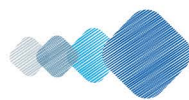


Rule of Law in View of EU Accession

Quarterly brief

October–December 2025



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This brief summarises the key developments related to the rule of law in the context of North Macedonia's EU accession for the period October–December 2025. It includes **monitoring the fundamentals of EU accession, including key developments in the functioning of democratic institutions, public administration reform, and Chapter 23: Judiciary and Fundamental Rights.**

Key developments

- » The 2025 local elections saw the lowest voter turnout in North Macedonia's history, with neither round exceeding 50% participation.
- » The Ministry of Public Administration launched a mandatory training for a modernised Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS) to centralise payroll and digitalise personnel files across the public sector.
- » New digital tools were introduced, including “e-Kiosk” for immediate document access and “e-sandache” for secure institutional communication, aiming to improve service delivery.
- » After the Ministry of Finance confirmed a continued lack of funding following the adoption of the 2026 state budget, the Management Board of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors decided to annul the 2023 admission announcement for the Academy's ninth generation of candidates.
- » The Assembly adopted a new Law on the Judicial Council in late December, introducing stricter criteria for members and new mechanisms for dismissing the Council's President.
- » In December, the Assembly elected a new president of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC).
- » A major bribery case involving EU Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development (IPARD) funds emerged, in which the Director of the Agency for Financial Support in Agriculture was investigated for accepting a bribe, prompting the freezing of funds.
- » The process for selecting North Macedonia's judge for the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) was marred by allegations of conflict of interest and procedural shortcomings, drawing criticism from civil society and candidates.
- » The ECtHR ruled against North Macedonia in two cases involving dismissed judges, finding that their rights to a fair trial and to access to justice had been violated.
- » The Ombudsperson's office warned of a potential shutdown in January 2026 if the Assembly fails to elect a new Ombudsperson, leaving the institution without a signatory for salaries and key documents.
- » The election period saw serious violence against the Roma community, including the physical assault of a Roma candidate for municipal councillor in Vinica, who was beaten into a coma.



List of Abbreviations

AAVMS	Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services
ACCMIS	Automated Court Case Management Information System
AJM	Association of Journalists of Macedonia
CPPD	Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
ENER	Electronic National Register of Regulations
EOM	Election Observation Mission
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
ESM	Power Plants of North Macedonia
EU	European Union
HRMIS	Human Resources Management Information System
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IPARD	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance for Rural Development
MES	Ministry of Education and Science
MP	Member of Parliament
MPA	Ministry of Public Administration
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PAR	Public Administration Reform
PPA	Paid Political Advertising
REK	Mining and Energy Combine
RIA	Regulatory Impact Assessment
SCPC	State Commission for Prevention of Corruption
SEC	State Election Commission
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SJC	State Judicial Council
SSNM	Independent Union of Journalists and Media Workers
VMRO-DPMNE	The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity



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Functioning of democratic institutions



Elections

Local elections held in October 2025 were conducted in an overall orderly manner, with institutions stressing that voting largely proceeded in line with the legal framework. At the same time, the electoral process was marked by reported irregularities and complaints, pointing to persistent challenges related to electoral integrity.

The Public Prosecutor's Office and the Ministry of Interior reported cases related to vote-buying, photographing of ballots, agitation during election silence, and obstruction of voting. Several individuals were detained, while institutions underlined that the incidents were isolated.^{1,2} The State Election Commission (SEC) addressed several procedural irregularities, including the annulment of a City of Skopje council list due to the inclusion of a deceased person,³ corrections of ballot-printing errors in Novo Selo,⁴ and complaints submitted by independent lists in the Municipality of Centar.⁵

The Ombudsperson opened a free hotline for reporting violations of voting rights during local elections, urging citizens to report pressure, obstacles to voting, and procedural irregularities.⁶ Civil society organisations (CSOs) raised concerns about the electoral environment, particularly regarding hate speech. The Helsinki Committee reacted publicly, warning that hate speech during elections undermines democratic participation.⁷

The second round of local elections was held in November. According to the State Election Commission (SEC), voting proceeded without major disruptions, although incidents related to agitation, vote-buying, and procedural violations were again recorded.⁸ The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/ Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the second round of local elections (2 November 2025) concluded that while the elections offered voters a *genuine choice between distinct political alternatives*, campaign conditions were not equal for all contestants. The ODIHR pointed to a media advertising allocation system that disadvantaged smaller and independent candidates, limited campaign finance reporting requirements, and continued involvement of government officials in campaign activities. Persistent allegations of pressure on public-sector employees and voters, and continued reports of vote-buying, were noted, alongside administrative and legal gaps in the regulation of second-round election procedures. Despite these concerns, the election administration was regarded as efficient and transparent, with procedures largely adhered to at polling stations.⁹

1 Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 'Announcement (Соопштение)', 19 October 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/soopshlenie-156/>.

2 TV 21, Toshkovski: 11 people detained for bribery, photographing, or destroying a ballot paper (Тошковски: лишени од слобода 11 лица поради поткуп, фотографирање или уништување на гласачко ливче), 19 October 2025, <https://mk.tv21.tv/toshkovski-lisheni-od-sloboda-11-litsa-poradi-potkup-fotografirane-ili-unishtuvane-na-glasachko-livche/>.

3 360degrees, SEC annulled DNET's list of Councilors for the City of Skopje, they proposed a deceased person (ДИК ја поништи листата за советници во Град Скопје на ДНЕТ, предложили починато лице), 18 October 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/dik-ja-ponishti-listata-za-sovetnitsi-vo-grad-skopje-na-dnet-predlozile-pochinato-litse/>.

4 Sakam da kazham, The printing error on the ballots in Novo Selo has been corrected, and voting is proceeding without problems, the SEC says (Исправена е печатната грешка на гласачките ливчиња во Ново Село, гласањето се одвива без проблеми, велат од ДИК), 18 October 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/dopisna-mrezha/ispravena-e-pechatnata-greshka-na-glasachkite-livchina-vo-novo-selo-glasaneto-se-odviva-bez-problemi-velat-od-dik/>.

5 Nezavisen, An independent list in the Municipality of Centar filed a complaint, as their logo was left out of the ballot paper (Независна листа во Општина Центар поднесе приговор, им го заборавиле логото на гласачкото ливче), 19 October 2025, <https://nezavisen.mk/nezavisna-lista-vo-opshtina-centar-podnese-prigovor-im-go-zaboravile-logoto-na-glasachkoto-livche/>.

6 Ombudsperson of the Republic of North Macedonia, 'Free telephone line 0800 54321 for reporting violations of citizens' voting rights in the 2025 local elections (Бесплатна телефонска линија 0800 54321 за пријавување на повреда на избирачкото право на граѓаните во процесот на локалните избори 2025 Година)', 1 October 2025, <https://shorturl.at/zTqHa>.

7 Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, The Helsinki Committee strongly condemns hate speech in the electoral process (Хелсиншкиот комитет остро реагира против говорот на омраза во изборниот процес), 13 October 2025, <https://mhc.org.mk/news/helsinshkiot-komitet-ostro-reagira-protiv-govorot-na-omraza-vo-izborniot-proces/>.

8 TV 21, Toshkovski: Peaceful election day – 30 cases reported of campaigning, bribery, preventing voting, threats... (Тошковски: Мирен изборен ден – пријавени 30 случаи на агитирање, поткуп, спречување на гласање, закани...), 2 November 2025, <https://mk.tv21.tv/toshkovski-miren-izboren-den-prijaveni-30-sluchai-na-agitirane-potkup-sprechuvane-na-glasane-zakani/>.

9 ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION, Republic of North Macedonia – Local Elections, Second Round, 2 November 2025, STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS, PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS, <https://odihr.osce.org/sites/default/files/f/documents/d/6/600656.pdf>.

Final results confirmed VMRO-DPMNE as the party with the highest number of mayoral mandates, while independent lists secured a notable share of the vote.^{10, 11} Voter turnout remained lower than in previous election cycles. The SEC reviewed appeals and complaints, including cases involving repeat voting at specific polling stations.¹² For the first time since the independence of North Macedonia, the turnout in the eighth local elections, in both rounds, did not exceed 50%, making these the elections with the lowest turnout in the country's history.¹³

In December, the SEC finalised post-election procedures¹⁴, including the replacement of Members of Parliament who were elected mayors.¹⁵ The SEC also announced that new rounds of voting would be organised in four municipalities in January 2026, citing insufficient turnout and annulled voting results as required by the Electoral Code.¹⁶

Assembly

Parliamentary activity in October was limited and shaped mainly by the local elections. Political debate focused primarily on election-related developments, while legislative output remained modest.

In November, the Assembly held a dedicated plenary session on the European Commission's 2025 Report. The debate included an address by the President of the Republic and interventions by the Prime Minister and MPs from both the ruling majority and the opposition. Discussions focused on constitutional amendments, rule-of-law reforms, and the credibility of the EU accession process.^{17, 18} The debate exposed deep political polarisation, with divergent interpretations of who was responsible for the stagnation of reform.¹⁹ In November, the Assembly held a session of the European Union–North Macedonia Joint Parliamentary Committee in Strasbourg, bringing together members of the national parliament and the European Parliament. Discussions focused on the country's EU accession process, the implementation of reform commitments, freedom of expression, good-neighbourly relations, and environmental issues. Participants underlined the importance of constructive parliamentary dialogue, effective oversight, and sustained reform momentum, while reiterating concerns related to polarisation and the need for inclusive political processes aligned with EU standards.^{20 21}

10 State Election Commission (SEC), 'Results – Local Elections 2025 (Резултати - Локални Избори 2025 година)', <https://rezultati-vtor.sec.mk/mk/mayr/r>.

11 Sakam da kazham, The independent lists won over 58,000 votes and became the fifth political force in the local elections (Независните листи освоија над 58.000 гласови и се петта политичка сила на локалните избори), 20 October 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/nezavisnite-listi-osvoija-nad-58-000-glasovi-i-se-petta-politichka-sila-na-lokalnite-izbori/>.

12 Nova Makedonija, SEC: Re-voting in four municipalities – Vrapchishte, Mavrovo and Rostushe, Centar Zhupa, and Gostivar (ДИК: Прегласување Во Четири Општини – Врпчиште, Маврово и Ростуше, Центар Жупа и Гостивар), 20 October 2025, <https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/dik-preglasuvanje-vo-chetiri-opstini-vrapchishte-mavrovo-i-rostushe-centar-zhupa-i-gostivar/>.

13 Deutsche Welle, Local elections with a historically lowest turnout (Локалните избори со историски најниска излезност), 3 November 2025, <https://www.dw.com/mk/lokalnite-izbori-so-istoriski-najniska-izleznost/a-74598603>.

14 State Election Commission (SEC), Final report on the 2025 local elections (Конечен извештај за Локални избори 2025) (2025), https://drive.google.com/file/d/13gqQHgHehsQLutthJTSWWL_TGomg5nQ/view.

15 NetPress, The SEC determined the replacement of MPs following the local elections (ДИК утврди замена на пратеници по Локалните избори), 3 November 2025, <https://netpress.com.mk/dik-utvrdi-zamena-na-prateniczi-po-lokalnite-izbori/>.

16 TV 21, The SEC finalized the voter list for the repeat elections on 11 January (ДИК го заклучи избирачкиот список за повторните избори на 11 јануари), 19 December 2025, <https://mk.tv21.mk/dik-go-zakluchi-izbirackiot-sписок-za-povtornite-izbori-na-11-januari/>.

17 Racin.mk, Siljanovska-Davkova: The European Commission report should be more technical than political (Силјановска Давкова: Извештајот на Европската комисија треба да биде повеќе технички отколку политички), 11 November 2025, <https://racin.mk/mk-von-eu/siljanovska-davkova-izveshtajot-na-evropskata-komisija-treba-da-bide-poveke-tehnichki-otkolku-politichki/>.

18 MIA, Mickoski on the EC Report: We will get a "five" and be champions if we make the constitutional amendments, and then we will face a new veto (Мицкоски за извештајот на ЕК: Ќе добиеме петка и ќе бидеме шампиони ако ги направиме уставните измени и потоа ќе имаме ново вето), 6 November 2025, <https://shorturl.at/sA2xQ>.

19 Deutsche Welle, Debate on the EU Report – sharp messages on reforms (Расправа за извештајот на ЕУ – остри пораки за реформите), 17 November 2025, <https://www.dw.com/mk/debata-vo-sobranieto-za-izvestajot-na-eu-rokas-silanovska-i-filipce-so-ostri-poraki-za-reformite/a-74779972>.

20 Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, Parliamentary delegation at the 24th EU–North Macedonia Parliamentary Committee meeting in Strasbourg (Собраниска Делегација На 24. Состанок На МПК – РСМ и ЕУ Во Стразбург), <https://www.sobranie.mk/ns-newsarticle-sobraniska-delegacija-na-24-sostanok-na-mpk-rsm-i-eu-vo-strazbur.nspх>.

21 MIA, From the 24th EU–North Macedonia Parliamentary Committee meeting in Strasbourg: Reforms continue, North Macedonia deserves to start the negotiations (Од 24. состанок на МПК Северна Македонија – ЕУ во Стразбург: Реформите продолжуваат, РС Македонија заслужува да ги почне преговорите), 27 November 2025, <https://shorturl.at/O4fQf>.

In December, the Assembly adopted several key decisions. It elected Adem Čučul as President of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC).²² The Assembly also adopted the Law on the Judicial Council, with the governing majority presenting it as aligned with EU recommendations, while the opposition expressed concerns.²³

Parliamentary oversight activities included an inquiry committee hearing on the Kochani tragedy and other tragedies²⁴, as well as debates on migration, marked by competing resolutions from the ruling parties and the opposition.²⁵

In the same month, representatives of the Ombudsperson's Office called on the Assembly to initiate and complete the process of appointing a new Ombudsperson, warning of the risks associated with a prolonged vacancy.²⁶

Governance

During October, executive action focused on EU integration-related processes and regional cooperation. The Government highlighted the approval of the second tranche of EU funds under the Reform and Growth Facility²⁷, presenting this as confirmation of progress under the Reform Agenda and continued engagement with the EU accession process.

In the same period, North Macedonia hosted the Western Balkans Digital Summit in Skopje,²⁸ where regional leaders discussed digital integration and initiatives to reduce roaming costs between the Western Balkans and the EU.²⁹ October was also marked by intensified bilateral engagement with Bulgaria, particularly concerning Corridor VIII. Government representatives announced that construction of the railway tunnel on Corridor VIII was moving toward a formal agreement that would frame the project as a strategic infrastructure priority and part of European transport connectivity.³⁰ Government officials confirmed the signing of an agreement with Bulgaria to construct a joint railway tunnel, stressing EU support for the project and its importance for regional connectivity.³¹

22 Deutsche Welle, Adem Čučul is the new head of the Anti-Corruption Commission (Адем Чучул е нов шеф на Антикорупциската комисија), 4 December 2025, <https://www.dw.com/mk/adem-cucul-e-nov-pretседатel-na-antikorpuciska-veti-transparentnost-i-otcetnost/a-75016121>.

23 Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia, The Assembly passed the Draft Law on the Judicial Council with 73 votes in favor and 1 abstention (Собранието го донесе предлог законот за Судски совет со 73 гласови „за“ и 1 „воздржан“), 29 December 2025, <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/sobranieto-go-donese-predlog-zakonot-za-sudski-sovet-so-73-glasovi-zai-1-vozdrzan>.

24 Nezavisen, The Assembly formed the Inquiry Commission on the Kocani tragedy and the other tragedies (Собранието ја формираше анкетната комисија за трагедијата во Кочани и другите несреќи), <https://nezavisen.mk/sobranieto-ja-formirashe-anketnata-komisiја-za-tragedijata-vo-kochani-i-drugite-nesrekji/>.

25 Deutsche Welle, After SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE also with a Resolution on migrants (По СДСМ и ВМРО-ДПМНЕ со резолуција за мигранти), 15 December 2025, <https://www.dw.com/mk/vmro-dpmne-so-rezolucija-protiv-migranti-sdsm-obvinuva-za-dogovor-so-velika-britanija/a-75162072>.

26 TV Telma, Dramatic situation at the office of the Ombudsperson: Employees will remain unpaid and have appealed to the Assembly and the public to appoint a new Ombudsperson, which has been stalled due to Badenter (Драматична состојба во Народниот правобранител, вработените ќе останат без плата и со апел до Собранието и јавноста да избере нов Омбудсман кој е закочен поради Бадентер), 24 December 2025, <https://telma.com.mk/2025/12/24/dramatichna-sostojba-vo-narodniot-pravobranitel-vrabotenite-ke-ostanat-bez-plata-i-so-apel-do-sobranieto-i-javnosta-da-izbere-nov-Ombudsperson-koj-e-zakochen-poradi-badenter/>.

27 Radio Free Europe, The EU approved the second tranche of funds from the Reform and Growth Facility (ЕУ ја одобри втората транша средства од Инструментот за реформи и раст), 17 October 2025, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/33562553.html>.

28 Ministry of Digital Transformation, Western Balkans Digital Summit 2025 returns to Skopje – October 1 and 2 at the Museum of Contemporary Art, 21 September 2025, <https://mdt.gov.mk/en-GB/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/digitalniot-samit-na-zapaden-balkan-2025-povtorno-vo-skopje-1-i-2-oktomvri-vo-muzejot-na-sovremenata-umetnost>.

29 MIA, Western Balkans Digital Summit 2025 in Skopje: The region takes bold steps toward a digitally integrated future (Дигитален самит на Западен Балкан 2025 во Скопје: Регионот презема смели чекори кон дигитално интегрирана иднина), 2 October 2025, <https://shorturl.at/WPBzg>.

30 Radio Free Europe, After three decades, the railway tunnel on Corridor 8 moves toward realization (По три децении железничкиот тунел на Коридорот 8 тргнува кон реализација), 6 November 2025, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/zeleznicki-tunel-koridor-osum-/33583011.html>.

31 Ministry of Transport, Nikoloski: We signed the Agreement for the construction of the joint border tunnel with Bulgaria. Railway Corridor 8 holds strategic, economic, and security significance for the Balkans and Europe (Николоски: Го Потпишавме Договорот За Изградба На Заедничкиот Пограничен Тунел Со Бугарија. Железничкиот Коридор 8 Има Стратешко, Економско и Безбедносно Значење За Балканот и Европа), 6 November 2025, <https://mtc.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/novosti/nikoloski-go-potpisavme-dogovorot-za-izgradba-na-zaednickiot-pogranicen-tunel-so-bugarija-zeleznickiot-koridor-8-ima-stratesko-ekonomsko-i-bezbednosno-znacenje-za-balkanot-i-evropa>.

Calls for early parliamentary elections were publicly dismissed by senior government representatives, including the Prime Minister and members of the governing coalition. They stated that early elections were not under consideration, citing the stability of the governing majority and the need to focus on governance, reforms, and implementation of the government programme.^{32, 33, 34} The issue remained at the level of political discourse and did not translate into institutional procedures or formal parliamentary debate. At the same time, fact-checking analyses pointed to variations in the Prime Minister's public statements, noting a degree of ambiguity about the circumstances under which early elections could be considered.³⁵ While these differing signals contributed to continued public and political speculation, no formal steps were initiated by the executive or the legislature.

Governance discourse in November was strongly influenced by the publication of the European Commission's 2025 Report. Members of the Government publicly responded to the report, reiterating their commitment to EU integration while disputing parts of the assessment, particularly regarding constitutional amendments.³⁶

In December, governance developments were marked by changes in government composition. The Assembly confirmed the appointment of Bekim Sali as Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, strengthening political coordination of the EU agenda.³⁷ At the same time, Muhamet Hodža assumed office as Minister of Environment and Spatial Planning, following his election by the Assembly.³⁸ Public debate intensified following statements by senior executive officials regarding the work of the Public Prosecutor and certain judges. While framed as calls for accountability, these statements raised concerns about potential pressure on the judiciary and respect for the separation of powers.^{39, 40}

In December, the Government also declared a crisis in electricity supply, citing difficulties securing mazut. The decision triggered political debate regarding preparedness and crisis management capacity.⁴¹

32 A1on, Nikoloski: There will be no early parliamentary elections (Николоски: Нема да има предвремени парламентарни избори), 15 October 2025, <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/nikoloski-nema-da-ima-predvreteni-parlamentarni-izbori/>.

33 MIA, Medziti: There will be no early parliamentary elections (Меџити: Нема да има предвремени парламентарни избори), 10 October 2025, <https://shorturl.at/GskMq>.

34 NetPress, Murtezani categorical —There will be no early elections (Муртезани категоричен – предвремени избори нема да има), 7 October 2025, <https://netpress.com.mk/murtezani-kategorichen-predvreteni-izbori-nema-da-ima/>.

35 Vistinomer, Mickoski inconsistent — Leaves the possibility of early elections open (Мицкоски неконзистентен – остава можност за предвремени избори), 10 October 2025, <https://vistinomer.mk/mickoski-nekonzistenten-ostava-mozhnost-za-predvreteni-izbori/>.

36 24 Vesti, Mickoski: There is no regression for Macedonia in the EC Report (Мицкоски: Нема назадување на Македонија во извештајот на ЕК), 6 November 2025, <https://24.mk/details/mickoski-nema-nazaduvanje-na-makedonija-vo-izveshtajot-na-ek/>.

37 Nova Makedonija, The Assembly elected Muhamet Hodža as Minister of Environment and Bekim Sali as Minister of European Integration (Собранието ги избра Мухамет Хоџа за министер за животна средина и Беким Сали за министер за евроинтеграции), 24 December 2025, <https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/sobranieto-gi-izbra-muhamet-hodja-za-minister-za-zhivotna-sredina-i-bekim-sali-za-minister-za-evrointegracii/>.

38 Ibid.

39 21 TV, Mickoski: I am not satisfied with the prosecutor's work, and it is logical that he should be replaced (Мицкоски: Не сум задоволен од работата на обвинителот, и логично е да биде сменет), 18 November 2025, <https://mk.tv21.tv/mitskoski-ne-sum-zadovolnen-od-rabotata-na-obvinitelot-i-logichno-e-da-bide-smenet/>.

40 Mickoski: We are seeking legal mechanisms for Kocovski — 'Some judges and prosecutors can't be moved from their seats even with a crane (Мицкоски: Бараме правни механизми за Коцевски – „некои судии и обвинители со кран не може да ги мрднеш од фотелјата“), 20 November 2025, <https://mk.tv21.tv/mitskoski-barame-pravni-mehanizmi-za-kotseviski-nekoi-sudii-i-obviniteli-so-kran-ne-mozhe-da-gi-mrdnesh-od-foteljata/>.

41 Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, Government: A decision has been made to declare a state of emergency for 7 days due to the inability to procure mazut (Влада: Донесена е одлуката за прогласување на кризна состојба во траење од 7 дена поради неможност за набавка на мазут), 23 December 2025, <https://vlada.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/vlada-donesena-e-odlukata-za-proglasuvanje-na-krizna-sostojba-vo-traenje-od-7-dena-poradi-nemoznosta-za-nabavka-na-mazut>.

Civil Society

The Council for Cooperation between the Government and civil society continued its regular work this quarter. It held three sessions (the 5th,⁴² 6th,⁴³ and 7th sessions⁴⁴ of this Council composition), with a clear focus on improving the enabling environment for CSOs, legislative reform, and monitoring of the Strategy for Cooperation with Civil Society 2025–2028. During these sessions, discussions focused on challenges related to public funding and the financial sustainability of CSOs, and on the use of the Electronic National Register of Regulations (ENER) for consultations with civil society. A review was performed of draft ‘indicator passports’ for monitoring the implementation of the aforementioned Strategy, as well as on improving communication channels between the Council and CSOs, including proposals for more direct and accessible communication mechanisms. Regarding potential improvements to the legal framework for CSOs, during these sessions, discussions focused on amendments to the Law on Associations and Foundations; the Law on Donations and Sponsorships in Public Activities; the Law on Volunteering; and the draft Law on Social Entrepreneurship. The Council selected its representatives to the working group on the new draft Law on Associations and Foundations, and the draft Law was published on the ENER on 31 December.⁴⁵

Civilian Oversight of the Security/Intelligence Sector

Civilian and parliamentary oversight of the security and intelligence sector remained limited during the reporting period. Public attention was drawn to integrity issues following international recognition of investigative reporting by “360 Stepeni” concerning the educational credentials of the Director of the Agency for National Security.⁴⁶ In November, a publicly reported complaint concerning the Agency for Intelligence raised questions about compliance with legal requirements governing national security institutions. An anonymous complaint submitted to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) alleged that certain employees were working without valid security clearance certificates. The Agency for Intelligence rejected the allegations, stating that all employment procedures complied with the law. The SCPC declared itself not competent and referred the case to the parliamentary oversight commission, underscoring the role of legislative oversight in addressing integrity concerns within security institutions.⁴⁷

42 5th session of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society (5-та седница на советот за соработка меѓу владата и граѓанското општество), 28 October 2025, <https://nvorabotka.gov.mk/?q=node/1057>.

43 6th session of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society (6-та седница на советот за соработка меѓу владата и граѓанското општество), 26 November 2025, <https://nvorabotka.gov.mk/?q=node/1059>.

44 7th session of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society (7-ма седница на советот за соработка меѓу владата и граѓанското општество), 22 December 2025, <https://nvorabotka.gov.mk/?q=node/1063>.

45 Ministry of Justice, “Draft Law on Associations and Foundations (Предлог на закон за здруженија и фондации),” National Electronic Register of Regulations (ENER), 31 December 2025, https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=73921.

46 Prizma, “360 Degrees” with the best story on the certificate of the ANS Director (360 Степени” со најдобра сторија за сертификатот на директорот на АНБ), 7 November 2025, <https://prizma.mk/360-stepeni-so-najdobra-istrzhuvachka-storija-za-sertifikatot-na-direktorot-na-anb/>.

47 TV Telma, The Intelligence Agency denies having employees without a security clearance (Агенција за разузнавање негира дека има вработени без безбедносен сертификат), 13 November 2025, <https://telma.com.mk/2025/11/13/agenczija-za-razuznavane-negira-deka-ima-vraboteni-bez-bezbednosn-sertifikat/>.

Public Administration Reform

On 08 October 2025, the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) launched mandatory training sessions for the modernised Human Resources Management Information System (HRMIS), aiming to fully implement it across all public institutions by the end of 2026. The upgraded system, fully owned by the state, enables centralised payroll processing, digital human resources management, interoperability, and direct employee access to electronic personnel files, supported by ongoing technical support and regular updates.⁴⁸

The fourth session of the Secretariat for Public Administration was held on 13 October 2025, during which the draft updated Action Plan for the PAR Strategy 2023–2030 (updated for 2025–2026) was discussed. It was also noted that a new Public Administration Academy has been established and that the Ministry of Public Administration (MPA) is working to adopt a new Law on Senior Management Service, a new Law on the Organisation and Operation of State Administration Bodies, a new salary system, and other related reforms.⁴⁹

A significant amount of older archive material has disappeared from ministerial websites following a poorly executed redesign, making it difficult to access historical government information. Key documents, such as the list of construction companies whose licenses were revoked after the Kochani nightclub fire and details of a EUR 70 million EBRD loan for Skopje's Bus Rapid Transit system, are no longer available. The redesign, aimed at unifying ministry websites, is behind schedule, leaving much recent official information accessible only through media republishing.⁵⁰

During the promotion of the National Portal for Electronic Services in Bitola in November 2025, it was highlighted that the portal already has nearly 240,000 users and provides faster access to services. The successful example of electronic device vouchers for students was also highlighted, with 39,000 students applying and 20,800 already using the vouchers.⁵¹

On 11 December 2025, the two-day workshop 'Strengthening Capacities for Better Management of Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) in the Republic of North Macedonia' was held, organised by the MPA with support from the Support for Improvement in Governance and Management (SIGMA) initiative. The workshop was attended by civil servants from all sectoral ministries and relevant institutions, aiming to improve practical and analytical skills for managing RIA, as well as to ensure higher quality in the preparation of regulations.⁵²

On 18 December 2025, the Venice Commission issued a positive opinion on the Draft Law on Equitable Representation, recommending the inclusion of more detailed provisions to clearly balance the principles of "adequate" and "fair" representation, establish concrete hiring procedures, and ensure that ethnic criteria do not undermine merit-based employment. The law should emphasise the primary role of qualifications, the secondary role of belonging to an underrepresented community, and the principle of proportionality for

48 Ministry of Public Administration, The Ministry of Public Administration has started training on the use of the modernized HRMIS (Министерството за јавна администрација започна со обуки за користење на модернизираниот ИСУЧР), 8 October 2025, <https://mja.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/10-ministerstvoto-za-javna-administracija-zapocna-so-obuki-za-koristenje-na-moderniziraniot-isucr>.

49 Ministry of Public Administration, 'Minutes of the fourth session of the Secretariat for Public Administration Reform held on 13 October 2025 (Зapisnik од четврта седница на Секретаријатот за реформа на јавна администрација одржана на 13.10.2025)', 13 October 2025, <https://portal.mdt.gov.mk/post-body-files/zapisnik-i-dneven-red-od-cetvrtata-sednica-na-sekretarijatot-za-reforma-na-javna-administracija-file-gdSM.pdf>.

50 BIRN, 404 not found: Archives vanish from North Macedonia's revamped govt websites, 27 November 2025, <https://balkaninsight.com/2025/11/27/404-not-found-archives-vanish-from-north-macedonias-revamped-govt-websites/>.

51 Ministry of Digital Transformation, Andonovski: In a year and a half, the number of users of the national portal — uslugi.gov.mk — has doubled (Андоновски: За една и пол година е дуплиран бројот на корисници на националниот портал — uslugi.gov.mk), 29 November 2025, <https://mdt.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/andonovski-za-edna-i-pol-godina-e-dupliran-brojt-na-korisnici-na-nacionalniot-portal-uslugigovmk>.

52 Ministry of Public Administration, Minchev: The improved RIA process is the foundation for higher-quality laws (Минчев: Подобрениот ПВР процес е основа за повквалитетни закони), 11 December 2025, <https://mja.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/1mincev-podobreniot-pvr-proces-e-osnova-za-pokvalitetni-zakoni>.

special measures. It also calls for clear definitions of objective criteria for verifying candidates' self-identification, the designation of a competent authority, and the consequences of any abuse.⁵³

The Ministry of Digital Transformation has announced a public call for municipalities and public-sector institutions to develop official websites. The initiative aims to improve digital infrastructure, transparency, and accessibility of local governments, and all entities are eligible to apply, regardless of their size or current website status.⁵⁴

The new IT tool for monitoring the implementation of the Public Administration Reform Strategy was launched on 18 December 2025, aiming to inform all stakeholders (public institutions, the private sector, the academic community, and CSOs) about its use, significance, and benefits, as well as to encourage all participants to engage in active collaboration and implementation.⁵⁵

On 19 December 2025, e-Kiosk (e-booth) and e-sandache (e-mailbox) were launched to improve digital inclusion and streamline public services. The e-kiosk allows citizens to access services and receive documents immediately, especially benefiting those in rural areas and those with limited internet access, while e-sandache provides a secure, legally valid channel for institutional communication with real-time notifications and case tracking, contributing to more efficient and accessible digital administration.⁵⁶

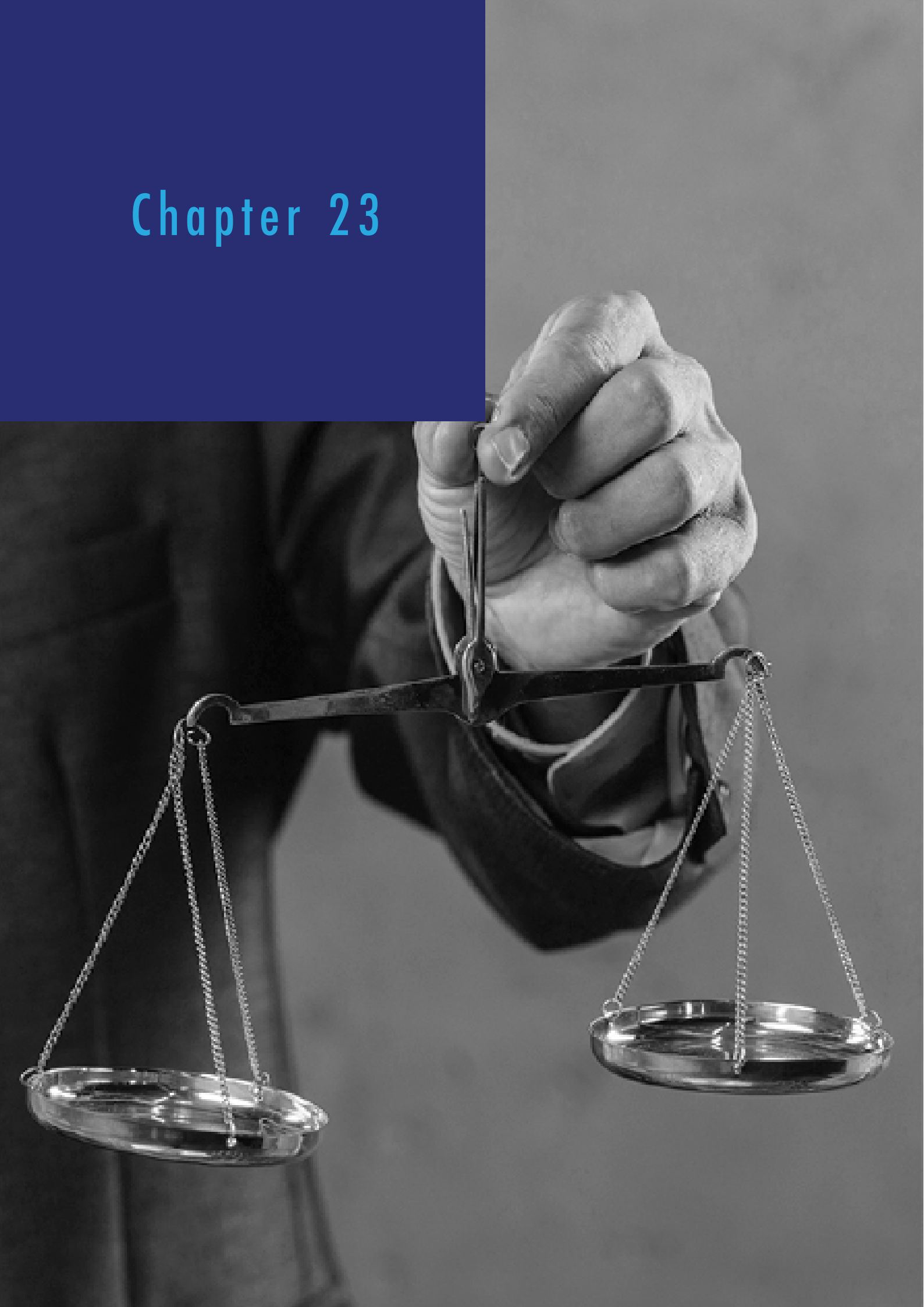
53 Sloboden Pечат, Venice Commission calls for clearer criteria — Will the Law on Fair Representation replace the “balancer”? (Венецијанска бара појасни критериуми – дали Законот за правична застапеност ќе го замени „балансерот“?), <https://www.slobodenpechat.mk/venecijanska-bara-pojasni-kriteriiumi-dali-zakonot-za-pravichna-zastapenost-ke-go-zameni-balanserot/>.

54 Ministry of Digital Transformation, Public call of the Ministry of Digital Transformation (ЈАБЕН ПОВИК на Министерството за дигитална трансформација), <https://mdt.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/javen-povik-na-ministerstvoto-za-digitalna-transformacija>.

55 Ministry of Public Administration, Event: “Promotion of the upgraded IT tool for monitoring the implementation of the PAR Strategy (Настан: „Промоција на унапредената ИТ алатка за следење на имплементацијата на стратегијата за ПЈА“), 17 December 2025, <https://mja.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/thastan-promocija-na-unaprednata-it-alatka-za-sledenje-na-implementacijata-na-strategijata-za-rja>.

56 Ministry of Digital Transformation, Andonovski: “Digital transformation must be accessible to everyone” — Promotion of e-kiosk terminals and e-sandache (Андоновски: „Дигиталната трансформација мора да биде достапна за сите“ – промоција на е-Киоск терминалите и е-Сандаче), 19 December 2025, <https://mdt.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/andonovski-digitalnata-transformacija-mora-da-bide-dostapna-za-site-promocija-na-e-kiosk-terminalite-i-e-sandace>.

Chapter 23



Functioning of the judiciary

In the second half of October, the Council for Monitoring Reforms in the Justice Sector held its second session. The meeting focused on reviewing key operational documents, including the draft Rules of Procedure and the Methodology for Monitoring and Measuring Reform Activities. Discussions highlighted the importance of strengthening inter-institutional coordination and ensuring the timely and consistent submission of data by all relevant institutions as prerequisites for effective monitoring and transparent reporting on reform implementation.⁵⁷

Management bodies

Following the EU Peer Review Mission's identification of shortcomings in the Law on the Judicial Council, the Ministry of Justice established a working group to draft a new law.⁵⁸ The working group held 23 meetings, and its work led to the Assembly's adoption of the new Law on the Judicial Council in late December.⁵⁹ The law introduces amendments to strengthen the legal framework, including provisions on the dismissal of the President of the Judicial Council, stricter eligibility criteria for lay members, and enhanced transparency and accountability mechanisms, addressing key recommendations of the Peer Review Mission.⁶⁰

In October, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe adopted a Joint Opinion on the draft laws on the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Council of Public Prosecutors.⁶¹ The Opinion recommended reinforcing the Council of Public Prosecutors' role in safeguarding prosecutors from external pressure and clarifying disciplinary procedures to prevent their misuse.⁶² Subsequently, the Government adopted the draft Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office, which entered further phases of the legislative procedure in the Assembly.⁶³

Regarding changes to the composition of governance bodies, the Judicial Council published an announcement in November to elect a member from among judges who belong to the community representing more than twenty per cent of the population.⁶⁴ The Parliamentary Committee on Election and Appointment Issues proposed a candidate currently employed as a police inspector in the Ministry of Interior.⁶⁵ The proposal prompted criticism from the Blueprint Group for Justice Reform, which raised concerns about professional standards and transparency, particularly given that the forthcoming legislative framework had not yet entered into force.⁶⁶

On 9 December, the Council of Public Prosecutors elected a new president and deputy president.⁶⁷

57 The second session of the Council for Monitoring Reforms in the Justice Sector was held today, chaired by the Minister of Justice, Igor Filkov (Денес се одржа втората седница на Советот за следење на реформите во правосудниот сектор, со која претседаваше министерот за правда, Игор Филков), Official Website of the Ministry of Justice, 22 October 2025, <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/novosti/denes-se-odra-vtorata-sednica-na-sovetot-za-sledenje-na-reformite-vo-pravosudniot-sektor-so-koja-pretседаваше-ministerot-za-pravda-igor-filkov>.

58 'Draft Law on the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia (Предлог на Закон за Судскиот совет на Република Северна Македонија)', National Electronic Register of Regulations (ENER), 13 May 2025, https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=84282.

59 'The Assembly adopted the Law on the Judicial Council with 73 votes "in favour" (Собранието со 73 гласа „за“ го донесе Законот за Судски совет)', A1 On, 29 December 2025, <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/sobranieto-so-73-glasa-za-go-donese-zakonot-za-sudski-sovet/>.

60 'The draft Law on the Judicial Council published on ENER (Објавен на ЕНЕР предлог Закон за Судскиот совет)', Official Website of The Ministry of Justice, n.d., <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/objaven-na-ener-predlog-zakon-za-sudski-sovet>.

61 'Joint opinion on the draft laws on the public prosecutor's office and on the Council of Public Prosecutors', Council of Europe - Venice Commission, 14 October 2025, [https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD\(2025\)036-e](https://www.venice.coe.int/webforms/documents/default.aspx?pdffile=CDL-AD(2025)036-e).

62 'The criteria for selecting a member of the Judicial Council are being strengthened (Се засилуваат критериумите за избор на член на Судскиот совет)', Meta, 29 December 2025, <https://meta.mk/se-zasiluvaat-kriteriumite-za-izbor-na-chlen-na-sudski-sovet/>.

63 'The Government adopted the draft Law on the Public Prosecutor's Office (Владата го усвои предлог-Законот за јавно обвинителство)', 360 Steps, 30 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/vladata-go-usvoi-predlog-zakonot-za-javno-obvinitelstvo/>.

64 'Announcement for election of a member of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia (Оглас за избор на член на Судски совет на РСМ)', Official website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 21 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4q1YwUV>.

65 'Police inspector proposed as member of Judicial Council (Полициски инспектор предложен за член на Судски совет)', Telma TV, 11 December 2025, <https://telma.com.mk/2025/12/11/policiziski-inspektor-predlozhen-za-chlen-na-sudski-sovet/>.

66 'The Blueprint Group Is Disappointed with the Manner the Candidate for a New Member of the Judicial Council Was Proposed (Блупринт Групата е Разочарана Од Начинот На Кoj е Предложен Кандидатот За Нов Член На Судскиот Совет)', Mkd.Mk, 12 December 2025, <https://mkd.mk/makedonija/bluprint-grupata-e-razocharana-od-nachinot-na-koj-e-predlozhen-kandidat-za-nov-chlen-na-sudski-sovet/>.

67 'Announcement from the 32nd session held (Соопштение од одржана 32-ра седница)', Official website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 9 December 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/soopshstenie-od-odrzhana-32-ra-sednica/>.

At its 533rd session, the Judicial Council adopted its Annual Work Program for 2026, with an Action Plan.⁶⁸ At the end of November, it also publicly presented the Draft Program and Action Plan for Prevention and Monitoring of Corruption in the Judiciary 2026–2029, which is aimed at addressing corruption influenced from outside, but also within the judicial system, with the ultimate goal of consolidating judicial independence, merit-based governance, accountability, and restoring public trust in the country's judicial system.⁶⁹

At its 29th session, the Council of Public Prosecutors adopted its Strategy for Communication and Transparency for 2025–2028,⁷⁰ and later established a Commission to implement it.⁷¹ At the same session, it adopted the Rulebook on Conducting a Procedure for Ensuring and Guaranteeing the Independence of Public Prosecutors.⁷²

Independence and impartiality

During the reporting period, the Judicial Council, the Supreme Court, and the Association of Judges issued a joint open letter to the Prime Minister in response to his public statements about the judiciary and its budget allocation.⁷³ The letter rejected claims linking the judiciary to the state's overall fiscal situation, including public debt. It stressed that the judiciary's financial dependence on the executive branch continues to pose a structural challenge to judicial independence.⁷⁴

Following earlier exchanges with the Ministry of Finance regarding budgetary allocations for employment,⁷⁵ the Judicial Budget Council, at its 257th session, reviewed the Ministry's negative opinions on the annual employment plans for the judiciary for 2026. The Council agreed to request an urgent meeting with the Minister of Finance to address the lack of consent for new employment, noting that persistent human resource shortages in courts and prosecution offices continue to affect their operational capacity and efficiency.⁷⁶

Toward the end of the year, the Ministry of Justice published the 2025 minutes of the Commission for Supervision of the Automated Court Case Management Information System (ACCMIS). The supervision, conducted in 15 courts, revealed that all cases were distributed exclusively through ACCMIS, with no instances of manual distribution found. The courts face significant challenges, including a shortage of judges and court staff, the technological obsolescence of the ACCMIS system, and the conclusion that delegating tasks to judges is not a sustainable long-term solution.⁷⁷

68 'Announcement from the 533rd session of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia held on 11.12.2025 (Соопштение од 533-та седница на Судскиот совет на РСМ одржана на 11.12.2025 година)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 11 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/3ZEUIUg>.

69 'Presentation of the new Anti-Corruption Program and Action Plan 2026–2029 (Претставување на новата Анти-корупциска програма и Акционен план 2026–2029)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 26 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4qHETCN>.

70 'Announcement from the 29th session held (Соопштение од одржана 29-та седница)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 11 November 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/soopshtenie-od-odrzhana-29-ta-sednica/>.

71 'Announcement from the 32nd session held (Соопштение од одржана 32-ра седница)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 9 December 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/soopshtenie-od-odrzhana-32-ra-sednica/>.

72 'Announcement from the 29th session held (Соопштение од одржана 29-та седница)'.

73 'Mickoski: Judges are demanding a court budget far above the European average, even 75% more, what success have they achieved for that budget (Мицкоски: Судиите бараат судски буџет далеку над европскиот просек, дури 75% повеќе, кој успех го постигнаа за тој буџет)', Official Website of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 18 November 2025, <https://vlada.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/intervjua/mickoski-sudiite-baraat-sudski-budzet-daleku-nad-evropskiot-prosek-duri-75-povekje-koj-uspex-go-postignaa-za-toj-budzet>.

74 'Announcement of the Judicial Council, Supreme Court and Association of Judges (Соопштение на Судски совет, Врховен суд и Здружение на судии)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 14 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/49OcSn5>.

75 'Announcement from the 254th session of the Judicial Budget Council, 27 August 2025 (Соопштение од 254-та седница на Судски буџетски совет - 27.08.2025 година)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 27 August 2025, <https://bit.ly/3Zbtizj>.

76 'Announcement from the 257th session of the Judicial Budget Council, 29 October 2025 (Соопштение од 257-та седница на Судски буџетски совет - 29.10.2025 година)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 29 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/4kaBkmb>.

77 'The minutes of the Commission for Supervision of ACCMIS in the Courts for 2025 have been published (Објавени записниците од Комисијата за надзор над АКМИС во судовите за 2025 година)', Official Website of The Ministry of Justice, 25 December 2025, <https://www.pravda.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost/soopstenija/objaveni-zapisnicate-od-komisijata-za-nadzor-nad-akmis-vo-sudovite-za-2025-godina>.

Professionalism and competence

At its 529th session, the Judicial Council adopted a decision on the temporary assignment of a judge of the Basic Court Gostivar to perform the judicial function in the Basic Court Kichevo for a period of one year, starting from 16 October 2025.⁷⁸

At its 533rd session, the Judicial Council appointed an acting president of the Administrative Court.⁷⁹ Shortly after, in the second half of November, it published a public announcement for the election of the President of the Administrative Court,⁸⁰ as well as an announcement for the election of the President of the Basic Court Berovo, Basic Court Delchevo, and Basic Court Radovich.⁸¹

At its 33rd session, the Council of Public Prosecutors appointed an acting High Public Prosecutor of the High Public Prosecutor's Office Skopje, until the appointment of a High Public Prosecutor, for a period not longer than six months.⁸²

At its 34th session, the Council of Public Prosecutors decided to publish an announcement for the election of a High Public Prosecutor of the Higher Public Prosecutor's Office in Skopje and to publish an announcement for the election of five public prosecutors in the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office for Prosecution of Organised Crime and Corruption.⁸³ At the end of November, the Council published an announcement for the election of a Basic Public Prosecutor in the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Skopje and a Basic Public Prosecutor in the Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Tetovo.⁸⁴

Following the Government's proposal to dismiss the Public Prosecutor of the Republic of North Macedonia,⁸⁵ the Public Prosecutor resigned from that position.⁸⁶ At its 35th session, the Council of Public Prosecutors appointed an acting Public Prosecutor of the Republic of North Macedonia, until the appointment of a Public Prosecutor of the Republic of North Macedonia, for a period not longer than six months.⁸⁷

78 'Announcement from the 529th session of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia held on 01 October 2025 (Соопштение од 529-та седница на Судскиот совет на РСМ одржана на 01.10.2025 година)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/4bZMJDb>.

79 'Announcement from the 533rd session of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia held on 11 December 2025 (Соопштение од 533-та седница на Судскиот совет на РСМ одржана на 11.12.2025 година)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 11 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/3NXKE09>.

80 'Announcement for election of the President of the Administrative Court (Оглас за избор на претседател на Управен суд)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 21 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4bqlxgM>.

81 'Announcement for election of the President of the Basic Court Berovo, Basic Court Delchevo and Basic Court Radovich (Оглас за избор на претседател на Основен суд Берово, Основен суд Делчево и Основен суд Радовиш)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 21 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4tegvuj>.

82 'Announcement from the 33rd session held (Соопштение од одржана 33-та седница)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 12 December 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/soopshtenie-od-odrzhana-33-ta-sednica/>.

83 'Announcement from the 34th session held (Соопштение од одржана 34-та седница)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 29 December 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/soopshtenie-od-odrzhana-34-ta-sednica/>.

84 'Advertisement for selection of public prosecutors (Оглас за избор на јавни обвинители)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 25 November 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/oglas-za-izbor-na-javni-obviniteli-3/>.

85 'Opinion of the Council on the Government's proposal to dismiss the Public Prosecutor of the Republic of North Macedonia (Мислење на Советот по предлогот на Владата за разрешување на ЈО на РСМ)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 2 April 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/mislenje-na-sovetot-po-predlogot-na-vladata-za-razreshuvanje-na-jo-na-rsm/>.

86 'Kocevski resigns from his position as State Public Prosecutor (Коцевски си поднесе оставка од функцијата државен јавен обвинител)', 360 Stepeni, 16 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/kotsevski-si-podnese-ostavka-od-funkcijata-drzhaven-javen-obvinitel/>.

87 'Announcement from the 35th session held (Соопштение од одржана 35-та седница)', Official Website of the Council of Public Prosecutors of the Republic of North Macedonia, 22 December 2025, <https://sjorm.gov.mk/soopshtenie-od-odrzhana-35-ta-sednica/>.

Quality of justice

Following the instruction of the Management Board of the Academy to address the Ministry of Finance regarding allocation of funds for admission of candidates in the Academy's ninth generation in 2026,⁸⁸ at its 240th session, the Management Board reviewed the Ministry's response informing the Academy that the Ministry cannot comment on this issue because the Budget of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2026 has not yet been adopted by the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia.⁸⁹ The Management Board instructed the Academy to address the Ministry again regarding the same issue urgently. At its next session, it was decided to postpone the decision on the ninth generation until the adoption of the state Budget.⁹⁰ Following its adoption, at the end of the year, the Management Board decided to annul the public announcement for the admission of 130 candidates into the Academy's ninth generation, as the announcement pursuant to which they were admitted was published in 2023 and is now rendered obsolete due to a continuous lack of financial resources to fund this generation.⁹¹

During this quarter, another Constitutional Court judge resigned,⁹² leaving its composition short by two judges. The Judicial Council stated that they have no authority over the resignation and that the Assembly will regulate it. At the same time, for the other empty seat, they expressed hope that a replacement proposal would be finalised by year's end, despite internal disagreements on how to proceed after the Administrative Court annulled her election.⁹³ However, the Judicial Council session scheduled for 24 December to address this "precedent" and the court verdict was postponed due to a lack of quorum.⁹⁴ It has been rescheduled for 12 January 2026, when the Council is expected to finally discuss this matter.⁹⁵

Efficiency

Toward the end of the year, the Judicial Council and the Administrative Court concluded a memorandum of cooperation for digital connectivity between these institutions in administrative court procedures for the timely exchange of acts and documents, simplification and acceleration of procedures, strengthening legal certainty and transparency, reducing costs and establishing an effective system for two-way communication-exchange of documents (e-delivery).⁹⁶

88 'Announcement from the 239th session of the Management Board of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors (Известување од одржана 239-та седница на Управниот одбор на Академија за судии и јавни обвинители)', Official Website of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev", 18 September 2025, <https://bit.ly/4ohfX3p>

89 'Announcement on the 240th session of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors (Известување од одржана 240-та седница на Управниот одбор на Академија за судии и јавни обвинители)', Official Website of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev", 22 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/3LRdmQd>.

90 'Announcement from the 241st session of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors (Известување од одржана 241-ва седница на Управниот одбор на Академија за судии и јавни обвинители)', Official Website of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev", 28 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/3NE0uO1>.

91 'Announcement from the 242nd session of the Board of Directors of the Academy of Judges and Public Prosecutors (Известување од одржана 242-ра седница на Управниот одбор на Академија за судии и јавни обвинители)', Official Website of the Academy for Judges and Public Prosecutors "Pavel Shatev", 25 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/4a7XgtB>.

92 'Constitutional judge Jadranka Dabovic-Anastasovska resigns (Уставната судијка Јадранка Дабовиќ-Анастасовска поднесе оставка)', 360 Stepeni, 2 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/ustavnata-sudijka-jadranka-dabovik-anastasovska-podnese-ostavka/>.

93 'Kambovski hopes that the Judicial Council will have a proposal for a new member of the Constitutional Court (Камбовски се надева дека Судскиот совет ќе има предлог за нов член на Уставниот суд)', Nova Makedonija, 3 December 2025, <https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/kambovski-se-nadeva-deka-sudskiot-sovet-kje-ima-predlog-za-nov-chlen-na-ustavniot-sud/>.

94 'Due to lack of quorum, the Judicial Council postponed the session at which it was to discuss the Administrative Court's verdict for judge Dukovska (Поради немање кворум, Судскиот совет ја одложи седницата на која требаше да расправа и за пресудата на Управен за судијката Дуковска)', 360 Stepeni, 24 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/poradi-nemane-kvorum-sudskiot-sovet-ja-odlozhi-sednitsata-na-koja-trebashe-da-rasprava-i-za-presudata-na-upraven-za-sudijkata-dukovska/>.

95 'The Judicial Council will hold the postponed session on 12 January, at which the precedent with judge Dukovska will also be discussed (Судскиот совет на 12 јануари ќе ја одржи одложената седница на која треба да се расправа и за преседанот со судијката Дуковска)', 360 Stepeni, 31 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/sudskiot-sovet-na-12-januari-ke-ja-odrzhi-odlozhenata-sednitsa-na-koja-treba-da-se-rasprava-i-za-presedanot-so-sudijkata-dukovska/>.

96 'Announcement on the signed memorandum of cooperation with the Administrative Court (Соопштение за склучен меморандум за соработка со Управен суд)', Official Website of the Judicial Council of the Republic of North Macedonia, 31 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/3LJsQFX>.

Fight Against Corruption

State Commission for Prevention of Corruption

Following the initiation of court proceedings against the former President of the SCPC⁹⁷ and the Assembly's public announcement of the election of a new President of the SCPC,⁹⁸ the election process continued during this quarter. Thirteen candidates applied,⁹⁹ the Committee on Elections and Appointments narrowed the list to 10 qualified candidates, who proceeded to the interview stage.¹⁰⁰ Following the interviews,¹⁰¹ at the beginning of December, the Assembly elected a new President of the SCPC.¹⁰²

During this quarter, preparations for the National Strategy for the Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 continued. Thematic consultative meetings¹⁰³ and multiple workshops were organised by the SCPC with relevant stakeholders in the areas covered by the new Strategy: transport and infrastructure,¹⁰⁴ urbanism and spatial planning,¹⁰⁵ supervision of the implementation of laws,¹⁰⁶ public procurement,¹⁰⁷ the health sector,¹⁰⁸ the judiciary,¹⁰⁹ and the environment, energy, and natural resources.¹¹⁰ Additionally, the SCPC adopted a Corruption Risk Assessment and the Methodology for developing the Strategy.¹¹¹

97 'The court trial against the former President of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Tatjana Dimitrovska, has begun (Почна судењето против поранешната претседателка на Антикорупциска, Татјана Димитровска)', 360 Stepeni, 30 September 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/počna-sudeneto-protiv-poraneshtna-ta-pretsedatelka-na-antikoruptionska-tatjana-dimitrovska/>.

98 'A committee for selection of candidates for president of the SCPC has been formed (Формирана комисијата за селекција на кандидатите за претседател на ДКСК)', Nova Makedonija, 13 August 2025, <https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/formirana-komisijata-za-selekcija-na-kandidatite-za-pretsedatel-na-dksk/>.

99 '13 candidates applied for the post of president of the SCPC, these are the names (За претседател на ДКСК се пријавиле 13 кандидати, еве ги имињата)', 360 Stepeni, 18 August 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/za-pretsedatel-na-dksk-se-prijavile-13-kandidati-eve-gi-imiñata/>.

100 'Out of 13 applicants, 10 candidates for president of the SCPC have been selected, interviews begin on Tuesday (Од 13 пријавени, селектирани се 10 кандидати за претседател на ДКСК, интервјуата почнуваат во вторник)', 360 Stepeni, 16 November 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/od-13-prijaveni-selektirani-se-10-kandidati-za-pretsedatel-na-dksk-intervjuata-pochnuvaat-vo-vtornik/>.

101 'Interviews of the candidates for president of the Anti-Corruption Commission will be held in the Assembly tomorrow and the day after tomorrow (Во Собранието утре и задутре интервјуа на пријавените кандидати за претседател на Антикорупциска)', Kanal 5, 17 November 2025, <https://kanal5.com.mk/vo-sobranieto-utre-i-zadutre-intervjua-na-prijavenite-kandidati-za-pretsedatel-na-antikoruptionska/a727480>.

102 'The Assembly elected Adem Cuculj as the new president of the SCPC (Собранието го изгласа Адем Чучуљ за нов претседател на ДКСК)', 360 Stepeni, 3 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/sobranieto-go-izglosa-adem-chuchul-za-nov-pretsedatel-na-dksk/>.

103 'Consultative meetings held for the preparation of the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026-2030 (Одржани консултативни состаноци за подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 14 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/3LZgHNE>.

104 'Second thematic workshop was held for the transport and infrastructure facilities (projects) sector, in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана втора тематска работилница за секторот транспорт и инфраструктурни објекти (проекти), во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 24 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/4q9bXLU>.

105 'Second thematic workshop was held for the urbanism and spatial planning sector (spatial planning, urban planning and construction), in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана втора тематска работилница за секторот урбанизам и просторно планирање (просторно планирање, урбанистичко планирање и градежништво), во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 24 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/4q8Mady>.

106 'Second thematic workshop was held on the area of oversight of law implementation, in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана втора тематска работилница за областа надзор над спроведување на законите, во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 19 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/46qQyxA>.

107 'Second thematic workshop on public procurement was held, in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана втора тематска работилница за областа јавни набавки, во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 5 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/462dvY3>.

108 'Thematic workshop was held on the health sector, in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана тематска работилница за сектор здравство, во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 2 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/49SIbGE>.

109 'Second thematic workshop was held for the justice sector, in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана втора тематска работилница за секторот правосудство, во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 28 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/3NOnFFk>.

110 'Thematic workshop was held for the environment, energy and natural resources sector, in the process of preparing the National Strategy for Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest 2026–2030 (Одржана тематска работилница за сектор животна средина, енергетика и природни ресурси, во процесот на подготовка на Националната стратегија за спречување на корупцијата и судирот на интереси 2026-2030 година)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 28 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4rk3c9D>.

111 '24th session of the SCPC (24-та седница на ДКСК)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 31 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/3NZVwEL>.

The SCPC promoted the first Action Plan for the Promotion of the Gender Perspective 2026–2030, which represents a practical framework for fairer, more inclusive, and more accountable policies, through which the SCPC intends to strengthen its capacity to identify and reduce gender-specific corruption risks.¹¹²

Following the October local elections, the SCPC published its election campaign donation reports, which revealed data on the transparency of campaign financing. During the first reporting period, only 35% of participants submitted their donation reports on time, including all 19 coalitions, but only 18 political parties and 24 independent candidates.¹¹³ In the second reporting period, compliance dropped slightly to 33%, with reports submitted by all 19 coalitions, 17 political parties, and 21 independent candidates.¹¹⁴ Regarding mayors' asset declarations, the SCPC found significant non-compliance with the legal obligation to declare assets: 35 former mayors failed to submit an asset declaration after their terms ended, and 19 newly elected mayors failed to submit one within the mandatory 30-day period after taking office. The SCPC announced that it will initiate misdemeanour proceedings against these individuals.¹¹⁵

The Public Prosecutor's Office

This quarter was marked by a bribery case involving IPARD funds. The initial investigation revealed that a company manager promised a EUR 50,000 bribe to the Director of the Agency for Financial Support in Agriculture to secure the illegal approval of an IPARD grant, and that the Director accepted part of the bribe (found during a search).¹¹⁶ As further investigation is ongoing, IPARD funds remain frozen, and the national institutions have not specified when the funds will be unblocked.¹¹⁷

An investigation was also opened into potential abuse of official position and authority in the Agency for Commodity Reserves. Four former officials and one expert witness were suspected of abusing their positions by submitting false information to the Government to justify the write-off of a shortage of 1,500 tons of wheat and 500 tons of barley (valued at EUR 473,000 or MKD 29.1 million).¹¹⁸

A former State Attorney was arrested on 13 December on suspicion of accepting a bribe for illegal influence.¹¹⁹ According to the investigation, he demanded and later received a larger sum of money to use his influence to bribe a judge at the Appellate Court in Skopje to revoke a detention order for an inmate.¹²⁰

112 'SCPC promotes the first Gender Action Plan 2026–2030 (ДКСК го промовира првиот родов Акциски план 2026–2030)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 9 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/3MhyuPG>.

113 'Reports on donations received were submitted by 35% of the total number of participants in the election campaign (Извештаи за примени донации доставија 35% од вкупниот број на учесници во изборната кампања)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 14 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/3ZNADpi>.

114 'Reports on donations received within the legal deadline were submitted by 33% of the total number of participants in the election campaign (Извештаи за примени донации во законскиот рок, доставија 33% од вкупниот број на учесници во изборната кампања)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 22 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/4kaCH44>.

115 'The SCPC found that 35 former and 19 newly elected mayors failed to comply with the obligation to declare their assets (ДКСК констатира непочитување на обврската за пријавување имотна состојба од 35 поранешни и 19 новоизбрани градоначалници)', Official Website of the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption, 17 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/45JEmYx>.

116 'Investigation against five persons (Истрага против пет лица)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 7 November 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/istraga-protiv-pet-licza/>.

117 'Status quo after the IPARD affair: Companies still waiting for payments (Статус кво по ИПАРД аферата: Компанији сè уште чекаат исплати)', Radio Slobodna Evropa, 19 December 2025, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/ipard3-istraga-fondovi-isplata/33626495.html>.

118 'Proceedings initiated against 5 persons for abuse of commodity reserves (Поведена постапка против 5 лица за злоупотреби со стокските резерви)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 25 November 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/povedena-postapka-protiv-5-licza-za-zlo-upotrebi-so-stokovite-rezervi/>.

119 'Fehmi Stafa, former state attorney, arrested (Уапсен е Фехми Стафа, поранешен државен правобранител)', 360 Stepeni, 14 December 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/uapsen-e-fehmi-stafa-poraneshen-drzhaven-pravobranitel/>.

120 'Order for investigation against one person for receiving a reward for unlawful influence (Наредба за истрага против едно лице за примање награда за противзаконито влијание)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 14 December 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/naredba-za-istraga-protiv-edno-licze-za-primane-nagrada-za-protivzakonito-vlijanie/>.

Investigations were initiated for the following: money laundering and usury against 12 suspects operating a criminal ring offering loans with exorbitant interest rates;¹²¹ abuse of the procedure for public call, award of public procurement contracts, or public-private partnerships, and embezzlement in the service against 32 natural persons and legal entities abusing public procurement procedures at the Prilep Hospital and against eight natural persons; one legal entity was suspected of organising a tender for moving equipment from REK Oslomej to REK Bitola, favouring one company;¹²² abuse of official position and authority against two owners of two private elderly care homes in Skopje, who accommodated more residents than legally permitted, in substandard conditions;¹²³ criminal association, abuse of procedure for public call, abuse of official position, and money laundering against 33 persons, including officials at ESM Heat Distribution and company owners, who manipulated a tender, awarding the contract to a company with a higher bid;¹²⁴ criminal association, usury, and money laundering against eight persons organising illegal gambling without a licence in Skopje.¹²⁵

Legal framework

The Platform of Civil Society Organizations Fighting Against Corruption has demanded the urgent adoption of the proposed Law on the Protection of Whistleblowers, expressing serious concern over the unjustified delays.¹²⁶ Despite the draft being prepared and debated as early as December 2023, the law has remained stalled for two years, even as the European Commission warned that current protections are insufficient and that whistleblowers continue to face harassment and retaliation.¹²⁷

121 '12 people under investigation for usury and money laundering (Под истрага 12 лица осомничени за лихварство и перење пари)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 22 October 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/pod-istraga-12-licza-osomnicheni-za-lihvarstvo-i-perene-pari/>.

122 'New investigation into abuses in REK Bitola (Нова истрага за злоупотреби во РЕК Битола)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 9 October 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/nova-istraga-za-zloupotrebi-vo-rek-bitola/>.

123 'Investigation into abuse and maltreatment in private nursing homes (Истрага за злоупотреби и малтретитање во приватни установи за сместување стари лица)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 8 October 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/istraga-za-zloupotrebi-i-mal-tretitane-vo-privatni-ustanovi-za-smestuvane-stari-licza/>.

124 'Coordinated action for economic and financial crime carried out – investigation launched against 33 persons (Сprovedena koordinirana akcija za ekonomsko-finansiski kriminal – povedena istraga protiv 33 licza)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 19 December 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/sprovedena-koordinirana-akcija-za-ekonomsko-finansiski-kriminal-povedena-istraga-protiv-33-licza/>.

125 'Action implemented against illegal organization of games of chance and money laundering – eight persons included in investigations (Реализирана акција за недозволено приредување игри на среќа и перење пари – осум лица опфатени со истраги)', Official Website of the Public Prosecutor's Office of the Republic of North Macedonia, 12 December 2025, <https://jorm.gov.mk/realizirana-akcija-za-nedozvoleno-prireduvane-igri-na-sreka-i-perene-pari-osum-licza-opfate-ni-so-istragi/>.

126 'The Anti-Corruption Platform demands the urgent adoption of the draft Law on Protection of Whistleblowers (Платформата за борба против корупција бара итно донесување на предлогот на Закон за заштита на укажувачи)', Radio MOF, 16 December 2025, <https://www.radiomof.mk/platformata-za-borba-protiv-korupcija-bara-itno-donesuvanje-na-predlogot-na-zakon-za-zashtita-na-ukazhuvachi/>.

127 COMMISSION STAFF WORKING DOCUMENT North Macedonia 2025 Report (European Commission, 2025), https://enlargement.ec.europa.eu/document/download/267b368e-6b55-4a42-bb72-6395593de4da_en?filename=north-macedonia-report-2025.pdf.

Fundamental Rights

Case law of the European Court of Human Rights

In the last quarter of 2025, developments related to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) were dominated by the selection process for ECtHR judges, controversies, and new case law concerning North Macedonia.

At the beginning of October, the Commission for the Selection of a Candidate from the Republic of North Macedonia for a judge at the European Court of Human Rights established a list of 11 eligible candidates for interview.¹²⁸ The procedure provoked significant public scrutiny. One of the candidates from the first call sent a letter to the Council of Europe, warning that the candidate list had been established amid serious procedural shortcomings and political interference, and that the second call for candidates was published during the election period, further stating that the Government was running parallel and conflicting procedures in the candidate selection process, thereby undermining legal certainty and transparency.¹²⁹ Concerns were further amplified by a formal complaint about a conflict of interest, submitted to the State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC), against an academic mentor who was simultaneously involved in the selection process, raising questions about impartiality and compliance with integrity standards.¹³⁰ On 20 October, the Commission conducted interviews with the 11 shortlisted candidates.¹³¹ However, CSOs invited as observers criticised the interview process, noting that it lacked a clearly unified methodology, exhibited an uneven approach, weak coordination and management, unclear criteria, and insufficient or unclear language testing (English/French), which together cast doubt on compliance with merit-based selection standards.¹³² In November, ongoing controversies surrounding the process saw the SCPC open three separate cases regarding potential conflicts of interest involving three members of the Commission for Selecting Candidates for Judge at the ECtHR, further delaying the selection process.¹³³ On 13 November, the SCPC recommended that three members of the selection commission step aside from voting on certain candidates due to potential conflicts of interest. However, the SCPC concluded that it was not competent to take further action, as no actual, legally recognised conflict of interest had been established.¹³⁴ On 26 November, the selection commission nominated three candidates – a professor and two lawyers – for appointment as judges at the ECtHR.¹³⁵ The names will be submitted to the Council of Europe's expert panel for a final assessment.

128 The Commission has identified the candidates who will be invited to an interview for a judge at the ECtHR in Strasbourg (Комисијата ги утврди кандидатите кои ќе бидат поканети на интервју за судија во ЕЧП во Стразбур), 8 October 2025, <https://ustavensud.mk/archives/35996>.

129 "Ristoska: The Government is creating a dualism in the procedures with the new advertisement for a Macedonian judge in Strasbourg (Ристоска: Владата прави дуализам на постапките со новиот оглас за македонски судија во Стразбур)," 360 Stepeni, 15 October 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/ristoska-vladata-pravi-dualizam-na-postapkite-so-noviot-oglas-za-makedonski-sudija-vo-strazbur/>.

130 "Conflict of interest report – Kostadinovski's academic mentor is now under his 'mentorship' for Strasbourg (Пријава за судир на интереси – академскиот ментор на Костадиновски сега е под негово „менторство“ за Стразбур)," Sloboden Pecat, 16 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/prijava-za-sudir-na-interesi-akademskiot-mentor-na-kostadinovski-sega-e-pod-negovo-mentorstvo-za-strazbur/>.

131 "Candidates for judge at the ECtHR in Strasbourg are being interviewed (Се интервјуираат кандидатите за судија во ЕЧП во Стразбур)," 360 Stepeni, 20 October 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/se-intervjuiraatkandidatite-za-sudija-vo-eschp-vo-strazbur/>.

132 Report on the procedure for the selection of candidates for the election of a judge at the ECtHR (Извештај за постапката за избор на кандидати за избор на судија во ЕЧП) (Blueprint Group on Judicial Reforms, 2025), <https://bit.ly/4acazdA>.

133 "Three members of the Strasbourg Commission challenged before the Anti-Corruption Commission (Три члена на комисијата за Стразбур оспорени пред Антикорупциската комисија)," Sloboden Pecat, 10 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/tri-chlena-na-komisijata-za-strazbur-osporeni-pred-antikorpuciskata-komisija/>.

134 "Strasbourg will also have a hard time dealing with the tangled 'knot' of conflicts of interest between the Commission and the candidates. (И Стразбур тешко ќе се снајде со заплетканиот „јазол“ од судир на интереси меѓу комисијата и кандидатите)," Sloboden Pecat, 13 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/i-strazbur-teshko-kje-se-snajde-so-zapletkaniot-jazol-od-sudir-na-interesi-megju-komisijata-i-kandidatite/>.

135 "Professor Sasho Georgievski and lawyers Jordan Apostolski and Natasha Boshkovska proposed as judges at the ECtHR (Професорот Сашо Георгиевски и адвокатите Јордан Апостолски и Наташа Бошковска предложени за судија во ЕЧП)," Nova Makedonija, 26 November 2025, <https://novamakedonija.com.mk/makedonija/profesorot-sasho-georgievski-i-advokatite-jordan-apostolski-i-natasha-boshkovska-predlozheni-za-sudija-vo-eschp/>.

During the reporting period, the ECtHR issued two important judgments concerning North Macedonia. On 13 November, the Court delivered two judgments in the cases of Ribarev v. North Macedonia,¹³⁶ and Ilievska and Zdraveva v. North Macedonia.¹³⁷ Both cases concern the applicants' inability, under domestic law, to appeal against decisions of the State Judicial Council (SJC) dismissing them from their posts as judges, following the remittal of their cases by a second-instance panel of the Supreme Court (the Appeal Panel). The cases also concerned the manner in which the SJC applied the relevant statutory provisions when determining whether the requests for their dismissal had been lodged in time. In both judgments, the ECtHR found that there had been violations of Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), namely the right to a fair trial. The Court considered that the applicants' right of access to the Appeal Panel, even in proceedings prior to remittal, was effectively deprived of any substance. The ECtHR concluded that the applicants' right of access to a court had been restricted to such an extent that the very essence of that right was impaired.

In addition, in November, the ECtHR opened a case following a complaint by former Minister of Interior Gordana Jankuloska regarding the 'Tank' case. The ECtHR will examine whether there has been a violation of the right to a fair trial in the domestic proceedings in North Macedonia. Jankuloska publicly stated that, although nearly five years have elapsed since she filed the application, and she believes she was subjected to an unjust sentence, it is still personally significant to her that the ECtHR has recognised the alleged violations to the extent of opening the case.¹³⁸

The Ombudsperson

During the reporting period, the Ombudsperson continued to face institutional challenges that affected the institution's functioning. Through an open letter sent on 11 December,¹³⁹ staff, together with the two remaining deputy ombudsmen, appealed to the Assembly to urgently elect a new Ombudsperson, warning that from 1 January 2026 the institution could effectively "shut down", since without an elected Ombudsperson there is no one to sign the final account and key documents necessary for the institution to function, such as salaries, rent, and utilities.¹⁴⁰ In addition, the office warned that, starting in January 2026, this situation would affect staff's social, health, and pension contributions. Following this, the president of the Assembly urged all parliamentary groups to show political will and reach a compromise to elect a new Ombudsperson, stating that it was unacceptable for the institution to be without a head for so long.¹⁴¹

During the local elections in 2025, the Ombudsperson's office opened a dedicated telephone line for the first round in October¹⁴², reinforcing efforts to enhance direct communication with citizens and facilitate reporting of violations related to the right to vote.

¹³⁶ Ribarev v. North Macedonia, Application no. 39987/22 (European Court of Human Rights 13 November 2025), <https://bit.ly/4adjPOx>.

¹³⁷ Ilievska and Zdraveva v. North Macedonia, Applications nos. 19689/21 and 42794/22 (European Court of Human Rights 13 November 2025), <https://bit.ly/3NDf5co>.

¹³⁸ "The European Court opened a case on the 'Tank' case after Jankuloska's complaint (Gjykata Evropiane hapi lëndë për rastin 'Tanku' pas ankesës së Jankuloskes)," Portalb, 24 November 2025, <https://portalb.mk/gjykata-evropiane-hapi-lende-per-rastin-tanku-pas-ankeses-se-jankuloskes/>.

¹³⁹ "Announcement to the public about the situation in the Ombudsperson Institution (Соопштение до јавноста за состојбите во институцијата Народен правобранител)," Ombudsperson of the Republic of North Macedonia, 24 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/49VD3XA>.

¹⁴⁰ "Don't you need an Ombudsperson? Employees of the institution, which will cease to exist as of 1 January, are asking the Government because the Parliament has not elected an Ombudsperson for 5 months. (Дали не ви треба Народен правобранител, ја прашуваат власта вработените во институцијата која од први јануари ќе згасне оти Собранието 5 месеци не избра Омбудсман)," Sakam Da Kazam, 24 December 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/dali-ne-vi-treba-naroden-pravobranitel-ja-prashuvaat-vlasta-vrabotenite-vo-institutsijata-koja-od-prvi-januari-ke-zgasne-oti-sobranieto-5-mesetsi-ne-izbra-Ombudsperson/>.

¹⁴¹ "Gashi appeals to parliamentary groups to show will and reach an agreement on the election of the Ombudsperson (Гаши со апел до пратеничките групи да покажат волја и да постигнат договор за избор на Народен правобранител)," Telma TV, 25 December 2025, <https://telma.com.mk/2025/12/25/gashi-so-apel-do-pratenichkite-grupi-da-pokazhat-volja-i-da-postignat-dogovor-za-izbor-na-naroden-pravobranitel/>.

¹⁴² "The Ombudsperson opens a telephone line for reporting violations of voting rights (Народниот правобранител отвора телефонска линија за пријавување повреди на избирачкото право)," 360 Steps, 17 October 2025, <https://360steps.mk/narodniot-pravobranitel-otvora-telefonaska-linija-za-prijavuvane-povre-di-na-izbirachkoto-pravo/>.

Prison and detention facilities

During the reporting period, developments related to prison and detention facilities were marked by recurring concerns over detention conditions and the treatment of vulnerable groups and minors, alongside isolated measures to improve child-friendly facilities.

On 2 October, media reported on the case of a 79-year-old man from Veles who had been convicted of sexual harassment, described as the first person in North Macedonia to serve a three-month house-arrest sentence with an electronic ankle monitor instead of going to prison. This measure was seen as a response aimed at reducing prison overcrowding.¹⁴³ Regarding the case of the 14-year-old girl in September, who had been kept locked in a cell for up to 22 hours a day in the Idrizovo prison, the Ombudsperson opened a case concerning the child and successfully arranged her transfer to the Tetovo Correctional Facility in Volkovija, where she now has an entire building to herself.¹⁴⁴ In another case, a prisoner in the Shtip penitentiary with an amputated leg was initially housed on the third floor and later provided with unsuitable sleeping arrangements. Still, after urgent action by the Ombudsperson, he was moved to accessible and appropriate accommodation, and his access to hospital treatment was secured.¹⁴⁵

On 21 November, it was reported that a children's corner was opened at Idrizovo prison to improve conditions for child visits and support the well-being of children of incarcerated persons.¹⁴⁶ On 16 December, it was reported that a court hearing concerning a former prison director would continue on 26 December at the request of the public prosecutor, reflecting ongoing judicial scrutiny of prison management and accountability.¹⁴⁷ On the same day, the media reported that a 40-year-old convicted person from Skopje was found dead in the prison in Štip, drawing attention to issues of inmate safety, health care, and the duty of care owed by the authorities to persons deprived of liberty.¹⁴⁸

143 "79-year-old Veles resident, first Macedonian to wear a bracelet instead of going to prison (79 годишен велешанец, прв Македонец кој ќе носи алка наместо да лежи во затвор)," *Televizija 24*, 2 October 2025, <https://24.mk/details/79-godishen-veleshanec-prv-makedonec-koj-ke-nosi-alka-namesto-da-lezhi-vo-zatvor>.

144 "The 14-year-old girl who was locked up for 22 hours a day in "Idrizovo" has been transferred to the "Tetovo" Correctional Facility (14-годишното девојче кое беше заклучено по 22 часа на ден во „Идризово“, е префрлено во Воспитно-поправниот дом „Тетово“)," *Sloboden Pecat*, 9 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/14-godishnoto-devojche-koe-beshe-zaklucheno-po-22-chasa-na-den-vo-idrizovo-prefrleno-e-vo-vospitno-popravniot-dom-tetovo/>.

145 "A convict without one leg was placed on the third floor of the Stip prison — he struggled with the stairs every day (Осуденик без една нога го сместиле на третиот кат во штипскиот затвор — секој ден маки мачел со скалите)," *Sloboden Pecat*, 8 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/osudenik-bez-edna-noga-go-smestile-na-tretiot-kat-vo-shtipskiot-zatvor-sekoj-den-maki-machel-so-skalite/>.

146 "A children's corner opens today in Idrizovo, built with support from the EU and the Council of Europe (Денеска се отвора детско катче во Идризово, изградено со поддршка од ЕУ и Советот на Европа)," *Press24.Mk*, 21 November 2025, <https://press24.mk/deneska-se-otvora-detsko-katche-vo-idrizovo-izgradeno-so-poddrshka-od-eu-i-sovetot-na-evropa/>.

147 "On 26 December, the session for the former Director and employee of Shutka prison will continue (Мë 26 Dhjetor do të vazhdojë seanca për Ish-Drejtorin dhe të punësuarit e burgut të Shutkës)," *Portalb*, 16 December 2025, <https://portalb.mk/me-26-dhjetor-do-te-vazhdoje-seanca-per-ish-drejtorin-dhe-te-punesuarit-e-burgut-te-shutkes/>.

148 "A convict was found dead in the Shtip prison (U gjet i vdekur një i dënuar në burgun e Shtipit)," *Portalb*, 16 December 2025, <https://portalb.mk/u-gjet-i-vdekur-nje-i-denuar-ne-burgun-e-shtipit/>.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

Developments related to freedom of thought, conscience and religion were primarily linked to the use of religion in the political sphere and public debate on religious education. October saw renewed public debate on proposals to introduce mandatory religious education in schools, raising questions about the role of religion in public education and the respect for freedom of conscience.¹⁴⁹ A survey-based report indicated that a significant share of citizens perceived the use of religion in electoral campaigning. The report notes that Albanian political parties were most frequently associated with the use of religion during elections; however, respondents expressed disapproval of mixing religion and politics and reported that they rarely voted based on religious appeals.¹⁵⁰ This still raises concerns about the instrumentalisation of religious identity in political processes.

Freedom of expression

During the reporting period, developments in freedom of expression were marked by intensive electoral-period media regulation and court proceedings, and recurring threats and pressure against journalists. In October, developments concerned complaints and initiatives submitted by the political party Levica regarding alleged group political advertising and media conduct. On 3 October, the Basic Civil Court Skopje rejected as unfounded Levica's request for a temporary measure within its lawsuit against the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AAVMS), which would have prohibited the Agency from distributing the Guidelines for Broadcasters for the 2025 Local Elections to commercial media outlets, and from submitting the report on broadcast paid political advertising (PPA) to the State Election Commission (SEC), which uses that report as the basis for allocating and disbursing funds for PPA.¹⁵¹ In addition, on 6 December, the Administrative Court issued a decision dismissing Levica's lawsuit seeking to annul the same guidelines.¹⁵² On 15 October, the Constitutional Court decided not to open proceedings against the AAVMS Guidelines, explaining that the act is based on and operationalises the legal provision of the Electoral Code. Therefore, the Court did not identify a legality problem in the Guidelines themselves.¹⁵³

In October, the AAVMS published a monitoring report on pre-campaign media coverage (10 August through 28 September 2025), covering nine national TV services. The AAVMS states that no violations of the Electoral Code were found during that period, while noting limited election-related reporting overall, and it also highlights exceptions to balanced treatment.¹⁵⁴ In addition, on 6 November, the AAVMS published its report on broadcasters' paid political advertising for the first round of elections (29 September through 17 October 2025).¹⁵⁵ On 19 October, during the first round of elections, the Association of Journalists of Macedonia (AJM)

149 "Mandatory religious education in schools is proposed again, now from first grade to the end of high school. (Пак се предлага задолжителна веронаука во училиштата, сега од прво одделение до крај на средно)," Sloboden Pecat, 10 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/pak-se-predlaga-zadolzhitel-na-veronauka-vo-drzhavnite-uchilishta-sega-od-prvo-oddelenie-do-kraj-na-sredno/>.

150 "Albanian parties used religion the most in election campaigns, most favored by religious communities VMRO and DUI (Partitë shqiptare përdorën më së shumti fenë në fushata zgjedhore, më e favorizuar nga bashkësitë fetare VMRO-ja dhe BDI-ja)," Portalb, 13 December 2025, <https://portalb.mk/perceptim-publik-partite-shqiptare-perdoren-me-se-shumti-fene-ne-fushata-zgjedhore-me-e-favorizuar-nga-bashkesite-fetare-vmro-ja-dhe-bdi-ja/>.

151 "COURT REJECTS PART OF LEVICA'S LAWSUIT AGAINST AAVMS," Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 8 October 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/10/08/court-rejects-part-of-levicas-lawsuit-against-avmu/>.

152 "ADMINISTRATIVE COURT ALSO DISMISSES LEVICA'S LAWSUIT AGAINST AAVMS," Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 9 October 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/10/09/administrative-court-also-dismisses-levicas-lawsuit-against-avmu/>.

153 "Constitutional Court did not initiate proceedings following the initiative of Levica regarding the AAVMS guidelines: The act replicates a legal provision (Уставен не поведе постапка по иницијативата на Левица за упатството на ААВМУ: Во актот е пресликана законска одредба)," 360 Stepeni, 15 October 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/ustaven-ne-povede-postapka-po-initsijativata-na-levitsa-za-upatstvoto-na-avmu-vo-aktot-e-preslikana-zakonska-odredba/>.

154 "Monitoring report on pre-election media coverage from 10 August to 28 September 2025," Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 7 October 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/10/07/monitoring-report-on-pre-election-media-coverage-from-10-august-to-28-september-2025/>.

155 "AAVMS releases its report on the paid political advertising by broadcasters for the first round of the 2025 local election campaign," Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 6 November 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/11/07/avmu-releases-its-report-on-the-paid-political-advertising-by-broadcasters-for-the-first-round-of-the-2025-local-election-campaign/>.

appealed to the SEC, municipal election commissions, and the Ministry of Interior to ensure unhindered access and working conditions for journalists at polling stations, citing reported incidents of obstruction and disputes over “accreditation” requirements.¹⁵⁶ In addition, the AAVMS initiated misdemeanour proceedings against two TV channels for alleged breaches of election silence during the first round of local elections,¹⁵⁷ and initiated additional misdemeanour proceedings against two other TV channels, alleging that during the election silence period, they aired statements/press content from the Minister of the Interior.¹⁵⁸

Furthermore, on 21 November, the AAVMS opened a public consultation on the Draft Guide for influencers, vloggers, and content creators, which aims to help these creators comply with the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services and related by-laws.¹⁵⁹ The Guide was later adopted on 25 December.¹⁶⁰ On 26 December, a new director of the AAVMS was appointed.¹⁶¹

On 15 October, the regional SafeJournalists network adopted a Declaration to advance the safety of women journalists in the Western Balkans. The Declaration was endorsed by a wide range of actors, and it underscores that women journalists face disproportionate risks, including online harassment, intimidation, workplace discrimination, and gender-based violence.¹⁶²

Attacks against journalists and media continued in the reporting period, consisting of malicious online attacks against news media¹⁶³, which were reported to the Ministry of Interior;¹⁶⁴ online threats and hate speech;¹⁶⁵ and a direct physical attack towards a journalist and a media outlet during a live broadcast.¹⁶⁶ The attack was condemned by the ruling party¹⁶⁷ and the AJM,¹⁶⁸ with the Skopje Basic Public Prosecutors’ Office later filing an indictment against the attacker.¹⁶⁹ In response to the “Resolution condemning the manipulations of opposition and confirming policies against illegal migration”, the AJM and the Independent Union

156 “AJM: Ensure respect and unhindered work of media workers at voting stations (ЗНМ: Да се обезбеди почитување и непречена работа на медиумските работници на гласачките места),” Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 19 October 2025, <https://znm.org.mk/en/ajm-ensure-respect-and-unhindered-work-of-media-workers-at-voting-stations/>.

157 “AAVMS: Misdemeanour proceedings have been initiated against two television stations for violating the election silence (АВМУ: Поведени се прекршочни постапки против две телевизии за прекршување на изборниот молк),” 360 Stepeni, 19 October 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/avmu-povedeni-se-prekrshochni-postapki-protiv-dve-televizii-za-prekrshuvane-na-izborniot-molk/>.

158 “AAVMS has initiated misdemeanour proceedings against two more television stations for violating the election silence. (АВМУ поведе прекршочни постапки против уште две телевизии за непочитување на изборниот молк),” 360 Stepeni, 20 October 2025, <https://360stepeni.mk/avmu-povede-prekrshochni-postapki-protiv-ushte-dve-televizii-za-nepochituvane-na-izborniot-molk/>.

159 “Public consultation opened on the draft guide for influencers, vloggers and content creators,” Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 21 November 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/11/24/public-consultation-opened-on-the-draft-guide-for-influencers-vloggers-and-content-creators/>.

160 “Guidelines for influencers, vloggers, and content creators adopted,” Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 25 December 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/12/26/guidelines-for-influencers-vloggers-and-content-creators-adopted/>.

161 “Director appointed at the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services,” Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 26 December 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/12/29/director-appointed-at-the-agency-for-audio-and-audiovisual-media-services/>.

162 “The SafeJournalists Network adopted the Declaration on Promoting the Safety of Women Journalists in the Western Balkans (Мрежата SafeJournalists ја усвои Декларацијата за унапредување на безбедноста на новинарките од Западен Балкан),” Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 15 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/3NCSrAV>.

163 “‘Sloboden Pечат’ profiles were the target of a coordinated bot attack — readers supported us en masse (Профилите на „Слободен печат“ беа цел на координиран ботски напад — читателите масовно нè поддржаа),” Sloboden Pечат, 7 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/profilite-na-sloboden-pechat-bea-cel-na-koordiniran-botski-napad-chitatelite-masovno-n%20d1%90-poddrzhaa/>.

164 “AJM filed a complaint with the Ministry of Interior for a malicious online attack on the profiles of ‘Sloboden Pечат’ (ЗНМ поднесе пријава до МВР за малициозен онлајн напад на профилите на „Слободен печат“),” Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 15 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4bf5D8T>.

165 “AJM: Condemnation of threats against journalist Ismaili (ЗНМ: Осуда за заканите кон новинарот Исмаили),” Radio MOF, 30 October 2025, <https://www.radio-mof.mk/znm-osuda-za-zakanite-kon-novinarot-ismaili/>.

166 “Infomax journalists attacked, attacker broke the door and forced entry during a live broadcast (Нападнати новинарите на „Инфомакс“, напаѓачот ја искршил вратата и насилно влегол за време на емисија во живо),” Sakam Da Kazam, 11 December 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/napadnati-novinarite-na-infomaks-napagachot-ja-iskrshil-vratata-i-nasilno-vlegol-za-vreme-na-emisija-vo-zhivo/>.

167 “VMRO-DPMNE also reacted: The party condemns the raid on ‘Infomax’ and demands a full clarification of the case (И ВМРО-ДПМНЕ со реакција: партијата го осудува упадот во „Инфомакс“ и бара целосно расчистување на случајот),” Skopje 1.Mk, 11 December 2025, <https://skopje1.mk/i-vmro-dpmne-so-reakcija-partijata-go-osuduva-upadot-vo-infomaks-i-bara-celosno-rascistuvanje-na-slucajot>.

168 AJM: Strong condemnation of the attack on the editorial office of “Infomax” (ЗНМ: Остра осуда за нападот врз редакцијата на „Инфомакс“), 11 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/49USdwh>.

169 “Public Prosecutor’s Office Skopje filed charges against the man who forcibly broke into the studio of the ‘Infomax’ portal (ОЈО Скопје поднесе обвинение против мажот што насилно упадна во студиото на порталот „Инфомакс“),” Telma TV, 18 December 2025, <https://telma.com.mk/2025/12/18/ojo-prodolzen-pritvorot-na-napagachot-vrz-vrabotenite-na-infomaks/>.

of Journalists and Media Workers (SSNM) warned that several broadly worded passages in the draft could be problematic for media freedom, because they loosely link “disinformation” and “spreading panic” with the potential use of the Criminal Code and other legal provisions, without clearly distinguishing between propaganda and opinion and professional journalism.¹⁷⁰ Furthermore, on 14 November, the AJM’s Council of Honour decided on three complaints regarding unethical conduct by a journalist related to unverified claims and evaluative/sexist remarks that contributed to victim-blaming and additional stigmatisation in a case involving the tragic death of a student.¹⁷¹

Vulnerable groups and the principle of non-discrimination

Between October and December, the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (CPPD) made several institutional changes. On 7 November, the CPPD announced that, following the rotation principle set out in the anti-discrimination law, its members elected Dushan Tomshich as the new President of the CPPD.¹⁷² On 24 November, the CPPD published an internal vacancy notice for the promotion of two administrative employees,¹⁷³ on 3 December, the Assembly of North Macedonia published a public call to select three members of the CPPD,¹⁷⁴ and on 15 December, the CPPD adopted a decision to fill two positions through internal promotion.¹⁷⁵ Regarding the selection process for three members of the CPPD, the Network for Protection against Discrimination called on the Assembly to ensure the process was transparent and merit-based, prioritising independence, expertise, impartiality, and adequate representation.¹⁷⁶ The CPPD issued several decisions establishing both direct and indirect discrimination on various grounds, including the following cases: discrimination in employment,¹⁷⁷ two cases of discrimination due to pregnancy, which resulted in non-extension of contracts¹⁷⁸ and pregnancy loss,¹⁷⁹ discrimination of 12,000 pensioners living abroad who were excluded from the second linear pension increase,¹⁸⁰ and harassment of a school cleaner by a superior.¹⁸¹ During this period, the CPPD also strongly condemned the rise of hate speech on social

170 “AJM and SSNM: Any resolution must not affect journalistic freedom of expression (ЗНМ и ССНМ: Каква било резолуција не смее да влијае на новинарската слобода на изразување),” Radio MOF, 16 December 2025, <https://www.radiomof.mk/znm-i-ssnm-kakva-bilo-rezolucija-ne-smee-da-vlijae-na-novinarskata-sloboda-na-izrazuvanje/>.

171 “Decision of the Council of Honor of AJM following complaints against journalist Nevrij Ademi (Одлука на Советот на Честа на ЗНМ по претставките против новинарот Невриј Адеми),” Association of Journalists of Macedonia, 14 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/3NL2d3R>.

172 “Dushan Tomshich — new President of the CPPD (Душан Томшиќ — нов претседател на КСЗД),” Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of North Macedonia, 10 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/45uLTua>.

173 “Internal call for the promotion of administrative employees (Интерен оглас за унапредување на административни службеници),” Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of North Macedonia, 28 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/3YZxRWZ>.

174 “Decision on publishing a public call for the selection of members of the Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination (Одлука за објавување јавен оглас за избор на членови на Комисијата за спречување и заштита од дискриминација),” Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of North Macedonia, 10 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/3LWQ8lh>.

175 “Decision on the selection of candidates for promotion through an internal advertisement in the CPPD (Одлука за избор на кандидати за унапредување по пат на интерен оглас во КСЗД),” Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of North Macedonia, 15 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/4q1GimG>.

176 “The Network for Protection against Discrimination called for the election of expert and independent persons to the Commission (Мрежата за заштита од дискриминација повика на избор на стручни и независни лица во Комисијата),” Makfax News Agency, 26 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/4afbbPC>.

177 “Conductor Dijana Imeri-Ilkoska was discriminated against by former Acting Director of the Philharmonic Aleksandar Kotevski, the Protection Commission has determined (Диригентката Дијана Имери-Илкоска била дискриминирана од поранешниот в. д. директор на Филхармонијата Александар Котевски, утврди Комисијата за Заштита),” Sakam Da Kazam, 1 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/4jXzDbw>.

178 “A warehouse worker in a private company was fired from her job as soon as she showed a document for a one-month sick leave due to a pathological pregnancy, discrimination was established (Магационерка во приватна фирма е избркана од работа веднаш штом покажала документ за едномесечно боледување поради патолошка бременост, утврдена е дискриминација),” Sakam Da Kazam, 13 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/3M7RAYv>.

179 “A Master’s Degree psychologist at the hospital in Struga, fired from work when she said she was pregnant, lost the baby due to severe stress at the 27th week of gestation (Магистерка психолог во болницата во Струга, избркана од работа кога кажала дека е бремена, од силен стрес во 27-та гестациска недела го изгубила бебето),” Sakam Da Kazam, 24 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/4bR4Lr5>.

180 “Discrimination against 12,000 pensioners who did not receive the second increase of MKD 2,500 was established, the denial was made a week before the legal Amendments were adopted (Утврдена дискриминација врз 12.000 пензионери кои не го добија второто покачување од 2.500 денари, ускратувањето им го направи недела дена пред да се донесат законските измени),” Sakam Da Kazam, 18 November 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/neraskazhani-prikazni/utvrdena-diskriminatsija-vrz-12-000-penzioneri-koi-ne-go-dobija-vtoroto-pokachuvane-od-2-500-denari-uskratuvaneto-im-go-napravile-nedela-dena-pred-da-se-donesat-zakonskite-izmeni/>.

181 “Boss harassed school hygienist: He called her ‘bride,’ ‘gorgeous,’ and ‘beautiful’ (Шеф вознемирувал хигиеничарка во училиште: Ја нарекувал „нусе“, „лична“ и „уба“),” Sloboden Pecat, 24 December 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/shef-voznemiruval-higienicharka-vo-uchilishte-ja-narekuval-nuse-lichna-i-uba/>.

media, citing an incident in which an individual allegedly insulted and discriminated against the entire Roma community, causing widespread public reaction and distress.¹⁸²

Between October and December, developments concerning persons with disabilities were dominated by accessibility barriers and developments, gaps in social protection and institutional care, and heightened concern over budgetary decisions affecting support services. October marked the start of the local 2025 elections. Although the lack of accessible voting arrangements was acknowledged during the 2024 elections, no meaningful progress was made for the 2025 elections, and persons with disabilities continue to face physical and procedural barriers in exercising their right to vote.¹⁸³ A dedicated study on the participation of visually impaired persons in elections further documented persistent obstacles, raising concerns about the appropriateness of assistance and the secrecy of the ballot, and the problematic framing of disability within election administration.¹⁸⁴ During this period, the AAVMS also reminded that for the local elections, the public broadcaster and state-level TV stations that air paid political advertising must broadcast election-related content in a format accessible to persons with disabilities, including at least one daily news edition (16:00–24:00) and at least one additional election-related programme weekly (16:00–24:00) with accessibility features.¹⁸⁵ In addition, the Assembly of North Macedonia has integrated advanced accessibility technologies into its website, including a digital assistant/mechanisms intended to make parliamentary information easier to access for people with visual, motor and cognitive disabilities.¹⁸⁶ Further in accessibility and reasonable accommodation in October, after an intervention from the Ombudsperson, a 70-year-old prisoner with an amputated leg in the Shtip penitentiary who was for a long period housed on the third floor and forced to climb stairs was moved to ground-floor accommodation, after which a second intervention ensured he was assigned a suitable lower bunk.¹⁸⁷

Regarding legislative developments, for the first time, people with autism spectrum disorder (and other pervasive developmental disorders) were added by the newly adopted amendments to the Law on Employment of Disabled Persons, adopted in September 2025. Employers can now hire them under this framework and apply for state support to adapt workplaces.¹⁸⁸ Discrimination was also prevalent, with the case of a 21-year-old employee of the City of Skopje with Down syndrome, who was pushed and harassed by a colleague in the workplace.¹⁸⁹ The cases prompted protests by parents of persons with disabilities and were filed with the CPPD.¹⁹⁰

182 “Reaction of the CPPD to hate speech against the Roma community (Реакција на КСЗД за говор на омраза кон ромската заедница),” Commission for Prevention and Protection against Discrimination of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/4q0G1Aa>.

183 “Local elections are a test for the state: Will they give citizens with disabilities the right to ‘vote’? (Локалните избори тест за државата: Ќе даде ли право на „глас“ на граѓаните со попреченост?),” Radio Free Europe, 13 October 2025, <https://www.slobodnaevropa.mk/a/izbori-poprachenost-glasanje-/33558233.html>.

184 Voice without Barriers: Analysis of the participation of blind persons in elections (Глас без Бариери: Анализа за учеството на слепите лица во изборите) (International Foundation for Electoral Systems, 2025), <https://bit.ly/4qCXTIN>.

185 “TV content to be adapted for people with disabilities during the 2025 local elections,” Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services of North Macedonia, 1 October 2025, <https://avmu.mk/en/2025/10/01/tv-content-to-be-adapted-for-people-with-disabilities-during-the-2025-local-elections/>.

186 “Digital assistant on the website of the Assembly of the Republic of Macedonia for people with disabilities (Asistent digital në ueb-faqen e Kuvendit të RMV-së për personat me aftësi të kufizuar),” Portalb, 20 December 2025, <https://portalb.mk/asistent-digjital-ne-ueb-faqen-e-kuvendit-te-rmv-se-per-personat-me-aftesi-te-kufizuar/>.

187 “A convict without one leg was placed on the third floor of the Shtip prison — he struggled with the stairs every day (Осуденик без една нога го сместиле на третиот кат во штипскиот затвор — секој ден маки мачел со скалите),” Sloboden Pecat, 12 October, 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/osudenik-bez-edna-noga-go-smestile-na-tretiot-kat-vo-shtipskiot-zatvor-sekoj-den-maki-machel-so-skalite/>.

188 “People with autism spectrum disorder have been made a Law, companies will be able to use their talents and abilities, and the State will help them with special space and equipment (Лицата со аутистичен спектар на нарушување влегоа во закон, фирмите ќе можат да ги користат нивните дарби и способности, за посебен простор и опрема ќе им помага државата),” Sakam Da Kazam, 12 October 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/litsata-so-autistichen-spektar-na-narushuvane-vlegoa-vo-zakon-firmite-ke-mozhat-da-gi-koristat-nivnite-darbi-i-sposobnosti-za-poseben-prostor-i-oprema-ke-im-pomaga-drzhavata/>.

189 “21-year-old Nikola Stojanovski, with down syndrome, was pushed and abused by a colleague in the City of Skopje, the institutions have been silent for a month (21-годишниот Никола Стојановски, со даунов синдром, бил бутнат и малтретиран од колега во Град Скопје, институциите еден месец молчат),” Sakam Da Kazam, 28 October 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/21-godishniot-nikola-stojanovski-so-daunov-sindrom-bil-butnat-i-maltretiran-od-kolega-vo-grad-skopje-institutsiite-eden-mesets-molchat/>.

190 “‘Stop discrimination and violence due to disability or handicap’ — parents’ protest in the ‘Woman Fighters’ Park („Стоп за дискриминација и насилство поради попреченост или хендикеп“ — протест на родители во паркот „Жена Борец“),” Radio MOF, 27 October 2025, <https://www.radiomof.mk/stop-za-diskriminacija-i-nasilstvo-poradi-poprachenost-ili-hendikep-protest-na-roditeli-vo-parkot-zhena-borec/>.

Delays and uncertainty surrounding the payment of the mobility allowance, which directly affect beneficiaries' independence and daily functioning, were reported in November.¹⁹¹ In another case in December, the police in Tetovo filed criminal charges against seven individuals, including the former director of the Tetovo Centre for Social Work and other staff, on suspicion of abuses linked to the granting of disability-related compensation. According to the police, the benefit was approved in 2024 through decisions issued without adequate verification of eligibility, allegedly supported by falsified medical documentation and false statements.¹⁹² During November and December, concerns grew about the anticipated reduction in the budget for the rare disease programme in the 2026 state budget,¹⁹³ a move perceived as endangering the continuity of therapy and effectively forcing patients into "rationing" scenarios.¹⁹⁴ Patient organisations publicly demanded increased funding,¹⁹⁵ while civil society coalitions and the national alliance of rare diseases called for responsible budget decisions to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities¹⁹⁶ and rare diseases.¹⁹⁷

Gender

In the period between October and December, the case of a pregnant woman whose organs were removed during a caesarean section¹⁹⁸ continued to expose serious concerns regarding judicial delays and accountability in cases involving medical malpractice with gendered impacts. In October, the third judge assigned to the case remained on the proceedings despite defence requests for recusal, while Veaposka publicly described her ongoing physical and psychological suffering following the removal of her organs during childbirth.¹⁹⁹ In November, the trial was again postponed due to the absence of expert witnesses, further prolonging the proceedings and intensifying concerns over access to justice and the secondary victimisation of the survivor.²⁰⁰ Later in November, a first-instance verdict was delivered, sentencing the gynaecologist involved to three years' imprisonment and a five-year professional ban, while other defendants were acquitted, an outcome that closed one procedural stage but continued to raise broader questions about institutional responsibility and effective redress for women harmed within the healthcare system.²⁰¹

191 "Why is the payment of the mobility allowance stuck? (Зошто заглави исплатата на додатокот за мобилност?)," Sloboden Pечат, 11 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/zoshto-zaglavi-isplatata-na-dodatokot-za-mobilnost/>.

192 "Criminal charges against the ex-Director of the Tetovo social center and five people for misuse of disability compensation (Kallëzim penal ndaj ish-Drejtoreshës së qendrës sociale Tetovë dhe pesë personave për keqpërdorim të kompensimit për aftësi të kufizuar)," Portalb, 18 December, 2025, <https://portalb.mk/kallezim-penal-ndaj-ish-drejtoreshes-se-qendres-social-tetove-dhe-pese-personave-per-keqpërdorim-te-kompensimit-per-aftesi-te-kufizuar/>.

193 "Budget cuts: EUR 17.5 million planned for rare diseases, but more needed (Намалување на буџетот: за ретките болести се планираат 17,5 милиони евра, а потребни се повеќе)," Frontline.Mk, 2025 111 AD, <https://frontline.mk/2025/11/11/namaluva-e-na-bu-etot-za-retkite-bolesti-se-planiraat-17-5-milioni-evra-a-potrebn-se-pove-e/>.

194 "Vesna Aleksovska: The drastic cut in the rare diseases budget is a direct attack on our right to life (Весна Алексовска: Драстичното кратење на буџетот за ретки болести е директен напад врз нашето право на живот)," Radio MOF, 14 December 2025, <https://www.radiomof.mk/vesna-aleksovska-drastichnoto-kratenje-na-budzheto-za-retki-bolesti-e-direkten-napad-vrz-nasheto-pravo-na-zhivot/>.

195 "Rare disease patients demand increased budget for their program (Пациентите со ретки болести бараат да се зголеми буџетот за нивната програма)," A1 On, 11 November 2025, <https://a1on.mk/macedonia/pacientite-so-retki-bolesti-baraat-da-se-zgolemi-budzheto-za-nivnata-programa/>.

196 "The 'Menuvame' Coalition calls for responsible budget decisions to protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities (Коалицијата „Менуваме“ повикува на одговорни буџетски одлуки за заштита на правата и достоинството на лицата со попреченост)," Nezavisen.Mk, 21 November 2025, <https://nezavisen.mk/koalicijata-menuvame-povikuva-na-odgovorni-budzhetski-odluki-za-zashtita-na-pravata-i-dostoinstvoto-na-licata-so-poprechenost/>.

197 "NARDM: Budget cuts for rare diseases could have huge consequences (НАРБМ: Кратењето на буџетот за ретки болести може да има огромни последици)," Radio MOF, 24 December 2025, <https://www.radiomof.mk/narbm-kratenjeto-na-budzheto-za-retki-bolesti-mozhe-da-ima-ogromni-posledici/>.

198 "Being left without organs is very difficult, but it is also difficult to argue with doctors who do not admit guilt, said the mother Veaposka, who was injured during a cesarean section, at the trial. (Да останеш без органи е многу тешко, но тешко е и да се расправаш со лекари кои не ја признаваат вината, рече на судењето родилката Веапоска повредена при царски рез)," Sakam Da Kazam, 24 January 2023, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/dopisna-mreza/da-ostanesh-bez-organi-e-mnogu-teshko-no-teshko-e-i-da-se-raspravash-so-lekari-koi-ne-ja-priznavaat-vinata-reche-na-sudeneto-rodilkata-veaposka-povredena-pri-tsarski-rez/>.

199 "The third judge deciding on Yaldz Veaposka remains in the process — gynecologist Muhamed Asani's request for his disqualification rejected (Третиот судија што одлучува за Јалдз Веапоска останува во процесот — одбиено барањето на гинекологот Мухамед Асани за негово изземање)," Sloboden Pечат, 10 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/tretiot-sudija-shto-odluchuva-za-jaldz-veaposka-ostanuva-vo-procesot-odbieno-baranjeto-na-ginekologot-za-negovo-izze-manje/>.

200 "I am exhausted and suffering mentally: Yaldz Veaposka's trial for the removed organs was postponed again („Истоштена сум и психички страдам": на Јалдз Веапоска пак и го одложува судењето за извадените органи)," Sloboden Pечат, 10 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/istoshtena-sum-i-psihichki-stradam-na-jaldz-veaposka-pak-i-go-odlozhuva-sudenjeto-za-izvadenite-organi/>.

201 "Three years in prison and a five-year ban on practicing for gynecologist Asani in the case of the woman giving birth in Debar (Три години затвор и пет години забрана за вршење дејност за гинекологот Асани за случајот со родилката од Дебар)," Brif.Mk, 21 November 2025, <https://www.brif.mk/tri-godini-zatvor-i-pet-godini-zabrana-za-vrsenje-dejnost-za-ginekologot-asani-za-sluchajot-so-rodilkata-od-debar/>.

October also included socio-economic gender equality concerns. Reporting on rural women highlighted systemic discrimination affecting registered women farmers, including unresolved access to paid maternity leave and work absence rights. It also referenced that the CPPD had recognised systemic discrimination in access to equal rights compared to women workers in other sectors.²⁰² Menstrual poverty also emerged as a concrete equality issue in October, when a local study reported that a significant number of secondary-school girls from socially at-risk families could not afford menstrual products, leading to limited distribution through dispensers in one school through private donations.²⁰³ The local elections held in October also shed light on women's representation in politics, where, despite 32 women competing for mayoral seats in the local elections, only four were elected, further illustrating the persistent underrepresentation of women in executive local positions.²⁰⁴ Moreover, public discourse included statements and commentary reinforcing traditional motherhood expectations as a "biological task," positioning women primarily through their reproductive and caregiving roles, reflecting ongoing societal contestation around women's roles.²⁰⁵

Developments in November further exposed the socio-economic impacts of violence. A report highlighted that women face severe economic consequences after violence, including being prevented from working and losing jobs, and that many take loans or borrow money to survive in the early months after leaving violent situations.²⁰⁶ Another study also highlighted harassment of women in public spaces, such as catcalling, stalking, and obstruction, among others, pointing to everyday insecurity and the normalisation of gendered harassment.²⁰⁷ On 25 November, a platform for tracking femicides was promoted as a tool to identify systemic gaps and support early intervention.²⁰⁸

A report by the State Audit Office, assessing North Macedonia's implementation of the Istanbul Convention, highlights that key measures for prevention and victim protection remain incomplete and underfunded, with major gaps in specialised services and staffing. The auditors note that, of 52 planned activities in the Action Plan, 22 were implemented, 20 were not implemented, and 10 were partially implemented, and that there is still no specialised psychosocial treatment programme for perpetrators; the report flags systemic protection deficits, including that criminal prosecution for bodily harm is still largely initiated upon the victim's proposal rather than ex officio, and serious service gaps.²⁰⁹

Another report captured material support gaps: survivors who report domestic violence to Centres for Social Work receive only MKD 15,000 (approximately EUR 250) as one-off assistance, while the state pro-

202 "Women farmers remained marginalized and discriminated against (Земјоделките останаа маргинализирани и дискриминирани)," Sloboden Pecat, 26 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/zemjodelkite-ostanaa-marginalizirani-i-diskriminirani/>.

203 "Over 100 schoolgirls from poor families in Bitola have no money for sanitary pads — Activists seek help from the municipality (Над 100 ученички од сиромашни семејства во Битола немаат пари за влошки — Активистите бараат помош од Општината)," Sloboden Pecat, 29 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/nad-100-uchenichki-od-siromashni-semejstva-vo-bitola-nemaat-pari-za-vloshki-aktivistite-baraat-pomosh-od-opshtinata/>.

204 "Only four women have been elected mayors (Само четири жени се избрани за градоначалнички)," Sloboden Pecat, 3 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/samo-chetiri-zheni-se-izbrani-za-gradonachalnichki-na-lokalnite-izbori/>.

205 "Moms for Freedom: We all come from different countries but share same concerns — Children to be safe and well educated," Macedonian Information Agency, 1 October 2025, <https://mia.mk/index.php/story/moms-for-freedom-we-all-come-from-different-countries-but-share-same-concerns-children-to-be-safe-and-well-educated>.

206 "Over 90 percent of women who have suffered domestic violence take out loans or credits to survive the first months, says the ESE Association. (Над 90 отсто од жените кои претрпеле семејно насилство земаат кредити или позајмици за да преживеат во првите месеци, вели Здружението ЕСЕ)," Sakam Da Kazam, 25 November 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/nad-90-otsto-od-zhenite-koi-pretprpele-semejno-nasilstvo-zemaat-krediti-ili-pozajmitsi-za-da-prezhiveat-vo-prvite-mesetsi-veli-zdruzenieto-ese/>.

207 "Reactor shared an alarming study: Women are being shouted at, stalked, whistled at, and obstructed in public spaces („Реактор“ сподели алармантно истражување: На жените на јавни простори им дофрлаат, ги демнат, им свиркаат и им го попречуваат патот)," Sloboden Pecat, 25 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/reaktor-spodeli-alarmantno-istranzhuvanje-na-zhenite-na-javni-prostori-im-dofrlaat-gi-demnat-im-svirkaat-i-im-go-poprechuvaa-patot/>.

208 "Femicide monitoring platform promoted (Промовирана платформата за следење на феминиди)," Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in North Macedonia, 25 November 2025, <https://mhc.org.mk/news/promovirana-platformata-za-sledenje-na-femicidi/>.

209 "In 5 years, there have been 33 domestic violence murders, there are not enough shelters for victims, the budget does not provide money for protection, and perpetrators are not prosecuted ex officio, the audit report revealed (За 5 години има 33 убиства во семејно насилство, нема доволно засолништа за жртвите, буџетот не дава пари за заштита, насилниците не се гонат по службена должност, откри ревизорскиот извештај)," Sakam Da Kazam, 2 December 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/za-5-godini-ima-33-ubistva-vo-semejno-nasilstvo-nema-dovolno-zasolnishta-za-zhrtvite-budhetot-ne-dava-pari-za-zashrita-nasilnitsite-ne-se-gonat-po-sluzhbena-dolzност-otkri-revizorskiot-izveshtaj/>.

vides no sustained support for core reintegration needs such as rent, utilities, food, children's education, psychological counselling, and employment support, factors that, they warn, often push women to return to abusive partners.²¹⁰ On the response side, Skopje City Council adopted a decision to open a shelter centre providing emergency accommodation and professional support until stabilisation and a long-term solution are found.²¹¹

On legal reforms, a group of MPs submitted amendments to the Criminal Code to align it with the Istanbul Convention by removing "prosecution upon the victim's proposal" for the offence of bodily injury when committed in the context of domestic violence, gender-based violence, hate-motivated violence, or against a particularly vulnerable person, meaning these cases would be prosecuted ex officio and prosecutors would act immediately without waiting for the victim to file a complaint.²¹²

The education minister stated that NGO reactions to using the term "gender" would not block the adoption of a new education strategy, defending the term as referring to differences between males and females and pointing to the consultation process behind the strategy.²¹³ Menstrual equity was again dismissed when the Kisela Voda municipal council rejected an initiative for free menstrual products in primary schools.²¹⁴ Moreover, amendments to the Law on Labour Relations were proposed to prevent dismissals during pregnancy by automatically converting fixed-term contracts into open-ended contracts upon a pregnant worker submitting medical proof of pregnancy.²¹⁵

During the reporting period, several cases of gender-based violence, domestic violence and femicide were reported including two cases of brutal assaults on partners,²¹⁶ stalking for two years of a former wife,²¹⁷ a physical attack on a wife and daughter and threatening them with a sharp object,²¹⁸ rape of a minor,²¹⁹ two other cases of assaults and threats with sharp objects against women by their husbands,²²⁰ illegal deprivation of liberty and killing of a woman²²¹ which was framed explicitly as femicide and called for urgent institutional

210 "Victims of domestic violence receive only EUR 250 in one-time assistance, the State does not allocate money for permanent support (Жртвите на семејно насилство добиваат само 250 евра еднакратна помош, државата не одвојува пари за трајна поддршка)," Sakam Da Kazam, 4 December 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/zhrtvite-na-semejno-nasilstvo-dobivaat-samo-250-evra-ednokratna-pomosh-drzhavata-ne-odvojuva-pari-za-trajna-poddrshka/>.

211 "The City of Skopje opens a shelter center for victims of gender-based violence (Градот Скопје отвора шелтер центар за жртви на родово базирано насилство)," TV 21, 10 December 2025, <https://mk.tv21.tv/gradot-skopje-otvora-shelter-tsentar-za-zhrtvi-na-rodovo-bazirano-nasilstvo/>.

212 Domestic violence with bodily harm will be prosecuted ex officio — there will be no waiting for a report from the victim, the prosecutor will act immediately (Семејното насилство со телесна повреда ќе се гони по службена должност - нема да се чека на пријава од жртвата, обвинител веднаш ќе постапува), 18 December 2025, <https://plusinfo.mk/semi-noto-nasilstvo-so-telesna-povreda-e-se-goni-po-sluzhbena-dolzhnost-nema-da-se-cheka-na-pri-ava-od-zhrtvata-obvinitel-vednash-e-postapuva/>.

213 "Janevska: The reactions of certain NGOs to the use of the term 'gender' will not hinder the adoption of the new education strategy (Јаневска: Реакциите на одредени невладини за употребата на терминот „род“ нема да го закови носењето на новата стратегија за образование)," 360 Stepni, 19 December 2025, <https://360stepni.mk/janevska-reaktsiite-na-odredeni-nevladini-za-upotreba-na-terminot-rod-nema-da-go-zakochi-noseneto-na-novata-strategija-za-obrazovanie/>.

214 "Kisela Voda Council rejects Levica initiative for free menstrual products in schools (Советот на Кисела Вода одби иницијатива на Левица за бесплатни менструални производи во училиштата)," Antropol, 24 December 2025, <https://antropol.mk/2025/12/24/sov-na-k-voda-odbi-inic-na-lev-za-besp-ment-proiz-vo-ucil/>.

215 "No dismissal during pregnancy! Levica has submitted a proposal for amendments to protect the employment status of pregnant workers (Да нема отказ при бременост! Левица поднесе предлог-измени за заштита на трудовиот статус на бремени работнички)," Skopje 1.Mk, 29 December 2025, <https://skopje1.mk/da-nema-otkaz-pri-bremenost-levica-podnese-predlog-izmeni-za-zastita-na-trudoviot-status-na-bremeni-rabotnicki/>.

216 "The Prosecutor's Office is also now up to date in prosecuting violence against women — Proceedings against two batterers on the same day (И Обвинителството сега е ажурно во гонењето насилство врз жени — во ист ден постапки против двајца тепачи)," Sloboden Pecat, 3 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/i-obvinitelstvoto-sega-e-azhurno-vo-gonenieto-nasilstvo-vrz-zheni-vo-ist-den-postapki-protiv-dvajca-tepachi/>.

217 "The Prosecutor's Office is seeking detention for the defendant who stalked his ex-wife in Krusevo for 2 years (Обвинителството бара притвор за обвинетиот кој 2 години ја демнел бившата сопруга во Крушево)," Sakam Da Kazam, 3 October 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/obvinitelstvoto-bara-pritvor-za-obvinietot-koj-2-godini-ja-demnel-bivshata-sopruqa-vo-krusevo/>.

218 "A violent man went on a rampage in Gjorce, pulled knife on his wife and children (Насилник дивеел во Ѓорче, им извадил нож на жената и децата)," Sloboden Pecat, 6 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/nasilnik-diveel-vo-gjorce-im-izvadil-nozh-na-zhenata-i-decata/>.

219 "Eighteen-year-old Skopje man raped a girl: Father reported after five months (Осумнаесетгодишен скопјанец силувал девојче: таткото пријавил по пет месеци)," Sloboden Pecat, 15 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/osumnaesetgodishen-skopjanec-silual-devojche-tatkoto-prijavil-po-pet-meseci/>.

220 "Two women were attacked by their husbands: One in Kumanovo, the other in Lipkovo (Две жени биле нападнати од сопрузите: едната во Куманово, другата во Липково)," Sloboden Pecat, 15 November 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/dve-zheni-bile-napadnati-od-sopruzite-ednata-vo-kumanovo-drugata-vo-lipkovo/>.

221 "Brutal murder solved in Shtip, man kills woman with knife and buries body in yard (Расчистено свирепо убиство во Штип, со нож усмртил жена и телото го закопал во дворот)," Meta.Mk, 16 November 2025, <https://meta.mk/raschisteno-svirepo-ubistvo-vo-shtip-so-nozh-usmrtil-zhena-od-shtip-i-teloto-go-zakopal-vo-dvorot/>.

reaction, stressing that femicide is not a “private matter”;²²² attempted murder;²²³ kidnapping, killing, and concealing the body of a woman;²²⁴ sexual assault/rape and subsequent blackmail.²²⁵ The plethora of gender-based violence, domestic violence and femicide cases is further highlighted by the Eurostat 2023 data, stating that North Macedonia ranked highly in Europe for the rate of partner-perpetrated killings of women.²²⁶

Hate speech

Between October and December, hate speech in North Macedonia remained visible across public discourse, social media, and local political contexts, prompting reactions from prosecutorial authorities, civil society organisations, and citizen initiatives.

In October, the Basic Public Prosecutor’s Office in Skopje filed an indictment proposal against a 59-year-old man for inciting hatred, discord, or intolerance after he allegedly directed Nazi salutes, insults, and threats in German at the director of the Holocaust Fund of the Jews from Macedonia.²²⁷ As the local elections were held in October, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights strongly reacted to hate speech used during the election campaign, calling on political actors to refrain from inflammatory rhetoric that fuels division and intolerance, highlighting that women candidates for mayoral and council positions were particularly exposed to hate speech and sexist attacks.²²⁸ Later in the month, Roma civil society organisations condemned a racist statement made by a municipal councillor in Negotino, assessing the remarks as anti-Gypsyist hate speech that degrades the Roma community and incites exclusion from public and political life, pointing to the continued marginalisation of Roma communities and the lack of accountability for racist speech by public officials.²²⁹

In November, the Ohrid police filed a criminal complaint against a 57-year-old man from Ohrid on suspicion of spreading racist and xenophobic material via a computer system, after he allegedly posted a social-media post with photos that promoted hate speech.²³⁰ At the same time, a graffiti containing hate speech in Skopje was removed by citizens after the municipality failed to act, highlighting gaps in institutional responsiveness and the role of civic engagement in countering hate speech in public spaces.²³¹

222 “Stella Network: Institutions must not remain silent in the face of the latest case of femicide in Shtip (Мрежа „Степа“: Институциите не смеат да молчат пред последниот случај на феминид во Штип),” Radio MOF, 17 November 2025, <https://www.radiomof.mk/mreza-stela-instituciite-ne-smeat-da-molchat-pred-posledniot-sluchaj-na-femicid-vo-shtip/>.

223 “Detention of an 84-year-old man for attempted murder in a hotel in Kumanovo (Притвор за 84-годишен маж за обид на убиство во хотел во Куманово),” Sakam Da Kazam, 12 December 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/privtor-za-84-godishen-mazh-za-obid-na-ubistvo-vo-hotel-vo-kumanovo/>.

224 “They killed her with a gun, buried her in a hole, and burned her body — It has been revealed how the woman from Gostivar was murdered (Ја убиле со пиштол, ја закопале во дупка, а телото го запалиле — откриено како е убиена жената од гостиварско),” Sloboden Pecat, 17 December 2025, <https://www.sloboden-pecat.mk/ja-ubile-so-pushka-ja-zakopale-vo-dupka-a-teloto-go-zapalile-otkrieno-kako-bila-ubiena-zhenata-od-gostivarsko/>.

225 “Charges filed for sexual assault and blackmail (Поднесено обвинение за ролов напад и уцена),” TV 21, 13 December 2025, <https://mk.tv21.tv/podneseno-obvinenie-za-polov-napad-i-utsena/>.

226 “Numbers that must not be ignored — Macedonia is third in Europe in the number of murders of women by their partners (Бројки што не смеат да се игнорираат — Македонија е трета во Европа по број на убиства на жени од нивните партнери),” Sloboden Pecat, 22 December 2025, <https://www.sloboden-pecat.mk/brojki-shto-ne-smeat-da-se-ignoriraat-makedonija-e-treta-vo-evropa-po-broj-na-ubistva-na-zheni-od-nivnite-partneri/>.

227 “He shouted nazi salutes and cursed in German at the Director of the Holocaust Fund — BPO Skopje has filed charges against a 59-year-old man (Извикувал нацистички поздрави и го пцуел на германски јазик директорот на Фондот на Холокаустот- ОЈО Скопје покренала обвинение против 59-годишен маж),” Telma TV, 9 October 2025, <https://telma.com.mk/2025/10/09/izvikuval-nacistichki-pozdravi-i-go-pczuel-na-germanski-jazik-direktorot-na-fondot-na-holo-kaustot-ojo-skopje-pokrena-obvinenie/>.

228 “The Helsinki Committee reacts strongly against hate speech in the electoral process (Хелсиншкиот комитет остро реагира против говорот на омраза во изборниот процес),” Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in North Macedonia, 13 October 2025, <https://mhc.org.mk/news/helsinskiot-komit-et-ostro-reagira-protiv-govorot-na-omraza-vo-izborniot-proces/>.

229 “Racist statement by a Councilor in the Municipality of Negotino (Расистичка изјава на советник во Општина Неготино),” Institute for Research and Policy Analysis Romalítico, 24 October 2025, <https://romalítico.org/24/10/2025/vesti/rasistichka-izjava-na-sovetnik-vo-opshtina-negotino/>.

230 “A man from Ohrid posted racist content — He was charged with hate speech (Охриданаец објавувал расистички содржини - доби пријава за говор на омраза),” Plusinfo.Mk, 20 November 2025, <https://plusinfo.mk/ohri-anec-ob-avuvai-rasistichki-sodrzhini-dobi-pri-ava-za-govor-na-omraza/>.

231 “When the City doesn’t want to, citizens react: Hate Speech deleted in front of student dormitories (Кора Градот не сака, реагираат граѓаните: Избришан говор на омраза пред студентски),” Racin.Mk, 24 November 2025, <https://racin.mk/makedonija/koga-gradot-ne-saka-reagiraat-graganite-izbrishan-govor-na-omraza-pred-studentski/>.

In December, a published report²³² highlighted that social media are the main channel for hate speech in North Macedonia, with harmful content mostly generated by private individuals and amplified by sensationalist online media. Interethnic hate speech often receives high engagement on social networks among ethnic minorities. At the same time, gender-based hate is also prominent, with women commonly attacked based on their private lives rather than professional roles, reinforcing stereotypes and fueling hostility across ethnic and political lines.²³³ Furthermore, an informal civic initiative filed a complaint with the Ombudsperson, alleging that the Prime Minister used insulting language and threatening messaging toward critics, the media, and political opponents, labelling them “the scum of society,” arguing that this fuels fear and intolerance.²³⁴

Rights of the child

During the local 2025 elections, the Ombudsperson²³⁵ issued appeals reminding participants in the local 2025 elections that involving children in political activities is an unacceptable form of instrumentalisation that violates children’s dignity and their right to protection from political influence under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Law on Child Protection, and the Electoral Code. In addition, the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights²³⁶ condemned the increasing practice of involving children and minors in political activities ahead of the local elections, noting widespread social-media posts and campaign content where children are used for promotion. In November, the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) prepared a new national Education Strategy for the period 2026–2032, published on the government’s ENER platform for public consultation on 1 December.²³⁷ The strategy emphasises continued reforms and builds on the current education framework, focusing on areas such as preschool education, inclusion in primary and secondary education, optimisation of the school network, new concepts for secondary and vocational education, and updated financing formulas for 2026 onwards.²³⁸ On 27 November, the Sectoral Working Group on education, employment, and social policy convened, where the MES presented results from the previous six months and highlighted progress linked to the Western Balkans Growth Plan, including new funding formulas for primary and secondary education, provision of modern ICT equipment for primary schools, and expansion of dual education/work-based learning.²³⁹

A report in December highlighted the persistence of early pregnancies, noting that births to mothers under the age of 15 remain above the EU average, raising concerns about prevention, education, and access to reproductive health services for minors.²⁴⁰ Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of minors were prevalent, with

232 Despina Kovachevska, Hate Speech Monitoring Report in North Macedonia 2025 (Извештај од мониторингот на говорот на омраза во Северна Македонија 2025) (“Innovative Media” and Media Diversity Institute — Western Balkans, 2025), https://innovativemedia.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/MMR_NM_mk.pdf.

233 “Interethnic hatred with the most ‘likes’, women are also hated (Меѓуетничката омраза со најмногу „лајкови“, се мразат и жените),” Racin.Mk, 4 December 2025, <https://racin.mk/makedonija/meguetnichkata-omraza-so-najmogu-lajkovi-se-mrazat-i-zhenite/>.

234 “Complaint against Prime Minister Mickoski for offensive language and incitement to intolerance (Ankesë ndaj Kryeministrit Mickoski për gjuhë fyese dhe nxitje intolerance),” Portalb, 25 December 2025, <https://portalb.mk/ankese-ndaj-kryeministrit-mickoski-per-gjuhe-fyese-dhe-nxitje-intolerance/>.

235 “Appeal of the Ombudsperson (Апел на Народниот Правобранител),” Ombudsperson of the Republic of North Macedonia, 10 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/45zsE2K>.

236 “Helsinki Committee appeals: Stop involving children in political campaigns (Хелсиншки комитет со апел: Да престане вовлекувањето на децата во политички кампањи),” Sloboden Pecat, 16 October 2025 AD, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/helsinshki-komitet-so-apel-da-prestane-ovlekuvanjeto-na-decata-vo-politichki-kampanji/>.

237 “Education Strategy 2026–2032,” ENER – Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations of the Republic of North Macedonia, 1 December 2025, <https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=newdocumentdetails&detailid=133>.

238 “Janevska: We have developed a new Education Strategy, through ENER we are making it available for public review and the opportunity for amendments (Јаневска: Изработивме нова Стратегија за Образование, преку ЕНЕР ја ставаме на јавен увид и можност за дополнување),” Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia, 24 November 2025, <https://mon.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost-soopstenija/janevska-izrabotivme-nova-strategija-za-obrazovanie-preku-ener-ja-stavame-na-javen-uvvid-i-moznost-za-dopolnuvanje>.

239 “17th meeting of the Sectoral Working Group on Education, Employment and Social Policy (17. состанок на Секторската работна група За образование, вработување и социјална Политика),” Ministry of Education and Science of the Republic of North Macedonia, 29 November 2025, <https://mon.gov.mk/mk-MK/odnosi-so-javnost-soopstenija/17-sostanok-na-sektorskata-rabotna-grupa-za-obrazovanie-vrabotuvanje-i-socijalna-politika>.

240 “12 babies born to mothers under 15 in one year: Early pregnancies in NM, above the EU average (12 foshnje nga nëna nën 15 vjeç në një vit: Shtatzënitë e hershme në RMV, mbi mesataren e BE-së),” Portalb, 29 December 2025, <https://portalb.mk/12-foshnje-nga-nena-nen-15-vjec-ne-nje-vit-shtatzenite-e-hershme-ne-rmv-mbi-mesataren-e-be-se-2/>.

two serious cases. The first case concerns the repeated sexual abuse of a 16-year-old by her stepfather, while the mother, although aware and asked for help by the girl, neither reported nor prevented the abuse.²⁴¹ The second case concerns trafficking and sexual exploitation involving a 15-year-old girl, including the detention of suspects and ongoing criminal proceedings.²⁴² Both cases underscore the acute risks to child safety and the need for effective protection mechanisms.

Roma

The reporting period began with developments around local elections and public reactions to anti-Roma incidents, highlighting both physical security risks and persistent discriminatory rhetoric. In early October, a Roma candidate for municipal councillor in Vinica was beaten and went into a coma.²⁴³ The assault was condemned by the Ombudsman²⁴⁴ and Roma civil society²⁴⁵, highlighting it as a serious incident with broader implications for participation and safety in political processes for Roma. In the 2025 local elections, Roma councillors were elected for the first time in several municipalities across the country, representing the community's interests and needs at the local level.²⁴⁶ Later in October, Roma civil society organisations condemned a racist statement made by a municipal councillor in Negotino, assessing the remarks as anti-Gypsyist hate speech that degrades the Roma community and incites exclusion from public and political life, pointing to the continued marginalisation of Roma communities and the lack of accountability for racist speech by public officials.²⁴⁷

In November, developments involved both criminal accountability for racist expression and rights-protection actions involving Roma children. The Basic Public Prosecutor's Office in Kavadarci filed an indictment proposal against a 67-year-old resident of Negotino after he allegedly shared a video on 20 October on a social-media profile/page that used insulting language toward Roma and called for Roma to be banned from voting.²⁴⁸ Separately, the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) reported filing a complaint with the Ombudsman concerning an incident involving an eight-year-old Roma child, who was threatened at knifepoint, forced to kneel and kiss the shoes of two adult perpetrators, and whose abuse was filmed and shared on Facebook. The ERRC called for stronger protective measures for the child, effective investigation, deterrent penalties, and public condemnation of anti-Roma violence.²⁴⁹ Furthermore, on 20 November, a final ruling of the Skopje Court of Appeal confirmed that state authorities failed to implement the Law on Unregistered Persons in the Birth Registry, resulting in systemic exclusion and discrimination, disproportionately affecting

241 "Stepfather sexually abused 16-year-old stepdaughter, she sought help from her mother who did not report or stop him (Очувот сексуално ја злоупотребувал 16-годишната покерка, таа барала помош од мајка си која не го пријавила ниту го спречила)," Sakam Da Kazam, 4 November 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/ochuvot-seksualno-ja-zloupotrebuval-16-godishnata-pokerka-taa-barala-pomosh-od-majka-si-koja-ne-go-prijavila-nitu-go-sprechila/>.

242 "Five men who paid for sex with a 15-year-old girl, including her boyfriend who drugged and prostituted her, were detained (Притвор за петмина мажи кои плаќале за секс со 15-годишно девојче, меѓу кои и за нејзиниот дечко кој ја дрогирал и ја проституирал)," Sakam Da Kazam, 24 December 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/pritvor-za-petmina-klienti-na-15-godishno-devojche-megu-koi-i-za-nejziniot-dechko-koj-ja-drogiral-i-ja-prostituiral/>.

243 "The candidate for Councilor beaten in Vinica is still in a coma, the Ministry of Interior has announced the incident (Кандидатот за советник претепан во Винаца сè уште е во кома, МВР се огласи за инцидентот)," Sloboden Pecat, 3 October 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/kandidatot-za-sovetnik-pretepan-vo-vinica-se-ushte-e-vo-koma-mvr-se-oglasia-za-incidentot/>.

244 "Reaction of the Ombudsman (Реакција на Народниот Правобранител)," Ombudsman of the Republic of North Macedonia, 3 October 2025, <https://bit.ly/4afBntu>.

245 "Public condemnation for the attack on a Council candidate in Vinica," Institute for Research and Policy Analysis Romalítico, 3 October 2025, <https://romalítico.org/03/10/2025/vesti/javna-osuda-za-napadot-vrz-kandidatot-za-sovetnik-vo-vinicza/>.

246 "Elected Roma Councillors (Избрани советници Роми - локални избори 2025)," Institute for Research and Policy Analysis Romalítico, 20 October 2025, <https://www.facebook.com/photo/?fbid=1229306405889372&set=a.547435844076435>.

247 "Racist statement by a Councilor in the Municipality of Negotino (Расистичка изјава на советник во Општина Неготино),"

248 "Negotino man accused of racism, calls on social media for Roma to be banned from voting in elections (Неготинец обвинет за расизам, на социјални мрежи повикувал на Ромите да им се забрани гласање на избори)," Sakam Da Kazam, 15 November 2025, <https://sdk.mk/index.php/makedonija/negotinets-obvinet-za-rasizam-na-sotsijalni-mrezi-povikuval-na-romite-da-im-se-zabrani-glasane-na-izbori/>.

249 "North Macedonia: Terrified eight-year-old Romani boy forced at knifepoint to kiss the shoes of his racist tormentors," European Roma Rights Centre, 24 November 2025, <https://bit.ly/3O4bKTH>.

Roma registered in the “special birth register” who received identification documents that still block equal access to rights.²⁵⁰

In December, a new draft Law on Social Housing was publicly presented to ensure fair and dignified access to housing for vulnerable groups.²⁵¹ In addition, the Ministry of Education and Science introduced Roma education mediators in secondary education, presenting them as a step to strengthen support and inclusion for Roma students.²⁵²

250 “Final court ruling confirms state responsibility for systemic failures that leave Roma without access to personal documents in North Macedonia (Конечната судска пресуда ја потврдува одговорноста на државата за системски пропусти кои ги оставаат Ромите без пристап до лични документи во Северна Македонија),” Macedonian Young Lawyers Association, 23 December 2025, <https://myla.org.mk/51753/>.

251 “Public presentation of the Draft Law on Social Housing in North Macedonia,” Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje, North Macedonia, 15 December 2025, <https://bit.ly/3ZtjZGK>.

252 “MES introduces Roma educational mediators in secondary education (МОН воведе ромски образовни медијатори и во средното образование),” Sloboden Pечат, 24 December 2025, <https://www.slobodenpecat.mk/mon-vovede-romski-obrazovni-medijatori-i-vo-srednoto-obrazovanie/>.

