with CSOs.
<p>Almost none of the institutions have published information about policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to policies under their competence. Institutions should publish all these documents, and not only those that have been developed under a certain project.</p>	Partially implemented	Gradually, in parallel with publishing other documents, institutions have started uploading diverse policies and analyses on their websites. This is still not a standard practice, but improvements can be seen as more than half of the institutions in the sample have published policy papers, studies, and analyses relevant to their competences.

2019/2020 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 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 about the cooperation with the civil society and other external stakeholders.*
- 5. In terms of open data information, institutions should start publishing datasets in open format, since many institutions have one or even zero datasets published.*

V ● SERVICE DELIVERY

V.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN SERVICE DELIVERY AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF 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

Since the last WeBER monitoring report, some crucial steps have been taken in order to improve service delivery to citizens. In the past two years, the National E-Services Portal¹⁶⁷ was established, a Law on Electronic Management and Electronic Services was adopted, the Catalogue of Services was updated, and the Population Register became operational.

According to the 2019 Report on the implementation of the PAR Strategy, 29.5% of activities in this area are already implemented, 35.5% are underway and 35.5% of the activities are delayed.¹⁶⁸ In 2019, the focus in this area was on the adoption of new legislation, in line with EU legislation, EU standards and principles for e-government related to the establishment of the Central Population Register and the National Portal for Electronic Services.

The National E-Services Portal allows citizens to utilize e-services provided by in-line authorities and enables other entities to provide services using this Portal, while offering information about public services. At the moment, registration, and e-services using the Single Sign-On System is available only to natural persons, while future plans envisage its integration with systems of other institutions. Thus far, 30, 062 users have registered, 810 services are available and 1,288 public institutions use the Portal.¹⁶⁹ The COVID-19 crisis further emphasized the importance of online services and the Portal has demonstrated to have great potential, but further commitment and ownership by all state institutions is needed in this regard.¹⁷⁰

The Population Register also became operational, enabling the collection of citizens' data and the use of the data by in-line institutions for their administrative procedures. This Register enables institutions to find the latest and most accurate data about citizens without the need for manual maintenance and updating, overcoming a long-lasting problem, where citizens had different data in different institutions and databases.¹⁷¹ Citizens can inspect their personal data contained in this Register using an electronic service available on the Portal.¹⁷²

Along with the establishment of the Portal and the Population Register, adequate legislation was adopted, in line with EU legislation and accepted standards and principles for electronic governance. With a view to establishing the framework for efficient and effective provision of services electronically the Law on Electronic Management and Electronic Services¹⁷³ was adopted in May 2019, and quality management tools were introduced.¹⁷⁴

Other relevant laws, which provide for the smooth functioning of the Portal are the Law on the Central Population Registry,¹⁷⁵ which aims to regulate and establish a single harmonized manner of keeping individual databases, while the Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Confidential Services¹⁷⁶ defines and comprehensively envisages the basis for digitalization of services. In the context of the legislative framework, it should be noted that the Law on General Administrative Procedures is still not systematically implemented across the administration.¹⁷⁷

167 <https://uslugi.gov.mk/about.nspix>

168 Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia, Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan of the Public Administration Reform Strategy 2018-2022, <https://bit.ly/3w74k4x>

169 E-Services Portal <https://uslugi.gov.mk>

170 European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 16

171 <https://vlada.mk/node/19274>

172 <https://vlada.mk/node/19274>

173 Law on Electronic Administration and Electronic Services https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/legislation/zeueu.pdf

174 European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 16

175 Law on central register of citizens https://www.mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/legislation/zcrn.pdf

176 Law on Electronic Documents, Electronic Identification and Confidential Services https://mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/legislation/zededu.pdf

177 European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 16

Standards for service delivery,¹⁷⁸ a methodology for including end-users¹⁷⁹ and a document on the Optimisation of Services were prepared¹⁸⁰ as well as a draft of the National ICT Strategy, which still has not been published.¹⁸¹

As elaborated under the PAR Strategy, it was foreseen to introduce One Point of Service in several cities across the country, and thus far “One point for all services” centres have been opened in Skopje¹⁸² and in Tetovo.¹⁸³

In November 2020, in the course of the presentation of the 2021 MISA Budget, it was underlined that in the next period, the first four “One point for services” offices would be opened in Kumanovo, Ohrid, Tetovo and in Bitola,¹⁸⁴ even though the office in Tetovo was opened in June 2020.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, the same offices were announced at last year’s press conference and presentation of the 2020 MISA Budget, when it was announced that the first three offices in Tetovo, Kumanovo and Ohrid were in the final preparation stages.¹⁸⁶

■ What does WeBER monitor and how?

Under the PAR Service Delivery area, 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 viewpoint of the civil society and the public at large, these Principles bear the most relevance in terms of addressing the outward-facing aspects of the administration that are crucial for daily provision of administrative services and contact with the administration. In this sense, these are the principles having the greatest relevance for the quality of the everyday life of citizens.

The approach to monitoring these principles relies, first, on the public perception of the service delivery policy, including how receptive the administration is to redesigning administrative services, based on citizens’ feedback. This is complemented with the perception of the civil society of distinct aspects of the service delivery. Moreover, the approach to the selected Principles goes beyond perceptions, exploring aspects of existence, online availability, and accessibility of information about services.

Four indicators were used, two fully measured by perception data (public perception and civil society) 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 the practice, covering various aspects of awareness, efficiency, digitalization, and feedback mechanisms.¹⁸⁷ Since the public perception survey was implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, citizens were also asked additional questions on how interested they were to explore more about electronic services following the COVID-19 outbreak and how frequently they had used such services during the pandemic. Perception data from these questions were not used for measuring indicator values.

In order to measure the accessibility of administrative services for vulnerable groups, and in remote areas, a survey of civil society and a focus group, with selected CSOs, were used,¹⁸⁸ the latter with the aim of complementing the survey data with qualitative findings. The existence of feedback mechanisms was explored by combining public perception data and online data on the sample of five services.¹⁸⁹ Finally, the websites of providers of the same sample of services were analysed to collect information on accessibility and their prices.

178 Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia, “Draft Standards in Service Delivery”, 13 January 2020, <https://bit.ly/3oJr5H6>

179 Ministry of Information Society and Administration of the Republic of North Macedonia, “Draft - Service Optimization Guidelines”, 13 January 2020 <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=20>

180 <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=20>

181 <https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/2110>

182 <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/kancelarijata-edna-tochka-za-uslugi-so-nov-moderniziran-izgled/>

183 <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/pochna-so-rabota-kancelarijata-edna-tochka-za-uslugi-vo-tetovo/>

184 <https://vlada.mk/node/23252>

185 <https://www.mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/2959>

186 <https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/2741>

187 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, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia in the period from 5 May to 30 May 2020. For North Macedonia, the margin of error for the total sample of 1,022 citizens is $\pm 3.14\%$, at the 95% confidence level.

188 The survey of CSOs was administered using an anonymous, online questionnaire. In North Macedonia, the survey was conducted in the period from 13 May to 25 May 2020. The data collection method included CASI (computer-assisted self-interviewing). The survey sample was N=92.

189 1) Property registration, 2) company (business) registration 3) vehicle registration 4) personal document issuance: passports and ID cards 5) value added tax (VAT) declaration and payments 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

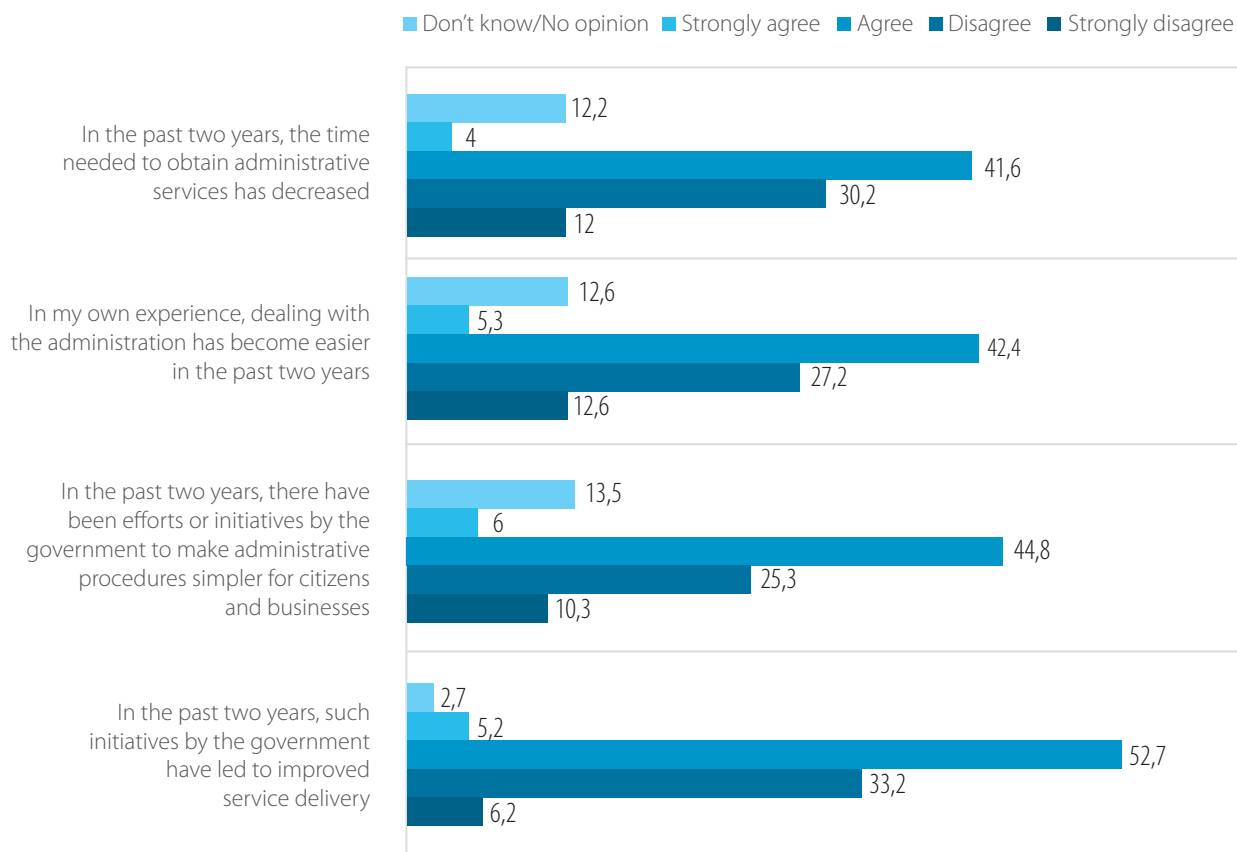
Indicator elements	Scores
E1. Citizens are aware of Government administrative simplification initiatives or projects	1/2
E2. Citizens confirm that administrative simplification initiatives or projects of the Government have improved service delivery	2/4
E3. Citizens confirm that dealing with the administration has become easier	2/4
E4. Citizens confirm that time needed to obtain administrative services has decreased	2/4
E5. Citizens consider that administration is moving towards digital government	2/2
E6. Citizens are aware of the availability of e-services	2/2
E7. Citizens are knowledgeable about ways on how to use e-services	2/2
E8. Citizens use e-services	2/4
E9. Citizens consider e-services to be user-friendly	2/2
E10. Citizens confirm that the administration seeks feedback from them on how administrative services can be improved	1/2
E11. Citizens confirm that the administration uses their feedback on how administrative services can be improved	2/4
Total score	20/32
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹⁹⁰	3
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	3

The results of the public perception survey conducted in the late summer of 2020 show that 50% of surveyed citizens agree that the government has **simplified administrative procedures for them and for businesses**, while 35.62% disagree. 57.84% of surveyed citizens agree that **the Government efforts have led to improved service delivery**, this being a steep decrease compared with the 2017/2018 monitoring cycle, where this result was 71.6%.

When it comes to administrative simplification initiatives or projects of the Government that have improved service delivery, 47.65% of citizens felt that **dealing with the administration has become easier in the past two years**, somewhat higher than the 43.8% seen in the 2017/2018 monitoring cycle. Yet, when it comes to the question of whether the **time needed to obtain administrative services has decreased**, citizens' perceptions are divided, with 45.6% agreeing and 42.17% disagreeing with this statement.

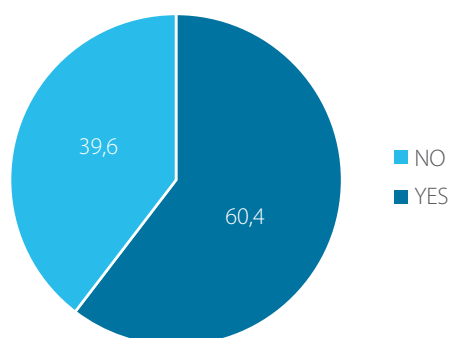
¹⁹⁰ Conversion of points: 0-5 points = 0; 6-11 points = 1; 12-17 points = 2; 18-22 points = 3; 23-27 points = 4; 28-32 points = 5

Public perception of state administration's citizen orientation



Citizens have a high opinion about e-services and what the Government has done in this regard. Around two thirds or 66.44% of surveyed citizens agree that the administration is moving towards digital government, and related to this, 60.37% of surveyed citizens are aware that e-services are offered in North Macedonia, which is an increase of about 7% compared with the results of the 2017/2018 monitoring report (at 53.1%).

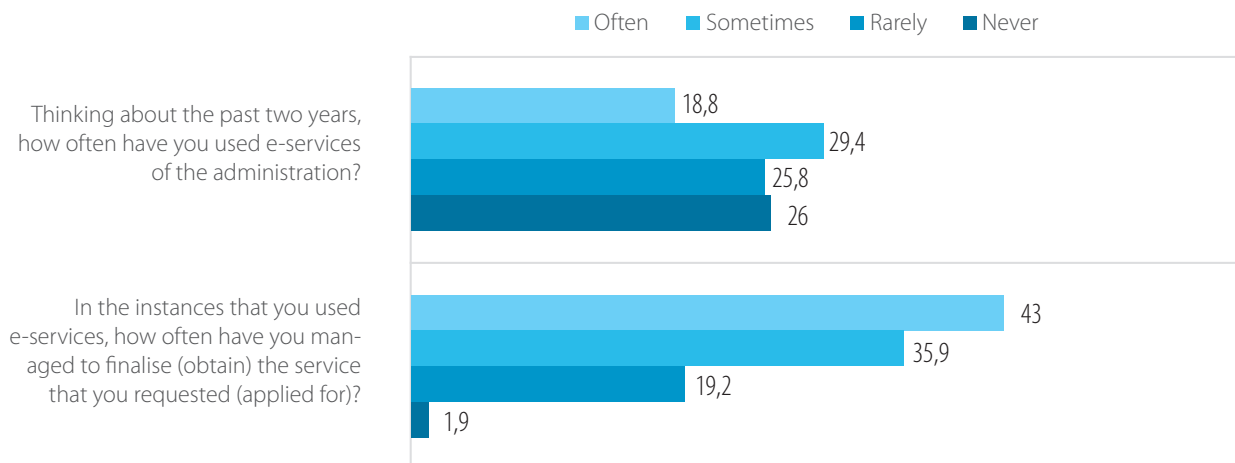
Are you aware if e-services (or administrative services via the internet) are offered in your country?



The most positive result is the increased awareness of citizens about the availability of e-services, with 74.88% of surveyed citizens saying that they are well informed about their existence, a significant increase compared with the 61% seen in the previous 2017/2018 Monitor.¹⁹¹ Closely related to the increased awareness of e-services, 48.19% of citizens are now saying that they know how to use e-services, more than double compared with 23.7% seen in 2017/2018. Furthermore, 85.82% of citizens who are using e-services consider them to be easy to use.

¹⁹¹ European Policy Institute – Skopje, National PAR Monitor Macedonia 2017/2018, <https://bit.ly/2RCJ1sp>

Public perception regarding the use of e-services

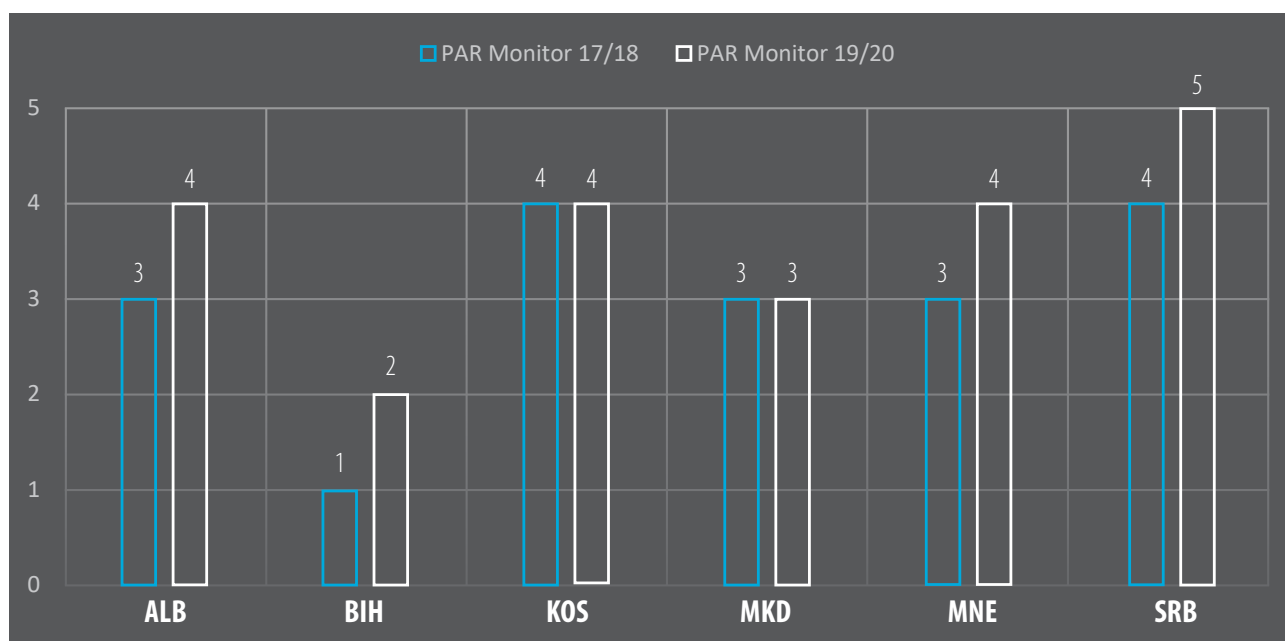


In the context of citizens giving feedback to the Government, 49.22% of surveyed citizens agree that the administration has asked for citizens' proposals on how to improve administrative services, and 58.33% of them believe that the administration takes into consideration their feedback on how to improve administrative services.

Despite the fact that there is no change in the overall scoring, there are some improvements in this year's monitoring cycle. 58% of surveyed citizens think that Government efforts have led to improved service delivery, which is a steep drop compared with the 2017/2018 monitoring cycle, when 71.6% of surveyed citizens agreed that there was improvement. On a more positive note, citizens have more knowledge about the ways how to use e-services (from 61% in 2017/2018 to 74% in 2020), and more and more Macedonian citizens use e-services, with an increase of 50% compared with the last monitoring cycle - (23% in 2017/18 compared with 48% in 2020). Furthermore, institutions are increasingly seeking "feedback about their work" from citizens (29% in 2017/18 compared with 49% in 2020).

How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



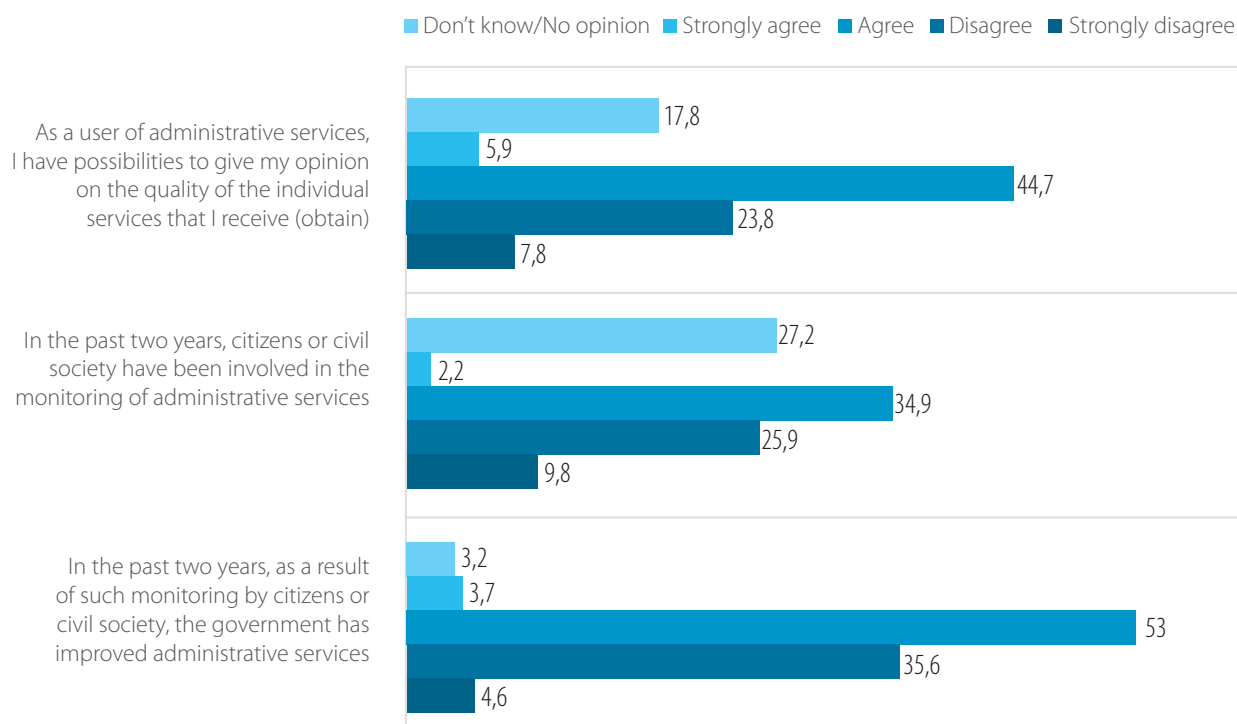
PRINCIPLE 3: MECHANISMS FOR ENSURING THE QUALITY OF PUBLIC SERVICES ARE IN PLACE

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

Indicator elements	Scores
E1. Citizens consider they have the possibility to provide feedback on the quality of administrative services	1/2
E2. Citizens perceive feedback mechanisms as easy to use	2/4
E3. Citizens perceive themselves or civil society as involved in monitoring and assessment of administrative services	2/4
E4. Citizens perceive that administrative services are improved as a result of monitoring and assessment by citizens	2/4
E5. Basic information regarding citizens' feedback on administrative services is publicly available	2/4
E6. Advanced information regarding citizens' feedback on administrative services is publicly available	0/2
Total score	09/20
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹⁹²	2
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	2

With a view to establishing what the perception of citizens is like, there was a survey conducted examining the public perception of the awareness, practice, and usefulness of feedback mechanisms regarding administrative services. The survey results show that 51% of surveyed Macedonian citizens think that they have the possibility of providing opinions about the quality of the individual services that they receive, and 38.5% think that administrative channels through which they can provide opinions about the quality of administrative services are easy to use. This is a significant drop compared with the results of the 2017/2018 monitoring report¹⁹³, when the percentage of citizens who thought the administrative services are easy to use was 71%.

Public perception of the practice and usefulness of feedback mechanisms regarding administrative services



Opinions about the involvement of citizens in monitoring and assessing administrative services, are almost equally divided - with 37% of surveyed citizens agreeing that they are involved and almost the same percentage of citizens - 35.71% thinking the opposite. Out of the former, 56.58% think that the Government has improved its administrative services, as a result of citizens' or civil society's monitoring and assessment.

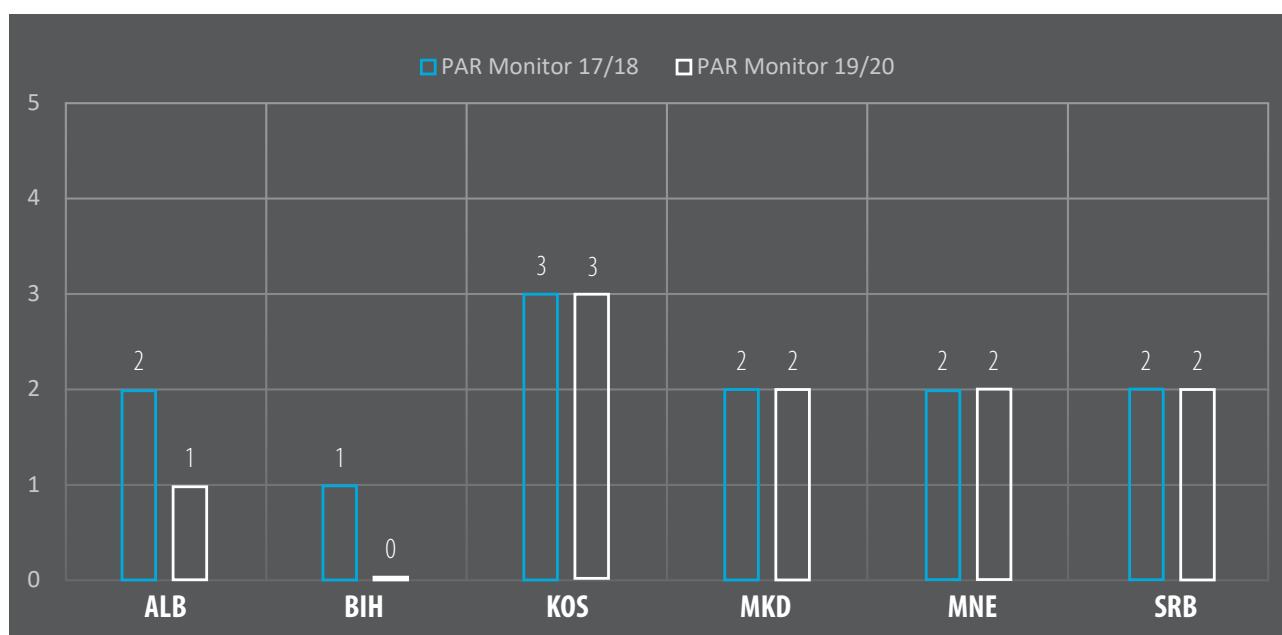
¹⁹² Conversion of points: 0-4 points = 0; 5-8 points = 1; 9-11 points = 2; 12-14 points = 3; 15-17 points = 4; 18-20 points = 5

¹⁹³ European Policy Institute – Skopje, National PAR Monitor Macedonia 2017/2018, <https://bit.ly/2RCJ1sp>

In order to establish whether state institutions have publicly available basic information about citizen feedback, five administrative services were selected,¹⁹⁴ provided by a number of state institutions.¹⁹⁵ This information was not found about three of the five sampled administrative services. Namely, there are two surveys accessible on the website of the Ministry of Interior - one about measuring citizens' satisfaction with services provided,¹⁹⁶ and another about the mobile system traffic control recording.¹⁹⁷ The first survey can be considered as a basic feedback about two of the sampled services (vehicle registration and the issuance of passports and IDs). The problem is that there are no results and information about the conducted survey, or whether the Mol uses information gathered under the survey to improve services. Furthermore, there is no publicly available advanced information¹⁹⁸ about citizens' feedback about any of the sampled services.

■ 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



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
E1. CSOs confirm the adequacy of territorial network for access to administrative services	0/4
E2. CSOs confirm that one-stop-shops are made accessible to all	0/4
E3. CSOs consider administrative services to be provided in a manner that meets the individual needs of vulnerable groups	0/4
E4. CSOs confirm that administrative service providers are trained on how to treat vulnerable groups	0/2
E5. CSOs confirm that the administration provides different channels of choice for obtaining administrative services	0/2
E6. CSOs confirm that e-channels are easily accessible for persons with disabilities	0/2
Total score	0/18
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)¹⁹⁹	0
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

194 Availability of data is measured using content analysis of relevant official websites, for a sample of services, as follows: Property registration; Company (business) registration; Vehicle registration; Issuance of personal documents: passports and ID cards; Tax administration: value added tax (VAT) declaration AND payment for companies

195 Selected institutions: Agency for Real Estate Cadastre (property registration); Central Registry of the Republic of North Macedonia (Company/business registration); Ministry of Interior (Vehicle registration; Issuance of personal documents: passports and ID cards); Public Revenue Office of North Macedonia (Tax administration: value added tax (VAT) declaration AND payment for companies).

196 <http://mvr.gov.mk/anketa2/AnketaMk>

197 https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfKcXijBvcfWSVhpbEPXOdikUgwml_EawYLe26Ve2CR9Ghg/viewform?c=0&w=1

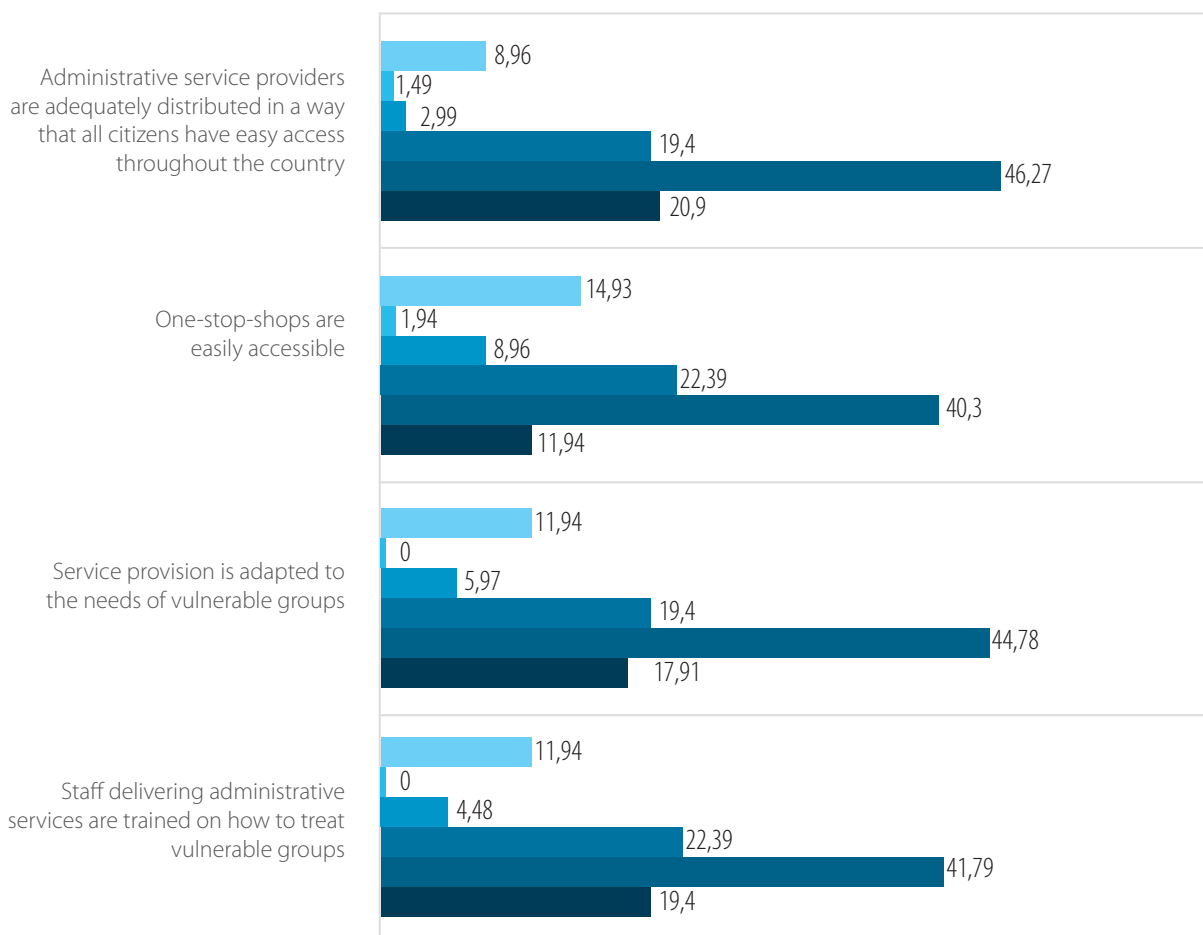
198 Advanced information is information that includes at least two different sources, then is segregated based on gender, disability or other relevant features)

199 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

CSOs were asked about their perceptions of the accessibility of administrative services for persons with disabilities, persons in remote areas and minority groups, and other vulnerable groups of the population. It was established that CSOs have a largely negative perception on these issues. Only 4.5% of surveyed CSOs think that administrative service providers are adequately distributed in a way that all citizens have easy access throughout the country. They also think that the existing one-stop-shops are not easily accessible, with only 10.5% of them confirming that this access is easy.

CSOs perceptions of the accessibility of administrative services for persons with disabilities, persons in remote areas and minority groups, and other vulnerable groups

■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree/Somewhat disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

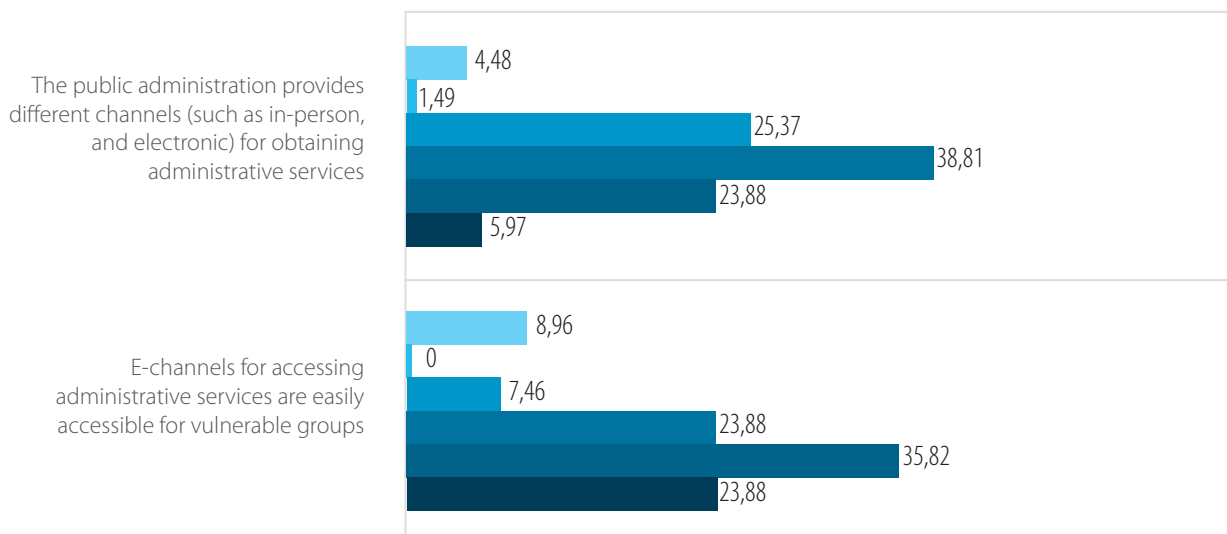


When asked about accessibility of administrative services for vulnerable groups, only 6% of CSOs think that service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups, in contrast to 61% who disagree. The consent rate is even lower when it comes to the issue on whether the staff delivering administrative services are trained on how to treat vulnerable groups, with as few as 4.5% of CSOs agreeing, and similarly to the previous question, 62% of them disagree. Furthermore, the majority of CSOs, or 60% do not think that e-channels for accessing administrative services are easily accessible for vulnerable groups, while only 7.5% think the opposite.

Finally, as regards the availability of different channels of choice for obtaining administrative services, 27% of CSOs agree that the public administration provides different channels (such as in-person, and electronic).

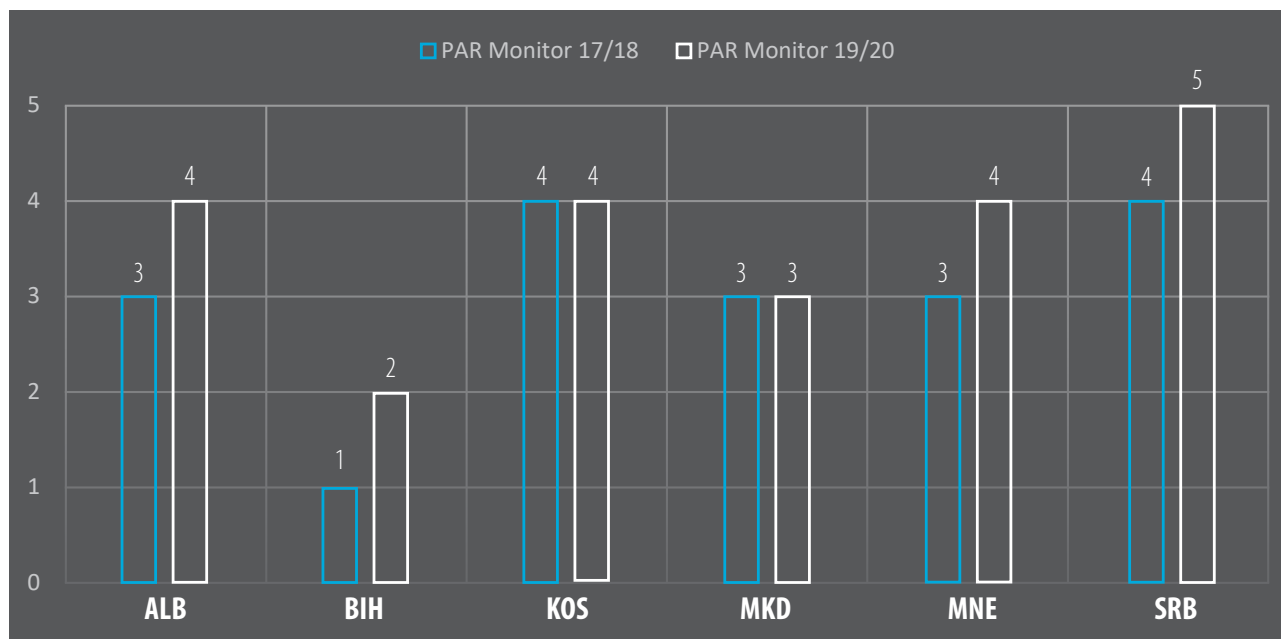
CSOs perceptions regarding the availability of different channels for obtaining administrative services and the accessibility of e-channels

■ Don't know/No opinion ■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Somewhat agree/Somewhat disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree



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

Indicator SD P4 I1: Public perception of state administration's citizen orientation



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

Indicator elements	Scores
E1. Websites of administrative service providers include contact information for provision of services	4/4
E2. Websites of administrative service providers include basic procedural information on how to access administrative services	4/4
E3. Websites of administrative service providers include citizen-friendly guidance on accessing administrative services	1/2
E4. Websites of administrative service providers include information on the rights and obligations of users	2/2
E5. Individual institutions providing administrative services at the central level publish information on the price of services offered	4/4
E6. The information on the prices of administrative services differentiates between e-services and in-person services	1/2
E7. Information on administrative services is available in open data formats	0/2
Total score	16/20
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)²⁰⁰	4
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	4

All services, except one, provide basic contact information (phones and email addresses) of the persons or units in charge of service provision. This information is found on the websites of the following service providers: Agency for Real Estate Cadastre (property registration), Central Registry (business registration), Public Revenue Office (VAT declaration and payment) and Ministry of Interior (ID cards/passports issuance; vehicle registration). As regards the last remaining sample service, vehicle registration, Mol’s website does not contain specific email addresses for accessing this service across the country.

In the context of the last-mentioned service, the procedural information on how to register a vehicle is incomplete. Namely, while all other service providers publish description of the services, i.e., where, and how to obtain them, and provide original forms, the Mol website does not contain specific addresses/physical locations across the country where people can register their vehicle.

Simple and user-friendly guidance for citizens on how to access administrative services is provided only for business registration and VAT declaration and payment. Both services contain visual content instructing users on how to use the e-service portals. On the other hand, the Mol and the Agency for Real Estate Cadastre do not provide simple instructions for citizens on how to obtain their services. In the case of all sampled services, in-line institutions publish information about the rights and obligations of users (documents that users need to submit), as well as clear price of service fees.

Given that only two services are accessible electronically – business registration and VAT declaration and payment – information about the fees for these two services clearly distinguishes between in-person and electronic services. Company (business) registration is free of charge when done electronically, while value added tax (VAT) for companies is processed exclusively electronically and is also free of charge. In the context of property registration, there is a fee list for each of the three property registration services provided by the Cadastre Office. However, no e-services are offered to citizens, being available only to professional users - legal persons. Finally, 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.

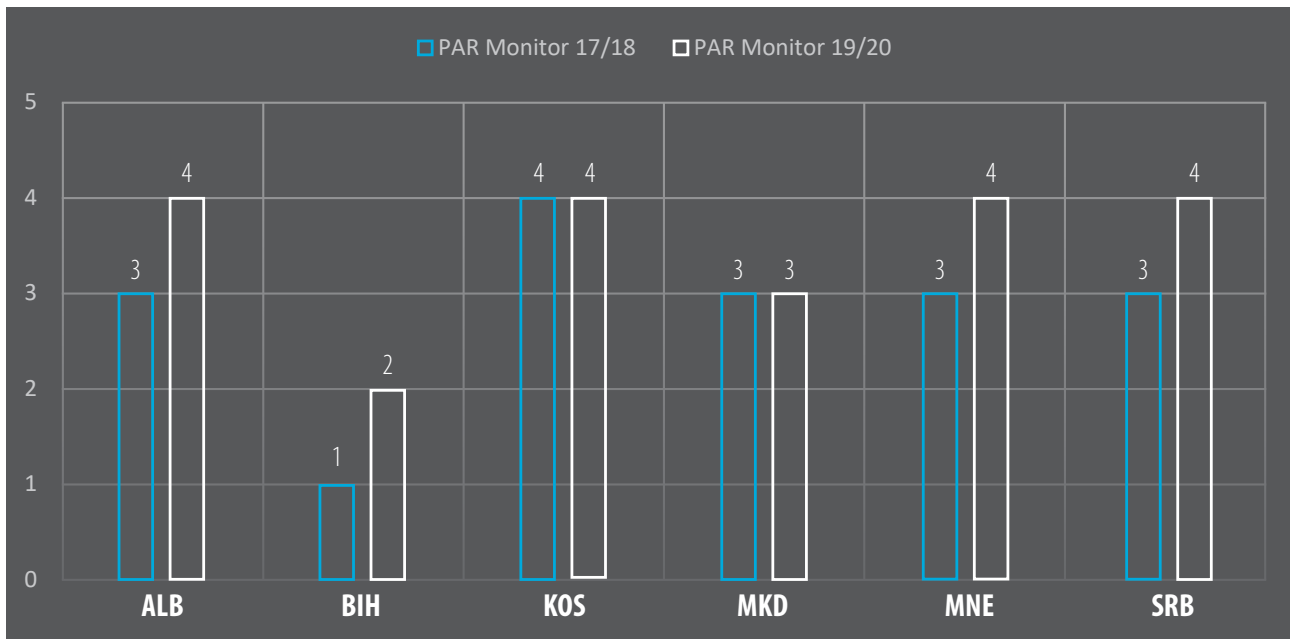
As regards reviewed services, none of the above-mentioned websites of service providers contain information about administrative services in open data formats.

There is almost no difference from the previous monitoring cycle, except on the websites of administrative service providers, which include citizen-friendly guidance on accessing administrative services, i.e., the website of the Central Registry, where a citizen-friendly guidance on accessing administrative services can be found.

²⁰⁰ 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

■ 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



V.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: 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.

Recommendations for Service Delivery

Tracking 2017/2018 PAR Monitor Recommendations

Recommendation	Status	Comment
Institutions should proactively and systematically increase the level of awareness and information about e-services to foster the utilization of e-services.	Implemented	Following the PAR Monitor Report, in December 2019, the Government launched the National E-Services Portal. The Portal allows citizens to utilize e-services of in-line authorities and enables other entities to provide services through the Portal, while also informing them about public services. The Portal is advertised on separate websites of most institutions and its usage has especially been encouraged during the COVID-19 crisis.
All institutions should have functioning public feedback channels on their websites providing citizens with a network where they can rate Government service delivery.	Not implemented	Even though half of the population believes they have the opportunity of providing opinions about the quality of services, feedback channels on websites are still a rare exception rather than a standard.
Institutions should strive to publish advanced performance data about their institutional service providers.	Not implemented	As in 2017/2018, there is no information about advanced performance data from any of the institutional service providers. This is also intricately linked with the fact that feedback channels are very scarce, too.
Service providers should develop citizen-friendly guidance (visual presentation, audio-visual guidance) for services they provide and should strive to publish information about administrative services in open-data formats.	Initiated	The situation is similar as in 2017/2018, with a limited number of websites providing citizen-friendly guidance. Information about administrative services in Open data formats is unfortunately still not available about any of the sampled services. However, a positive step forward has been made with the open data portal where thus far 265 data sets have been made available from 55 bodies/institutions.
One-stop-shops should be easily accessible by all citizens and adequately distributed across the territory of the country so that all citizens can have easy access.	Partially implemented	Thus far, one-stop-shops have been opened in Skopje and Tetovo. It has been announced several times that one-stop-shops will be opened in Kumanovo, Ohrid, and Bitola, but this has been postponed for this year.
Administrative services should be adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups and civil servants should be trained on how to treat vulnerable groups (this includes the elderly, the illiterate, disabled people, and other vulnerable categories).	Not implemented	Administrative services are still far from being adequately adapted to the needs of all vulnerable categories. The MISA has announced that they have adapted the facilities of a number of institutions for persons with disabilities. However, this is a small step, which does not provide all vulnerable categories with access to services equally and without barriers.

2019/2020 PAR Monitor Recommendations

- 1. E-channels are not easily accessible to vulnerable groups, service provision is not adapted to their needs and that staff delivering administrative services should be trained on how to treat vulnerable groups***
- 2. However, no e-services are offered to citizens, being available only to professional users - legal persons. Finally, 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.***
- 3. As regards reviewed services, none of the above-mentioned websites of service providers contain information about administrative services in open data formats.***
- 4. CSOs believe that administrative services are not adequately distributed across the country and that existing one-stop-shops are not easily accessible***
- 5. 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***

VI ● PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT

VI.1 WEBER INDICATORS USED IN PUBLIC FINANCE MANAGEMENT AND COUNTRY VALUES FOR THE REPUBLIC OF 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

The 2018 - 2021 public financial management (PFM) reform programme continued to be implemented and the 2019 annual progress report²⁰¹ on its implementation was published.²⁰² The considerable delay in finalizing and adopting the new Law on Budgets in turn postponed the drafting of documents related to the preparation, monitoring, evaluation and reporting on sectoral strategies.²⁰³ Moreover, the delay with the Law on Budgets also affects the implementation of all activities in the PFM reform programme.²⁰⁴

The Law, which is in its final stages introduces new mechanisms including: establishing fiscal rules and institutionalization of the Fiscal Council; publishing a register of public sector entities; improving the process of medium-term fiscal strategy design, preparation of a basic scenario and new initiatives; improving transparency (submission of data on public enterprises, units of local self-government); establishment of an integrated information system for public financial management.²⁰⁵ The conclusions from the latest, 5th PFM Policy Dialogue held on 7 October 2020 emphasized that authorities are committed to intensifying the implementation of the 2020 Action Plan to overcome delays caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and adopt the new Law on Budgets by the end of 2020.²⁰⁶ In addition, the conclusions also point out that authorities are committed to starting public consultations and to adopting the new Law on Public Internal Financial Control (PIFC), a Tax System Reform Strategy, Public Debt Strategy, and the Defence and Security secondary legislation by the end of 2020.²⁰⁷

The Government adopted the 2021-2023 Fiscal Strategy²⁰⁸ in July 2020, incorporating economic measures for the post-crisis period, aimed at stimulating private consumption by citizens and providing additional support to the economy to protect liquidity and jobs, increase competitiveness, productivity and modernization of equipment and processes.

Several important steps have been taken in order to improve the transparency of public finances. Although open public consultations were organized to prepare the 2020 Budget, parliamentary scrutiny on budget preparation and execution needs to be improved.²⁰⁹ In addition to the 2020 Budget²¹⁰ and various monthly, quarterly budgetary reports and data that are regularly published on the website of the Ministry of Finance, a 'Citizens' budget' web application was introduced.²¹¹ The application aims to bring the budget closer to citizens, while interactively informing them about how the budget is designed, how it is filled and how allocated funds are spent. The idea was created within 48 hours of the first Fin-tech hackathon organized by the Ministry of Finance and the Fund for Innovation and Technological Development and was further developed by the winning team.²¹²

201 On the website of the Ministry of Finance.

202 European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 14

203 Draft report, not published yet, page 9

204 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Economic Reform Program 2019-2021, available at: <https://bit.ly/3pT5duV>

205 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021-2023 available at: <https://bit.ly/2TyPk0U> page 31

206 https://www.finance.gov.mk/files/zaklucoci_5ti_dijalog_za_politiki_mak.pdf

207 https://www.finance.gov.mk/files/zaklucoci_5ti_dijalog_za_politiki_mak.pdf

208 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021-2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TyPk0U>

209 European Commission, North Macedonia Report 2020, 6 October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2LXCMg4> page 14

210 Citizens Budget <https://bit.ly/3wrVRJi>

211 http://budget.finance.gov.mk/gragjanski_budget.html

212 http://budget.finance.gov.mk/gragjanski_budget.html

In addition to the Citizens' budget, new standards for greater transparency of public finances have been promoted under three new online tools: "Open Finance Portal"²¹³, a tool for "Capital Expenditures"²¹⁴ and a tool on "Public Debt"²¹⁵.

The Open Finance Portal aims to "provide the public with insight into data about the implementation of transactions by all budget users of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia, which are available to the Treasury of the Ministry of Finance. In the first phase, all transactions of budget institutions under the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia are published. In the second phase, the transactions of local self-government units (LSGUs) and their budget institutions will be published."²¹⁶ In addition, in order to improve transparency, amendments were made to the Law on Public Enterprises in April 2018, obliging public enterprises to publish annual and quarterly reports on their websites, enabling timely and transparent monitoring of financial operations of these entities.²¹⁷ The tool on capital expenditures shows their realization by budget users on a monthly basis, while the tool on Public debt tool presents to the public debt, borrowings, repayments and other information related to the public debt.

The Fiscal Strategy also underlines that in the next period the Ministry of Finance will work on the preparation of a detailed technical specification for the Integrated Public Financial Management Information System.²¹⁸

■ What does WeBER monitor and how?

Monitoring in the Public Finance Management area is done 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.

In light of the fact that these Principles are thoroughly assessed by SIGMA, the WeBER approach considers and enhances the elements of transparency and accessibility of information, external communication, but also a proactive and citizen-friendly approach to informing citizens.

As an additional development compared with the baseline monitoring, new indicator was developed to cover the public procurement sub-area of the PFM, which was not monitored in the first cycle. Consequently, this PAR Monitor edition uses four indicators, by including the measurement under SIGMA Principles 11 and 13 in the PFM area with a single indicator. With this addition, WeBER researchers monitored public procurement policy for the first time, next to the annual budget policy, PIFC, and the external audit. Considering that it is measured for the first time, the indicator on public procurement sets the baseline values in this PAR monitor edition.

The first indicator assesses transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents, measuring how accessible key budget documents are to citizens (annual central budget and budget execution reports), but also to what extent budgetary information is presented and adapted to citizens and civil society. Primary online sources considered to this end are the web presentations of Ministries in charge of finance and data available thereon, but also official government and open data portals.

213 <https://open.finance.gov.mk/mk/about>

214 Capital Expenditures Portal <https://kapitalni-rashodi.finance.gov.mk/>

215 Public Debt Portal <https://javendolg.open.finance.gov.mk/en>

216 Open Finance Portal <https://open.finance.gov.mk/en/home>

217 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021-2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TyPk0U> page 34

218 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Fiscal Strategy of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2021-2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TyPk0U> page 31

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

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

Finally, in the public procurement area, the indicator measures availability of public procurement related information to the public. It focuses on whether supreme procurement authorities and key contracting authorities publish annual plans and reports, as well as how informative and citizen friendly are central public procurement portals for the interested public. Additionally, it looks into availability of open procurement data, as well as into the percentage of public procurement processes done in an open procedure. The indicator is entirely based on review of official documentation related to the public procurement policy.

VI.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
E1. Enacted annual budget is easily accessible online	4/4
E2. In-year budget execution reports are easily accessible online	4/4
E3. Mid-year budget execution reports are easily accessible online	0/4
E4. Budget execution reports (in-year, mid-year, year-end) contain data on budget spending in terms of functional, organization and economic classification	4/4
E5. Annual year-end report contains non-financial information about the performance of the Government	0/2
E6. Official reader-friendly presentation of the annual budget (Citizen Budget) is regularly published online	4/4
E7. Budgetary data is published in open data format	2/2
Total score	18/24
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)²¹⁹	4
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	4

PFM in North Macedonia has significantly improved compared to the last monitoring cycle of 2017/18. Key budget documents were analysed, such as the annual budget, and budget execution reports – monthly, mid-year, and year-end.

First, it was checked if the annual budget prepared by the Ministry of Finance is easily accessible. The annual budgets for 2020²²⁰ and 2019²²¹ are easily accessible (one click away on a drop-down menu public finances documents) and are on the same page (which is also the case with the previous budgets, going back to 2008).²²² Available annual budgets are also already machine readable (XML).

Second, it was analysed whether In-year and Mid-year budget execution reports are easily accessible online. On the main page of the Ministry of Finance under the tab Areas - Macroeconomics Monthly economic reports and quarterly economic reports can be found, which are three clicks away from the home page. Monthly economic reports are available from May 2020 until October 2020.²²³ The reports cover the real sector, foreign trade, the fiscal sector, the social sector, the monetary and the finance sector.²²⁴ Additionally, quarterly economic reports are also available for the first and second quarter of 2020, covering: economic activity, labour market, public finances, inflation, and macroeconomic projections for 2020.²²⁵

The Mid-year report for 2020²²⁶ was adopted on 5 August 2020²²⁷ and was published in January 2021, when the Ministry of Finance launched a new website, providing a more structured and citizen-friendly overview of news and documents. Still, some of the documents have not been uploaded on the new website. However, as of recently, the 2020 mid-year report can be found on the previous archived version of the website. The 2019 report²²⁸ can also be found on the archived version of the website, while it is very difficult to find it on the new version of the website. One has to type “reports” in the search bar and then scroll through different links for various reports. Considering that some of the reports are available on the archived version of the website, that means they are not easily accessible, i.e., they are not 3 clicks away.

With a view to checking the quality of reports, it was examined whether the three types of budget execution reports (monthly, mid-year and year-end) contain data on expenditures, according to three classifications such as: Organisational (per budget users, e.g. ministries, agencies, social security organisations), Economic (type of expenditures, e.g. social protection, salaries, capital investments, transfer to local levels, donations, subventions; and Functional (purpose/sectors of expenditures, e.g. education, housing, healthcare). Monthly reports contained data

219 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

220 Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Budget of the Republic of Macedonia for 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TYkvmi>

221 Government of the Republic of Macedonia, Budget of the Republic of Macedonia for 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3vuX2X0>

222 <https://finance.gov.mk/%d0%b4%d0%be%d0%ba%d1%83%d0%bc%d0%b5%d0%bd%d1%82%d0%b8-2/>

223 <https://bit.ly/35bL9KY>

224 Example from October 2020 <https://bit.ly/2YIF5gd>

225 Quarterly economic reports <https://bit.ly/2KRevHS>

226 Semi-Annual Report on the Execution of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia - January-June 2020, available at: <https://bit.ly/3pUpDE0>

227 <https://vlada.mk/node/22196>

228 Semi-Annual Report on the Execution of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia - January-June 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3wr6cVD>

on two types of classification: **organizational and economic**. Monthly reports offer a separate section titled fiscal sector, containing data on budget revenues and expenditures. This section also offers an organizational classification, titled expenditures per budget users. The 2020 **Mid-year report** covers the period from January until June 2020 and offers information on two types of classification: **organizational and economic**, while it lacks the functional classification. The 2019 **year-end report**²²⁹ contains data on expenditures **according to all three classifications**. The report presents the balance of revenues and expenses by budget users; per items and per functions of the budget of the country. A review of government programs and development sub-programs is also available.

In addition, it was analysed if the **annual year-end report** contains non-financial information about the performance of the Government, but no such information was found. At the end of the report there is a section on Gender budget initiatives and activities that every Ministry undertook, but that is not sufficient in order to be able to say that these represent non-financial information about the performance of the Government. However, it should be noted that the year-end report contains information about government programmes and development sub-programs.

The most significant change from the previous monitoring cycle is the newly created Citizens' budget.²³⁰ The Ministry of Finance and the Fund of Innovation and Technology Development organized a Fintech hackathon, a first of its kind, which resulted with the development of a Citizens' budget web application. The application offers an overview of the budget, providing information about budget planning, distribution and income through an interactive interface created for citizens.

An informative citizen friendly video is also available, and an educational quiz is being developed. The web application offers an easy-to-follow overview of expenditures by economic classification including current expenditures, capital expenditures, presentation of the budget-by-budget users, and allocation by functional area. It also explains what state budget revenues are, including tax revenues, non-tax revenues, social contributions, and capital revenues. The Citizens' budget can be downloaded in a pdf format for 2018 and 2019, but the 2020 pdf copy has a technical error. The Citizens' budget is published on the homepage of the Ministry of Finance and also on the homepage of the Government (in the "Services" section).

Finally, it was checked if the budgetary data is published in open data format, and it was established that the budgets for 2020 and 2019 are available in XML data sets. The Open Data portal²³¹ offers diverse data sets from 55 organizations/institutions. Concretely, the Ministry of Finance has uploaded 22 data sets out of which 21 are XLS files and one is a PDF file.²³² The data sets cover different topics such as GDP, employment (e.g., data sets on production, employment, and productivity in the form of monthly quarterly and annual changes in % from 2005 to 2017); basic macroeconomic indicators of the country, import and export information.

At this juncture, the Open Finance Portal,²³³ should be mentioned, which is also a new tool, providing the public with insight into data about budget transactions of all users of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia. The portal offers information on transactions of payers and payees and budget users on an annual level. This portal offers a direct link to the public debt webpage,²³⁴ which offers information about public debt trends, public debt in 2020, Government securities, including a citizen friendly infographic on public debt and the COVID-19 crisis. Another link that can be accessed through the open finance portal is the COVID-19 financial transparency webpage,²³⁵ which provides information on donations, payments, and procurements. The webpage is interactive, as well as the previous two tools and it can be seen that it is regularly updated.

229 2019 Year-end Report <https://bit.ly/2NC6k3b>

230 Citizens Budget <https://bit.ly/3wrVRJi>

231 Open Data portal <https://data.gov.mk/en/>

232 <https://bit.ly/35l20ea>

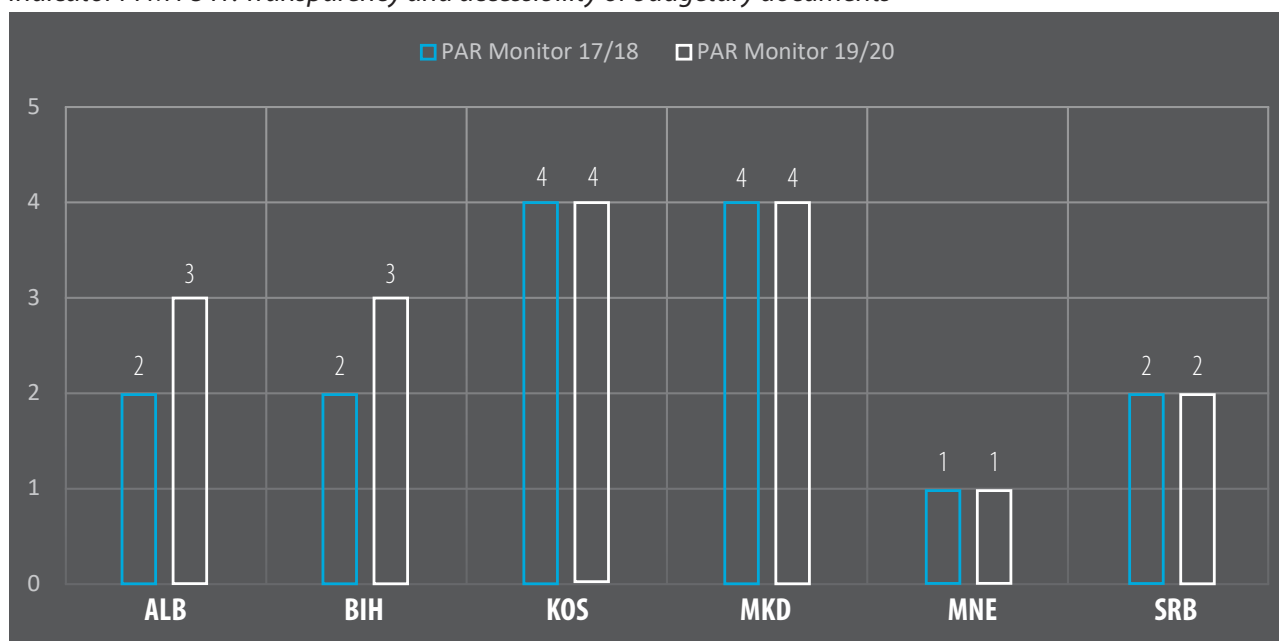
233 Open Finance Portal <https://open.finance.gov.mk/en/home>

234 Public Debt Portal <https://javendolg.open.finance.gov.mk/en>

235 Financial transparency for COVID-19 Portal <https://finansiskatransparentnost.koronavirus.gov.mk/#/payments-details>

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

Indicator PFM P5 I1: Transparency and accessibility of budgetary documents



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
E1. Consolidated annual report on PIFC is regularly produced and published online.	4/4
E2. Quality reviews of internal audit reports are regularly produced and published online	0/2
E3. Ministries publish information related to financial management and control	4/4
E4. CHU proactively engages with the public	0/2
E5. The Parliament regularly deliberates on/reviews the consolidated report on PIFC.	0/2
Total score	8/14
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)²³⁶	3
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	2

The Central Harmonization Unit (CHU) is an organizational unit within the Ministry of Finance, which is responsible for coordination of the public internal financial control (PIFC) in the public sector in the Republic of North Macedonia.²³⁷ The Ministry of Finance has published consolidated annual reports on PIFC for 2019²³⁸ and 2018²³⁹. However, there are no quality reviews of internal audit reports regularly produced or published online at all. The European Commission 2020 Report on North Macedonia²⁴⁰ confirms that “The administrative capacities of internal audit units on central and local level are still limited. Most audit units have strategic and annual plans, but quality assurance remains a challenge”. The positive development is that there is a manual on how to implement internal audit (which is not consolidated).^{241 242 243 244}

²³⁶ 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

²³⁷ Central Harmonization Unit <https://bit.ly/3grCV6z>

²³⁸ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Annual Report on the Functioning of the Public Internal Financial Control System for 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/201TzPC>

²³⁹ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Annual Report on the Functioning of the Public Internal Financial Control System for 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LqsAfO>

²⁴⁰ European Commission, North Macedonia 2020 Report, available at: <https://bit.ly/3xdgREF>

²⁴¹ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Internal Audit Manual (Part 1) available at: <https://bit.ly/3pVxx05>

²⁴² Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Internal Audit Manual (Part 2) available at: <https://bit.ly/3wie0Jg>

²⁴³ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Internal Audit Manual (Part 3) available at: <https://bit.ly/3whLhEv>

²⁴⁴ Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Internal Audit Manual (Part 4) available at: <https://bit.ly/3pQITSP>

When it comes to information about the internal control Information related to financial management and control (FMC)²⁴⁵ and the available documentation, findings point to a tangible difference compared with the previous monitoring cycle (2017/18), as Ministries were more transparent, but only as regards information about FMC managers, mostly published in rulebooks on internal organisation of Ministries.²⁴⁶

In order to see if the CHU proactively engages with the public their consolidated reports were analysed to identify activities related to the outreach, communication, dissemination engagement towards the interested public. In order to corroborate the findings obtained through the available online documentation, the head of the CHU was consulted.

The CHU does not engage proactively with the public. The Ministry of Finance has no press releases related to the activities of the CHU in 2020. Although the website of the Ministry of Finance has a separate section called PIFC Announcements, matters related to PIFC are not systematised there, but only in the "News" section of the website.²⁴⁷ There were no press releases found for 2020, only for 2019.²⁴⁸ The same goes for social media activity by the CHU: they only published information about activities in 2019.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, the CHU representatives do not appear in the media to present or discuss PIFC related matters, and they do not organize public events with participation of non-state stakeholders (civil society and associations, media, professional associations, etc.).

There is no evidence of booklets, leaflets and other info materials designated for the public. At the same time, manuals and instructions for the authorities can be found on the website of the Ministry of Finance.²⁵⁰ Consolidated annual PIFC reports have a two-pager summary, but do not meet the standards of reader-friendliness.

Even though there is a lack of available evidence to prove the CHU's public engagement, the head of the CHU underlined that all of the above-mentioned criteria for proactive public engagement are met by the CHU, except for activities on social media platforms.

Finally, it was analysed if the Parliament reviewed and discussed the consolidated reports on PIFC in the last two years. According to the Law on PIFC (Article 48), the CHU prepares annual reports on PIFC, which are then submitted only to the Government. There is no provision in the Law envisaging that they have to submit their report to the Parliament. In addition, after checking the website of the Parliament, i.e., agendas of on-going and completed plenary sessions, as well as sessions of working bodies, no evidence was found that the Parliament is reviewing the consolidated report on the PIFC.

245 Information related to financial management and control will be interpreted to mean the following set of data: 1. Risk registers; 2. Procedure registry/Book of procedures; 3. Information on who is the appointed FMC manager.

246 Fourteen out of sixteen Ministries have appointed an FMC manager. The two Ministries that do not have FMC managers are the Ministry of Interior and the newly formed Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations

247 <https://bit.ly/3il33wP>

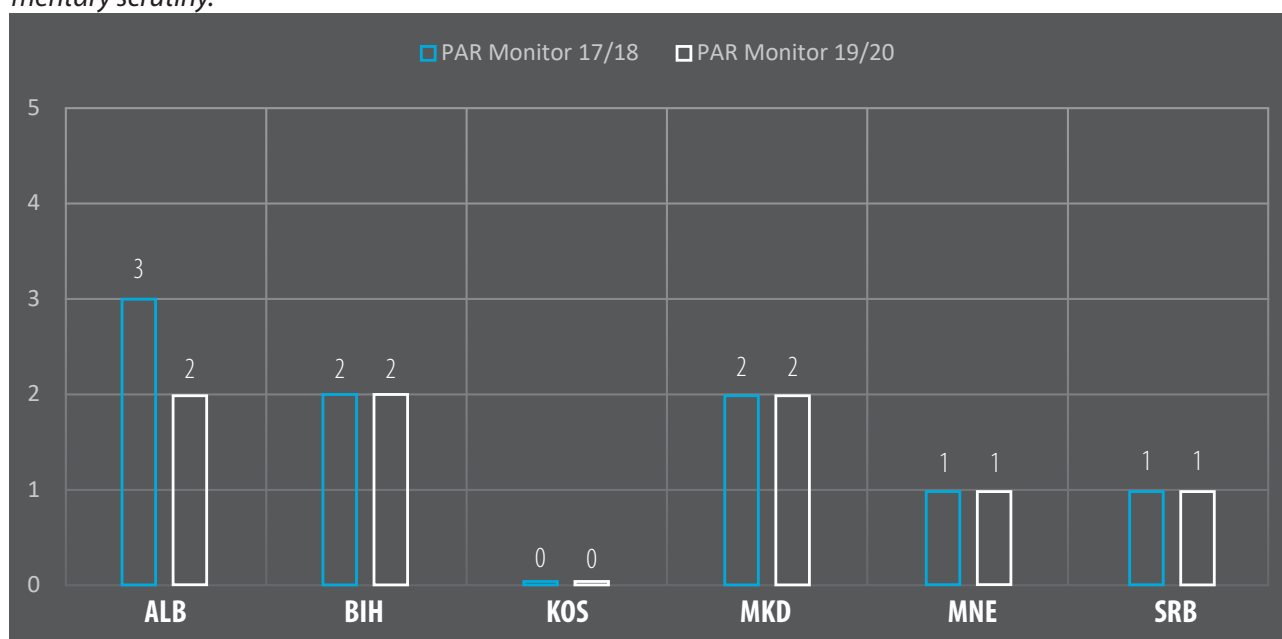
248 <https://bit.ly/3pJwhg9>

249 <https://www.facebook.com/MinistryOfFinanceMK/posts/1692675764211266>

250 Public Internal Financial Control <https://www.finance.gov.mk/node/679>

■ 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.



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
E1. Central procurement authority regularly reports to the public on implementation of overall public procurement policy	4/4
E2. Central review body regularly reports to the public on procedures for protection of rights of bidders in public procurement	2/4
E3. Reporting on public procurement is by the central procurement is citizen-friendly and accessible	2/2
E4. Public procurement portal is user-friendly	2/2
E5. Central-level contracting authorities regularly publish annual procurement plans	4/4
E6. Central-level contracting authorities regularly publish annual procurement reports	0/4
E7. Central procurement authority publishes open procurement data	0/2
E8. Open and competitive procedures are the main method of public procurement	4/4
Total score	18/26
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)²⁵¹	4

Public procurement management in North Macedonia is centrally coordinated and monitored through the Public Procurement Bureau (PPB), as a central body of the state administration within the Ministry of Finance.²⁵² In order to analyse the transparency of the procurement policy and with that the Governments' financial accountability, the analysis was focused on the availability and accessibility of information about the annual public procurement processes. The Public Procurement Bureau regularly publishes Annual Reports about the implementation of overall public procurement policy.²⁵³ The State Commission for Public Procurement Appeals (SCPPA)²⁵⁴ has been also regularly publishing reports about procedures for protection of rights of bidders in public procurement, with the exception of the 2019 Report which is still not published (the 2018 Report was published in March 2019). The SCPPA also published the Annual year-end budget report for 2019, but not the annual report on their work for 2019.

²⁵¹ 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

²⁵² Public Procurement Bureau <https://www.bjn.gov.mk/en/>

²⁵³ For the purpose of the analysis, reports were considered covering three full calendar years: 2019; 2018; 2017, available at: <https://www.bjn.gov.mk/category/godishni-izvestiai/>

²⁵⁴ State Appeals Commission for Public Procurement <http://dkzjn.mk/>

Annual reports of the Public Procurement Bureau (PPB) are written in a citizen-friendly manner and contain a reader-friendly summary of the main outcomes in reporting period. The reports are divided in two parts - the first part reports about the 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 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 document. Annual reports contain graphs and tables throughout the text. Reports are published at a clearly designated website location and are available with maximum three clicks from the homepage.

While the PPB has its own website, there is a separate portal for public procurement, the Electronic System for Public Procurement (ESPP) that enables the implementation of public procurement in electronic form in Republic of North Macedonia.²⁵⁵ To use the ESPP, there is no need to be registered to search functionalities and to view the documentation. Anyone on the website can access and look through the published contract notices, latest award decisions, assigned contracts, e-procurement, e-complaints, etc. When one opens the tab e.g., 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 documents, they can be seen by clicking on the number of the request where the entire contract notice is available (here one can also easily download the pertaining documents to the contract). The access to full tender documentation 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.

For better use of the portal, the ESPP has guides and manuals on how to use its functions. There are sections on the website regarding Contracting Authority and Economic Operators, where Manuals can be found on how to use these functions. For these two sections, there are two manuals – 1. Instructions for Contracting authority; and 2. Instructions for Economic Operators.²⁵⁶ The ESPP also includes frequently asked questions (FAQ) section.²⁵⁷

In terms of searchability functions on the ESPP website, there is no “Search” bar on the front page, but a search bar can be found in the various sections on the website and the search function has a wide scope, which is not identical, but tailored for each 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 using keywords, for example one can type in “Ministry” for subject matter of the contract/announcement and one will obtain all the results for this keyword.

There is no glossary for PP terms on the National e-portal for Public Procurement. However, the website of the Public Procurement Bureau contains an entire section regarding Terminology of key public procurement terms.²⁵⁸

It was monitored if the central-level contracting authorities regularly publish annual procurement plans, reports, and open procurement data²⁵⁹. The Annual public procurement plans are available on the National e-portal for public procurement for both 2019 and 2020 for all the Ministries (and other state institutions)²⁶⁰, and most of the PP plans are published on the Ministries websites with few exceptions.²⁶¹

In regard to reporting on PP, no public procurement reports were found for any of the sample central-level contracting authorities for the last two calendar years (neither on their websites nor on the website of the National e-portal for public procurement). The Law on Public Procurement does not stipulate an obligation for Ministries to prepare and publish public procurement reports. The only obligation imposed by the Law, (Article 129) for all contracting authorities is that they need to keep separate records of public procurement procedures in a separate electronic book in an electronic form on the national e-portal for public procurement. The record book contains all the documents that result from the appropriate part for the public procurement procedure. Even though all Ministries are obligated to keep records of all of their public procurement procedures and report them to the Public Procurement Bureau through the national e-portal, there are no consolidated reports of all of their records. Data provided on the National e-procurement portal and the Public Procurement Bureau are not in open data formats, they are only provided in word document and pdf.

255 Electronic Public Procurement System <https://www.e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/Home.aspx#/home>

256 Public Procurement Bureau, Manual on how to use the Electronic Public Procurement System for Contracting Authorities and Economic Operators available at: <https://bit.ly/3pUGXbQ>

257 <https://e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/home.aspx#/faq>

258 <https://www.bjn.gov.mk/terminologi-a/#1541679591081-18b9656a-faeb>

259 Publishing open procurement data means publishing datasets that are: In an open format, which renders this data machine-readable (CSV, XLS, XML, JSON, RDF, TXT); Downloadable by different users; and Free of charge.

260 <https://e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/home.aspx#/annual-plans>

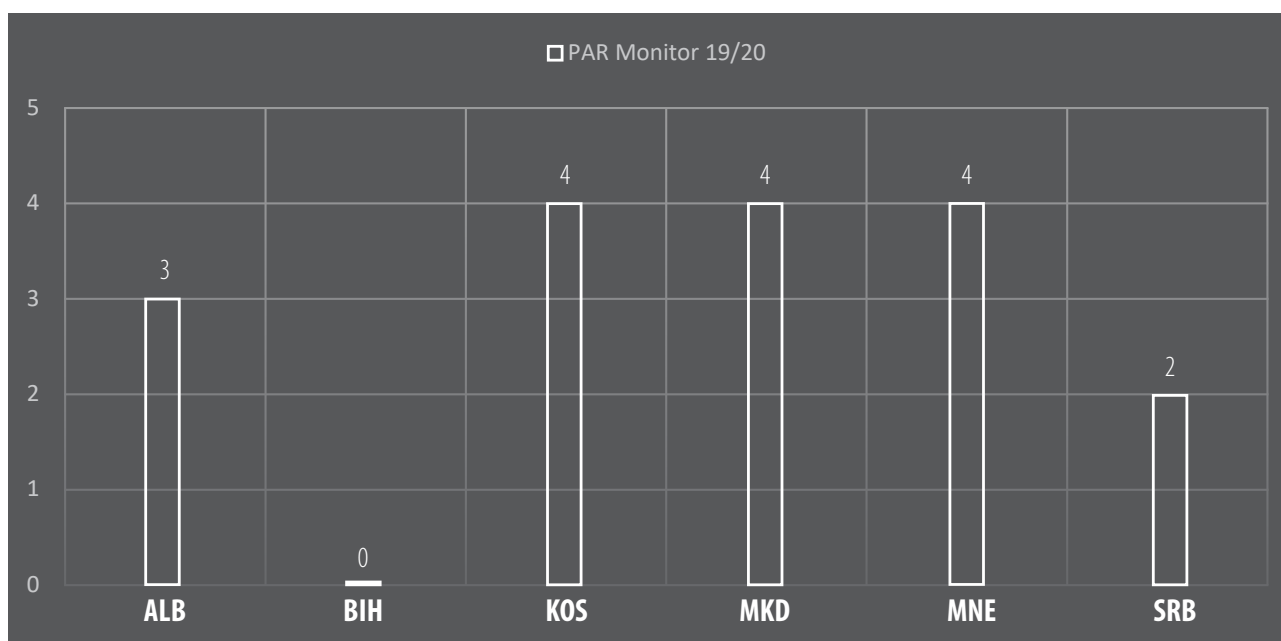
261 Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Local Self-Government; Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations

Finally, it was monitored if 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 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.

The overall procedures are open and competitive/published on the electronic system, except h) negotiated procedure without publishing a call. According to the 2019 Report of the Public Procurement Bureau, a total of 32,065 contract were concluded in 2019. The gross majority of the contracts were concluded through one of the above-mentioned open and competitive procedures. Only 376 contracts (1.17%) were concluded through a 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



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
E1. SAI develops a communication strategy for reaching out to the public	4/4
E2. SAI has dedicated at least one job position for proactive communication and provision of feedback towards the public	2/4
E3. SAI utilises various means of communication with the public	1/2
E4. SAI produces citizen-friendly summaries of audit reports	0/4
E5. Official channels for submitting complaints or initiatives to SAI by external stakeholders are developed (wider public, CSOs)	2/2
E6. SAI consults CSOs and their work for the purpose of identifying risks in the public sector	1/2
Total score	10/18
Indicator value 2019/2020 (scale 0 – 5)²⁶²	3
Indicator value 2017/2018 (scale 0 – 5)	0

²⁶² 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.

Unlike the previous monitoring cycle of 2017/18, under this cycle data and findings show that the State Audit Office (SAO) has improved its standards and external communication, mainly with the civil society sector in monitoring government performance and accountability.

The first sign of improvement was the SAO's new communication strategy for reaching out to the public. The State Audit Office has a standalone Communication Strategy covering the period from 2020 to 2023.²⁶³ 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 CSOs. The Strategy identifies the 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 separately is elaborated (2020-2023) and the means of evaluation of the communication with each target group is also indicated.

Next, it was analysed if the SAO has dedicated at least one job position for proactive communication and provision of feedback towards the public. In the "Rulebook on job systematization", there is a Sector for Support to the Auditor General, and in the Unit for public relations and informing about state audit results, there is a position "Independent auditor for public relations and informing for the state audit results". The main tasks of this position include: "Support to the assistant of the manager for communication with the public; reporting about public relation activities and implementation of the strategic priorities; preparation, organisation and implementation of campaigns, conferences, meetings, public appearances; preparation and implementation of public surveys; external communication and informing the public about the activities of SAO". Based on the aforementioned tasks, it can be concluded that the SAO has appointed a person for proactive communication with the public, which is also confirmed in the Action Plan of the 2020-2023 Communication Strategy, where they state that one person is appointed to communicate with the public at large. It should be added that based on EPI's work and cooperation with the SAO, evidence is gathered that this person is in charge of communicating with the general public and in the last year, after the SAO got a new leadership team, they constantly send reports to civil society organizations, including the EPI.

In terms of communicating with the public, the SAO has not used too many various means of communication.²⁶⁴ In the past twelve months, the SAO had numerous press conferences, especially in 2019, when the SAO was still without an appointed Director²⁶⁵ and they also started having press-conferences when the Director was appointed.²⁶⁶

Unfortunately, the SAO does not have active social network accounts, although they have inserted the icons for Facebook, twitter, and LinkedIn on the website itself. Furthermore, the SAO does not produce and publish online information brochures, leaflets, videos, multimedia presentations or similar promotional materials other than audit reports.²⁶⁷ There are only videos of interviews featuring the new Director of SAO.²⁶⁸ They also do not use online interactive data presentations and visualisations.

While the SAO may not use various means of communication with the public, the SAO has been participating in events presenting the monitoring of the work of SAO, and at least two events took place in the last two months of 2020²⁶⁹, where representatives from the SAO were invited as guest speakers. However, the SAO does not raise initiatives or organize public campaigns to promote the SAO work.

In order to see whether the SAO communicates with the public in a citizen-friendly manner, their audit reports were analysed, and it was considered whether the SAO produces citizen-friendly summaries of audit reports. On the SAO website, 9 finalised audit reports are published.²⁷⁰ Each of these reports contains a summary which is written in a simple and easily comprehensible language. However, these summaries do not present the findings in a citizen friendly manner. At the same time, the SAO has started producing separate citizen-friendly summaries of audit reports, which is a novelty introduced in the information system of the SAO.²⁷¹ The SAO sends these abstracts (short summaries) of conducted audits to CSOs, the media and key stakeholders via mail. In the 2019

263 Communication Strategy of the State Audit Office 2020-2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TB2xpG>

264 The monitoring period took place in November 2020, and covered a period of 12 months. The monitoring period referred to the period from November 24, 2019 to November 24, 2020.

265 <https://dzr.mk/mk/191126-pres-konferencija-na-drzhavnite-revizori>

266 <https://dzr.mk/mk/200129-sredba-i-pres-konferencija-na-maksim-acevski-i-bujar-osmani>

267 The monitoring period took place in November 2020, and covered a period of 12 months. The monitoring period referred to the period from November 24, 2019 to November 24, 2020.

268 <https://dzr.mk/mk/video>

269 <https://dzr.mk/mk/201119-indikator-i-za-rizici-od-korupcija-vo-javnite-nabavki>

270 <https://dzr.mk/mk/revizorski-izvestai>

271 The Communication Officer of the SAO has shared the information of this newly undertaken approach in one of the emails sent to CSOs in which they have also shared the first abstracts of conducted audits.

SAO Annual Report,²⁷² they indicate that “with the Audit Report Abstract, which contains the most important information it is easier to read and understand the context of the content of audit reports. The media, news agencies, individual investigative journalists and civil society organizations are immediately informed following the publication of a new final audit report, and a link is given to the published report on the SAO website and an abstract of the report.” These abstracts have concise explanation of the main findings, results, and conclusions of conducted audits. Unfortunately, these abstracts are not published on the SAO website together with the audits.

Another positive step towards external communication is the development of a channel for submitting complaints or initiatives to the SAO by external stakeholders. On the front page of the SAO website, a section named “Request for a revision”²⁷³ can be found, where anyone can submit a request. There are mandatory fields to fill in, such as contact person, phone number, subject/topic, and explanation, and also there is a possibility to attach documents. A test request was sent to check the functionality of the channel and there was an email reply from the SAO that the channel is functional and working (on 22 December). The SAO Director confirmed the functioning of the channel saying that “the SAO website operates in a way that all interested external parties can electronically submit a request/proposal for conducting an audit in a certain entity by the SAO”.²⁷⁴ For each submitted request/proposal by external stakeholders, appropriate processing is done by the SAO management, and the request/proposal can be accepted if it is in accordance with the SAO Strategic Audit Plan and in accordance with the available resources for the year in question. Having in mind that subjects of audit of the SAO can be over 1,300 public sector entities, the choice for determining entities that will be subject of an audit is made in accordance with the Rulebook on the manner of performing state audit, the Guidelines for strategic and annual planning, the Decision determining strategic objectives for SAO audits for the period from 2021 to 2023 and other strategic and methodological documents of the institution. The benefits of this site and the possibility to send requests/suggestions electronically for auditing are that the procedure is quite easy, fast and simple, and the tab for submitting requests for auditing is easily visible and available on the SAO website.”

Finally, the SAO Director was asked in an interview²⁷⁵ if they consult CSOs and their work for the purpose of identifying risks in the public sector, if they have consultation meetings with CSOs and whether they consult analyses and publications of CSOs for risk identification. According to the SAO Director, the SAO fosters good cooperation with CSOs in its work, especially in the field of identifying risks in the public sector. In this context, the SAO has working meetings with CSOs and participates in joint activities, events, trainings, and workshops. In November 2020, SAO representatives (the Chief and the Deputy Auditor General) participated in online workshops and round tables, organized by CSOs, where they presented their experiences and expertise in the process of performing state audit. The cooperation between the SAO and CSOs is strengthened in a way that the SAO continuously and timely informs CSOs about the day of publishing of the final audit report on the SAO website, in addition to the audit report containing key findings and findings.

Regarding consultations on risk identification, the Director stated that CSOs share and send to the SAO their prepared analyses and publications, especially in terms of detecting possible risks in the activities of the public sector and the manner of spending public funds. The SAO, as the supreme audit institution, consults the analyses and publications of CSOs and often in these documents locates certain indications of illegal actions by public institutions, state bodies and public enterprises, which in turn can be a serious indicator and argument in the planning stage of audits and scope of entities that will be audited in course of the current or next year. At the same time, when they organize events and trainings, the SAO often invites lecturers from certain CSOs, who share their experiences in working in the civil sector.

The 2019 SAO Annual Report underlines that they organized a series of meetings, workshops, and interviews with CSOs, through which several important documents were developed, including: the SAO Communication Strategy, analysis and recommendations for strengthening the audit process and a Strategy for presenting simplified audit reports. The 2018 annual report states that the activities of the Supreme Audit Network were focused on greater interaction and cooperation with the CSO sector and also pointed out that under a Twinning project, implemented in cooperation with Croatia and Bulgaria, a round table with CSOs and other stakeholders was organized, focusing on the cooperation of supreme audit institutions and parliaments.

272 State Audit Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, Annual report for 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/3q8eIG8>

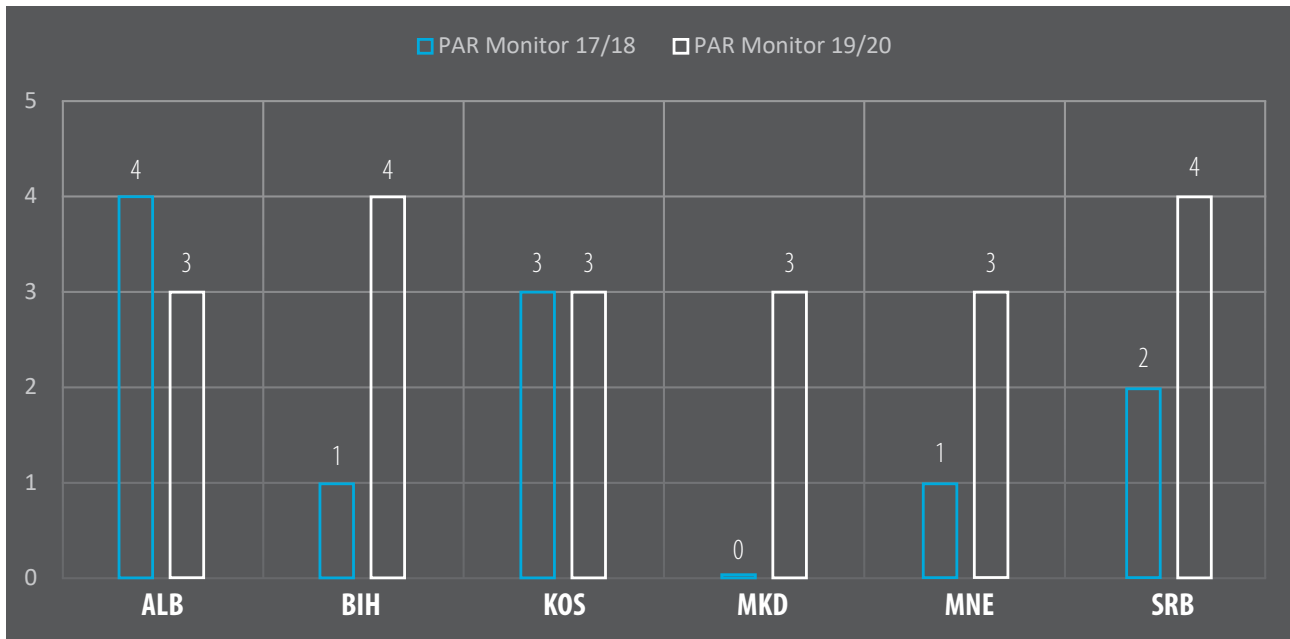
273 https://dzt.mk/mk/contact/barane_za_revizija

274 Interview with the SAO Director (10 December 2020)

275 Interview with the SAO Director (10 December 2020)

■ How does North Macedonia do in regional terms?

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



VI.3 SUMMARY RESULTS: 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 report²⁷⁶ 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 portal²⁷⁷, public debt webpage²⁷⁸, and the COVID-19 financial transparency webpage²⁷⁹ provide insightful information related to budget transactions, payments, public debt trends and procurements.

The Ministry of Finance published consolidated annual reports²⁸⁰ on PIFC for 2019²⁸¹ and 2018²⁸² 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.²⁸³ 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 form²⁸⁴ 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)²⁸⁵, and most of the public procurement plans are published on the Ministries' websites, with few exceptions.²⁸⁶ 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 2023²⁸⁷, 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.

276 Year-end report of the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2019 <https://bit.ly/2NC6k3b>

277 Open Finance Portal <https://open.finance.gov.mk/en/home>

278 Public Debt Portal <https://javendolg.open.finance.gov.mk/en>

279 Financial transparency for COVID-19 Portal <https://finansiskatransparentnost.koronavirus.gov.mk/#/payments-details>

280 No evidence has been found that the Parliament reviews and discusses the reports.

281 Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Annual Report on the Functioning of the Public Internal Financial Control System for 2019, available at: <https://bit.ly/201TzPC>

282 Ministry of Finance of the Republic of North Macedonia, Annual Report on the Functioning of the Public Internal Financial Control System for 2018, available at: <https://bit.ly/2LqsAfO>

283 For the purpose of the analysis, reports covering three full calendar years: 2019; 2018; 2017, were considered, available at: <https://www.bjn.gov.mk/category/godishni-izvestai/>

284 <https://www.e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/Home.aspx#/home>

285 <https://e-nabavki.gov.mk/PublicAccess/home.aspx#/annual-plans>

286 Ministry of Health; Ministry of Education and Science; Ministry of Local Self-Government; Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations

287 Communication Strategy of the State Audit Office 2020-2023, available at: <https://bit.ly/2TB2xpG>

Recommendations for Public Finance Management

Tracking 2017/2018 PAR Monitor Recommendations

Recommendation	Status	Comment
The year-end report budgets should contain information on organisational economic and functional classification	Implemented	The 2019 year-end report contains data on expenditures according to all three classifications.
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	Even though at the report there is a section on Gender budget initiatives and activities that every Ministry undertook, this is not sufficient in order to be able to say that non-financial information about the performance of the Government is included in the year-end budget report.
Quality reviews of internal audit reports should be produced and published.	Not Implemented	Quality reviews of internal audit reports are not regularly produced nor published online
All Ministries should publish risk registers, books of procedures and information on the appointed FMC manager.	Partially Implemented	Findings point to a tangible difference compared with the previous monitoring cycle (2017/18), as Ministries are more transparent, but only as regarding information about FMC managers, which are mostly published in rulebooks on internal organisation of Ministries.
The CHU should start engaging with the public, informing about its activities of relevance to the citizens.	Not Implemented	The CHU does not engage proactively with the public. The Ministry of Finance has no press releases related to the activities of the CHU in 2020. There were no press releases found for 2020, only for 2019. The same goes for social media activity by the CHU: they only published information about activities in 2019. The CHU representatives do not appear in the media to present or discuss PIFC related matters, and they do not organize public events with participation of non-state stakeholders.
CHU reports should be reviewed and discussed in the Parliament	Not Implemented	CHU reports are still not reviewed and discussed in the Parliament and this remains a recommendation in this report.
The SAO should use a variety of means to communicate with the citizens on its activities, on a regular level, instead of engaging once per year for the presentation of the Annual report.	Not Implemented	The SAO does not have active social network accounts and does not produce and publish any online information brochures, leaflets, videos, multimedia presentations or similar promotional materials other than audit reports.
The SAO should engage with the CSOs and develop a methodology for cooperation with CSOs, so that the capacities of both actors are strengthened through joint work.	Implemented	The State Audit Office has a standalone Communication Strategy covering the period from 2020 to 2023. The Strategy identifies the 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 separately is elaborated (2020-2023) and the means of evaluation of the communication with each target group is also indicated.

■ PAR Monitor 2019/2020 recommendations

- 1. 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.*
- 2. 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.*
- 3. 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.*
- 4. 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.*
- 5. 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.*
- 6. 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.*
- 7. 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.*
- 8. The newly introduced Audit Report Abstract should be published on the SAO website along with the audits.*

METHODOLOGY APPENDIX

The PAR Monitor methodology was developed by the WeBER research team and was thoroughly consulted among the WeBER expert associates. In accordance with the methodological changes described in this report, methodology is based on 22 SIGMA Principles (as opposed to 21 in the baseline monitoring cycle), and 23 compound indicators are used to monitor these principles within six key areas of PAR.

The PAR Monitor methodology document provides details on the overall approach of the WeBER monitoring, the process of methodology development, the selection of the principles that the WeBER project monitors and the formulations of indicators with descriptions of methodological approaches. Detailed information for the measurement of each indicator is provided in separate indicator tables. Each indicator table contains the following: formulation, weight, data sources, methodology/description what a given element measures and how and point allocation rules. Finally, each indicator table provides the conversion table for turning the scores from all elements into the final indicator values on the scale from 0 to 5.

PAR Monitor Methodology, and indicator tables are available on the following link: <https://www.par-monitor.org/par-monitor-methodology/>.

The data from all six individual administrations 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 organizations;
- Analysis of official documentation, data, and official 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. More specifically, the PAR monitor methodology anticipated focus groups for:

- Strategic Framework for PAR, with civil society organizations (for indicators SFPAR_P1_I1, SFPAR_P2&4_I1);
- Policy Development and Coordination, with civil society organizations (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);
- Accountability, with civil society organizations (for indicator ACC_P2_I1), and
- Service Delivery, with civil society organizations 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, or other target groups, with expert knowledge on the issue in question. Following focus groups were held:

Table 48: Focus groups conducted at the WB level

Administration	Group	No. of FGs	PAR Area
ALB	Civil society	3	Service Delivery; Policy Development and Coordination
BIH	Civil society	2	Policy Development and Coordination; Service Delivery
KOS	Civil society	1	Strategic Framework of PAR; Policy Development and Coordination; Accountability
MKD	Civil society	1	Strategic Framework of PAR
	Former candidates for job position in central administration	4	Public Service and Human Resource Management
MNE	/	/	/
SRB	Civil society	3	Strategic Framework of PAR; Service Delivery; 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. Due to constraints posed by the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews have in certain cases substituted focus groups as data sources.

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, nonprobability sampling and targeted experts relevant for a given thematic area.

Overall, a total of 61 interviews was 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 49: Interviews conducted at WB level:

Administration	Interviewee (number of interviews)	PAR Area
ALB	Representative of DoPA (3)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Former civil service candidate (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Senior civil servant (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Representative of SAI (1)	Public Finance Management
BIH	Former civil service candidate (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Representative of PARCO (1)	Strategic Framework for PAR
	Director of CSA (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Expert in civil service area (2)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Senior civil servants, former and current (5)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Representative of SAI (1)	Public Finance Management
KOS	Representative of CSO (1)	Strategic Framework for PAR
	Former civil service candidates (2)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Senior civil servant (4)	Public Service and Human Resource Management; Strategic Framework for PAR
MKD	Senior civil servants, former and current (6)	Strategic Framework for PAR; Public Service and Human Resource Management
	Representative of SAI (1)	Public Finance Management
	Representative of MoF/CHU (1)	Public Finance Management
MNE	Representatives of CSO (7)	Strategic Framework for PAR, Policy Development and Coordination, Service Delivery
	Senior civil servants (5)	Strategic Framework for PAR, Public Service and Human Resource Management, Public Finance Management
	Former civil service candidates (3)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
SRB	Representatives of CSO (1)	Strategic Framework for PAR
	Civil servants, former and current (6)	Public Service and Human Resource Management; Strategic framework of PAR
	Experts (1)	Public Service and Human Resource Management
	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) in the Western Balkans. The survey was conducted through computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) in combination with computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI), using a three-stage random representative stratified sampling (primary sampling unit, polling station territories, secondary sampling unit: households, tertiary sampling unit: household member).

The survey was conducted between 15th and 30th May 2020. At WB level, the margin of error for the total sample of 6085 citizens is $\pm 3.13\%$, at the 95% confidence level.

Table 50: Public perception survey methodology framework

Location	Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia
Time	15 – 30 May, 2020
Data Collection Method	CATI in combination with CAWI
Sampling Frame	Entire 18+ population of permanent residents
Sampling	Three stage random representative stratified sample (PSU: Polling station territories, SSU: Households, TSU: Household member)
Margin of error	Average margin of error is $\pm 3.13\%$ 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 Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, North Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia. 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 3827 civil servants participated in the survey, between the second half of June and the beginning of August 2020.

Table 51: Breakdown of the sample for survey of civil servants

	N	% (of observations)
TOTAL	3827	100%
Key groups		
Civil service position		
Senior civil service manager – head of authority	67	2.32
Senior civil service manager – not a head of authority	210	7.27
Non-senior civil service manager (executorial)	705	24.42
Civil servant in non-managerial expert position	1468	50.85
Administrative support civil servant position	127	4.40
Civil servant on fixed-term contract or otherwise temporarily engaged	151	5.23
Political appointment (minister's cabinet or otherwise)	10	0.35
Other	337	11.67
State administration institution		
Ministry	1279	44.30
Subordinate agency	473	16.38
Centre-of-government institution (PM office, government office, government service)	441	15.28
Autonomous agency within the central state administration	357	12.37
Other	337	11.67
Gender		
Male	1067	36.96
Female	1543	53.45
Other	59	2.04
Do not want to respond	218	7.55
Years working in the administration		
Mean = 12.82 years; Range = 0-41 years		
Sector worked before joining the administration		
Local or regional administration	265	9.18
Other branch of power	147	5.09
Public services	408	14.14
International organization	85	2.94
Non-governmental organization	105	3.64
Media	50	1.73
Private sector	1061	36.75
This was my first job	447	447
Other	319	11.05

Table 52: 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	3.62-3.76	2.41-2.72	2.27-2.60	2.56-2.75	3.52-3.80	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)	3.85-3.99	2.51-2.85	2.47-2.82	2.84-3.06	3.88-4.15	3.62-3.74
To get a civil service job in my institution, one needs to have connections	2.62-2.79	3.57-3.87	3.69-3.99	3.17-3.37	2.51-2.79	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	2.99-3.14	2.56-2.85	2.53-2.86	2.34-2.51	3.89-3.18	2.60-2.72
Individuals who are hired on a temporary basis perform tasks which should normally be performed by civil servants	3.19-3.41	3.29-3.67	3.54-3.92	3.81-4.05	3.12-3.52	3.77-3.94
Such contracts get extended to more than one year	2.18-2.34	2.89-3.22	2.56-3.86	3.49-3.66	2.59-2.73	3.61-3.73
When people are hired on a temporary basis, they are selected based on qualifications and skills	3.53-3.71	2.84-3.19	1.97-2.26	2.70-2.91	3.58-3.91	3.39-3.53
Individuals hired on a temporary basis go on to become civil servants after their temporary engagements	2.77-2.92	3.37-3.57	3.01-3.32	3.12-3.28	3.37-3.64	3.18-3.29
The formal rules for hiring people on a temporary basis are applied in practice	3.65-3.82	3.02-3.35	2.76-3.08	3.24-3.44	4.07-4.34	3.67-3.80
Procedures for appointing senior civil servants ensure that the best candidates get the jobs in my institution	3.41-3.57	2.02-2.33	2.17-2.49	2.31-2.49	3.32-3.62	2.88-3.01
In my institution, senior civil servants would implement illegal actions if political superiors asked them to do so	2.89-3.12	3.67-4.07	3.72-4.09	3.51-3.78	2.76-3.21	3.74-3.93
Senior civil servants can reject an illegal order from a minister or another political superior, without endangering their position	3.27-3.42	2.73-3.02	2.64-2.94	2.96-3.16	3.60-3.84	3.03-3.15
Senior civil service positions are subject of political agreements and "divisions of the cake" among the ruling political parties	2.51-2.67	3.94-4.20	3.56-3.86	3.52-3.72	2.95-3.25	3.36-3.49
Senior civil servants are at least in part appointed thanks to political support	2.74-2.93	3.89-4.18	3.71-3.99	3.81-3.99	3.05-3.82	3.53-3.66
In my institution, senior civil servants participate in electoral campaigns of political parties during elections	2.02-2.21	2.58-2.92	3.31-3.61	3.23-3.45	2.01-2.33	2.45-2.60
In my institution senior civil servants get dismissed for political motives	2.20-2.38	1.81-2.14	3.20-3.49	3.08-3.42	1.77-2.09	2.43-2.58
Formal rules and criteria for dismissing senior civil servants are properly applied in practice	3.67-3.84	3.00-3.38	2.54-2.83	3.08-3.32	4.01-4.28	3.39-3.52
In my institution, bonuses or increases in pay grades are used by managers only to stimulate or reward performance	2.57-2.74	2.15-2.45	2.19-2.49	2.68-2.88	3.19-3.48	2.95-3.08
In my institution, political and personal connections help employees to receive bonuses or increases in pay grades	1.90-2.08	3.25-3.61	3.09-3.46	3.18-3.41	2.16-2.51	2.76-2.90
Integrity and anti-corruption measures in place in my institution are effective in achieving their purpose	3.68-3.80	2.54-2.83	2.78-3.10	2.99-3.18	3.63-3.87	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)	3.59-3.73	2.57-2.88	2.48-2.78	2.86-3.06	3.73-3.97	3.37-3.49
If I were to become a whistle-blower, I would feel protected	2.67-2.82	1.85-2.12	2.12-2.43	2.00-2.18	2.40-2.72	2.23-2.35
How important do you think it is that the civil society organisations (NGOs) monitor public administration reform	2.51-2.67	2.03-2.36	1.65-1.98	2.39-2.61	1.78-2.02	2.67-2.81
How important do you think it is that the public (citizens) perceive the administration as depoliticised	1.30-1.41	1.23-1.42	1.19-1.41	1.15-1.26	1.26-1.44	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 581 CSOs participated in the surveys conducted between 22 June 22 and 4 August 2020.

Table 53: Duration of the survey:

ALB	BIH	KOS	MKD	MNE	SRB
24/06 – 29/07	23/06 – 3/08	23/06 – 04/08	23/06 – 04/08	22/06 – 27/07	22/06 – 27/07

Table 54: Breakdown of the CSO survey sample in at WB level.²⁸⁸

	N	% (of observations)
TOTAL	3827	100%
Key groups		
Type of organization		
Policy research/Think-tank	168	16.37
Watchdog	100	9.75
Advocacy	228	22.22
Service provider	203	19.79
Grassroot	167	16.28
Other	160	15.59

Field of operation		
Governance and democracy	168	6.05
Rule of law	167	6.01
Human rights	295	10.62
Public administration reform	109	3.93
European integration	149	5.37
Gender issues	156	5.62
Children and youth	238	8.57
Environment and sustainable development	229	8.25
Education	225	8.10
Culture	143	5.15
Health	123	4.43
Media	120	4.32
Economic development	164	5.91
Civil society development	228	8.21
Social services	189	6.81
Other	74	2.66

Year of registration of the CSO		
Mean= 2005; Range=1920-2020		

Position of the respondent in the organization*		
Senior-level management	371	63.86
Mid-level management	70	12.05
Senior non-management	28	4.82
Mid-level non-management	16	2.75
Other	96	16.52

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

288 Multiple choice possible.

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 analyzed 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 scrutinized 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 only in cases where methodology asks for certain institutional practices that could not easily be covered by online available data. 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 in the following 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).

In certain cases, additional FOI requests were sent for data and information needed in other PAR areas analysed and their indicators, with a total of 170 FOI requests sent at the WB level.

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