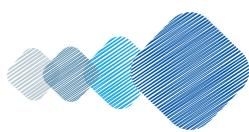




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SERVICE DELIVERY *in the* **EDUCATION, POLICY SECTOR**

PAR Principles Mainstreaming
in Sectoral Policies — Report for the Republic of North Macedonia



SERVICE DELIVERY IN THE EDUCATION, POLICY SECTOR

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Publisher:
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Author:
Dimitar Vrglevski, Center for Change Management

Graphic designer:
Vladimir Gjorgjevski

Proofreading and editing:
Jason Robert Brown

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REPORT SUMMARY

The aim of this report is to present the analysis of the service delivery performance of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of the Republic of North Macedonia (MKD). The analysis is structured according to eight requirements, which are related to: (1) the possibility for citizens to voice their opinions on the quality of the services received from the particular sector-specific institution; (2) public display of information on citizen feedback and satisfaction with received services; (3) detailed segregation of such information (4) adapting service provisions to the needs of vulnerable groups; (5) existing different channels for accessing sector-specific services; (6) stages of development of the e-services that the sector-specific institution provides; (7) information on the accessibility of sector-specific services is available to users; and (8) data relevant to sector-specific services is available in open formats.

Through the listed order, qualitative research methods and mechanisms have been used for determining whether the selected sector specific institution that is subject of this analysis has or has not fulfilled the requirements mentioned above. More pertinently, web site reviews, legislation reviews, on-site visits, as well as requests for access to public information (hereinafter FOI requests) and interviews with relevant employees from the MES have been conducted in the past period. Overall, the analysis was conducted to determine whether or not citizens/users are able to use the services that the MES provides via different channels and at what quality as well as if they are able to voice/express their satisfaction related to the service delivery performance of the MES. On the other hand, the analysis shows whether MES collects data and conducts regular examinations which may contribute to future enhancement of the services as well as the service delivery performance, tailored to the citizen needs and priorities.

Regarding the possibility for voicing the citizens' opinion on the services and the service delivery, the MES has limited the citizens by using only one publicly available method on their website (a complaint form) and dedicates research attention to the satisfaction of the employees of the institutions/schools that work closely on a day-to-day basis with the MES. The MES publishes neither information regarding citizens' complaints, nor for the conducted research (2020 and 2021) of the satisfaction of the institutions that it collaborates with on its website. Regarding the adaptation of the services to the needs of vulnerable groups, the MES implements a strategic document - Conception for Inclusive Education - since the services it provides are delivered through different institutions. All of the services that the MES provides are available in the traditional (physical) ways of delivery, and some of them are also provided electronically. However, as an institution that promotes digitalisation, MES provides its services online on different platforms that are in need of mutual integration and greater promotion. The e-services that the MES provides are user-friendly and it needs to work further on digitalising more services by concentrating on one systematically organised platform, thereby easing citizens' paths to using digital services. The MES needs to collect information on the accessibility of the services both available online as well as those it provides through the traditional way, so that it may serve as evidence for future public service designing and enhancement of already existing services. Also, in future the MES should focus on publishing more data in open formats and coordinate with the national platform for open data so it will be displayed on it as a more accessible central government platform.

Overall, the MES has the potential to enhance the service delivery performance since it has shown a drive for following and implementing the modern trends in public service delivery.

I.

INTRODUCTION

I.1 What does WeBER monitor and how?

The monitoring in Service Delivery (SD) area is performed against two SIGMA Principles.

Principle 3: Mechanisms for ensuring the quality of public services are in place.

Principle 4: The accessibility of public services is ensured.

The SD checklist consists of eight requirements that pertain to possibilities for service users to voice their opinion about the quality of sector-specific administrative services, data transparency and accessibility, and practices of electronic service provision. Specifically, when it comes to sending feedback on obtained services, it is monitored whether feedback channels are embedded into website of service provider or government-sponsored service delivery portals, and whether submitted feedback is made public. In relation to accessibility, it is monitored whether responsible service providers ensure conditions for vulnerable and marginalised groups to easily obtain services they need, and whether there are at least two options for accessing them (digital, and in-person). In addition, monitoring focuses on whether practice of collecting and publishing data on accessibility exists (such as statistics, analyses, reports or similar). Electronic service provision is further monitored for the purpose of determining the level of presence and development of e-services (based on four-tier classification of the United Nations). Finally, the last requirement looks at whether practices of publishing open data related to service provision are established, and how regularly open datasets are publicly disclosed for further (re)use.

For data collection, approach to this checklist relies on the review of websites of assessed service providers, government-sponsored portals for centralised service delivery, e-services, and open data, but also on filing requests for free access to information for all documents that are not available online. Depending on individual requirements, the timeframe for analysis covers current practices that exist at the time of assessment, as well as two years past for availability of specific data on accessibility and citizen feedback.

I.2 In this Report

In this report, we have analysed the service delivery management of the Ministry of Education and Science (MES) of the Republic of North Macedonia (MKD) with focus on the opportunity for citizens to provide feedback and whether this feedback is published and serves as a basis for plans to further improve services. The institution provides approximately 67 central services to its diverse group of users/youngsters (pupils, students), elderly people, and people with disabilities. Hence, we considered this institution to represent the whole social structure of the country, since its final users are citizens from different demographic categories from different age groups to citizens with disabilities. The analysis should be an accurate reflection of the service delivery management in the public sector in the Republic of North Macedonia even though we focused on a one sector-specific institution in education.

The education sector is a broad field that encompasses many public institutions, such as the Bureau for Development of Education (BDE), elementary schools, high schools, universities and the faculties, which are the universities' editions, the State Education Inspectorate, and the State Examination Centre. However, for the purpose of this analysis we have selected the central services that the Ministry of Education and Science provides, which does not include the university-level services which according to the Law on Higher Education from 2020 are autonomous in their functioning and have a high level of decentralisation from the MES.

For the purpose of conducting this analysis, we have obtained information on the subject of analysis from relevant government websites, relevant research analysis, FOI requests, and in-depth interview with relevant employees from the MES.



ANALYSIS

Requirement 1: Users are enabled to voice their opinion on the quality of services received

Two of the important elements of the modern public administration are the principle of service orientation and evidence-based public policy making decisions. For these purposes, the MKD has developed strategies and adopted laws that regulate the matter. As such, the state has adopted the Law on the Introduction of a Quality Management System and a Common Framework for Evaluating the Operation and Provision of Services in the Civil Service in 2013 (hereinafter the Law on Quality Management), which obligates the public sector to enforce the minimum ISO 9001 standard and the CAF common framework for assessing and the methods for managing and assessing /measuring the quality of service-management. Additionally, the Law for General Administrative Procedure (LGAP) adopted in 2015 and revised in 2018, guarantees efficient public service delivery in the administrative procedures through its provisions and legal remedies in the case of breaching the principles of service orientation of the public administration, concretely elaborated in the Laws' provisions. Overall, it is safe to say that the MKD has the necessary legal framework set in place as well as having developed the necessary strategic documents like the Strategy for Public Administration Reform¹ meaning that all that is left is to do is to execute of the policy.

According to Criteria 6 of the Common Assessment Framework (hereinafter CAF²) the public institutions have two ways of measuring the satisfaction of citizens regarding the service delivery: (1) measuring of general perception and perception on the services, and (2) measuring the operational success.

Searching the website of the MES (www.mon.gov.mk), it is a challenge to find an option/channel where you can share your opinion regarding the satisfaction/dissatisfaction on their service delivery of a specific service. However, on the website of the MES there is a side-button (envelop button) that leads to an online form for submitting complaints. According to the information obtained from an interview with an employee from the MES, the Ministry acts upon the submitted complaints through this form, but unfortunately, they do not document them and publish them on their website. According to the information obtained through the same interview, the MES forms an internal commission for each open call for a service and publishes their contact information so that citizens who use that particular service can contact the commission's members for voicing their complaints. Unfortunately, there is not an official online platform mechanism for voicing satisfaction from the users for a particular service.

1 https://www.mioa.gov.mk/sites/default/files/pbl_files/documents/strategies/srja_2018-2022_20022018_mk.pdf

2 <http://kvalitet.mioa.gov.mk/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/caf-2020.pdf>

From the on-point research, we can conclude that the MES has a physical form/mechanism of voicing citizen opinion in a form of a “compliment and complaint” box, that the institution reviews and acts upon (answers), but according to an interview with an employee from the MES, the Ministry does not collect and publish the submitted complaints (answers) on the website.

Some of the services provided by MES are available in a form of one-stop shops in five municipalities in the country which are City of Skopje, Tetovo, Shtip, Kumanovo, and Ohrid. On the website of the one-stop shop concept (<https://etu.uslugi.gov.mk/pages/home>) there is an “evaluation report” displayed in a separate tab. This evaluation report consists of answers to three questions: (1) Evaluate the work of the counter clerk; (2) Evaluate the service procedure, and (3) Evaluate the work of the Institution. However, there is not an option on the website for evaluating the service delivery of the one-stop shop.

The national portal for e-services (<https://uslugi.gov.mk/>), according to the data displayed, has up to 73,945 registered users, with a total of 838 services out of which 75 are digitalised and 46 are of the education sector i.e. together with the MES it incorporates 1,288 institutions in total. When a user logs in on this platform on the upper right corner a button “support” can be found which gives several options for the user, from which two are options for giving feedback: (1) Report a problem, and (2) Send a suggestion for enhancement. However, these options are related to the uslugi.gov.mk platform in general and not for an individual service, or an individual institution.

From our brief analysis, we can conclude that citizens can partially express their opinion on the quality of the service delivery, or express their experience/satisfaction/dissatisfaction from the services in the education sector.

Requirement 2: Information on citizen feedback and satisfaction with received services is published

The Law on Quality Management does not oblige the institution to publish the conducted measurement of citizens’ satisfaction. However, as a document of public interest and for the sake of transparency and good governance, the institutions should publicly display those kinds of documents.

Through website reviews of the MES website (www.mon.gov.mk) and the online portal for e-services in the education sector (<https://e-uslugi.mon.gov.mk/#/>) we concluded that there are no reports (in differently displayed formats) of information about citizens’ feedback regarding their satisfaction of the service delivery of the MES. Additionally, we reviewed other government portals which might have published information regarding the topic that can be useful to this analysis. Hence, we reviewed the State Statistics Office portal (www.stat.gov.mk), the portal of the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) (<https://www.mioa.gov.mk/>) as well as the Central Government Portal for e-service delivery (<https://uslugi.gov.mk/>). We could not find (in the open/public areas) on any of the aforementioned portals information regarding citizens’ satisfaction of the service delivery.

Also, since ten services from the education sector are available in the one-stop shops in five municipalities in the country, we reviewed its online portal (<https://etu.uslugi.gov.mk/pages/home>) on which there is a visibly placed tab named “evaluation report”. This tab displays results only for 2022 up until May and it shows answers from citizens on three questions³ which are general and do not refer to the educational services as a special group of services. Also, there is no option to access any kind of form to evaluate the service delivery of an individual service and report to the Ministry.

3 - Evaluate the work of the counter clerk
- Evaluate the service procedure
- Evaluate the work of the institution

For additional information and further clarification on publishing citizens' feedback, we proceeded to communicate with the MES through FOI request, in order to gather more information on the topic. The FOI request was sent to the MES on 01 April 2022, with five specific questions and an answer was received on 11 April 2022, i.e. within 10 days, which is quite quick (compared to our previous experience with the FOI). However, the information provided by the MES was partial, and did not contain the satisfaction of citizens/direct users of services, merely general opinions on the work of the Ministry itself. Specifically, we received reports for collected data for feedback for the year 2020 (a total of 470 respondents), and for the year 2021 (a total of 535 respondents). Nevertheless, the respondents are employees from the elementary and high schools in the country, which are not direct users of the services of the MES, unlike students or parents.

Regarding the content of the received reports, the reports are actually survey results that have four questions regarding the respondents' general satisfaction regarding the services that the MES provides, the communication with the employees, and the efficiency of their work. The second part of the report is a comparison of the answers from the previous year, so the MES can monitor progress. The third part of the report is a ten-page list of comments from the respondents which overall are related to commenting upon specific employees in the MES, the communication and cooperation with the MES and the schools which contain critical and constructive suggestions regarding the work of the Ministry.

These kinds of reports are conducted by an employee of the MES that is responsible for conducting research on the satisfaction of the users of the services that the MES offers. These reports are conducted on an annual basis according to the ISO standards. We obtained these details through an interview with an employee from the Ministry, since these details are not available on the MES website.

However, the information that we received is not published on the MES website, nor can it be found on another government portals, such as the ones listed above.

Besides the elaborated information received through FOI and an interview with an employee from the MES, there are no other ways in which the MES displays information about citizens' satisfaction that can be accessed by the general public.

Citizens are limited in their options for expressing their satisfaction/dissatisfaction on the service delivery performance of the MES, since surveys are distributed only to employees in schools, meaning that the only option left for citizens is to use the "compliment and complaint" option on the MES website, for which the MES does not collect data. The MES does not even publish the data collected from the conducted surveys, so we can conclude that the MES fails to meet this requirement.

Requirement 3: Published data on citizen feedback is sufficiently detailed and segregated

In this section of the report, we analysed the 2020 and the 2021 reports from citizens' feedback that were received from the MES through FOI request (not published on the website) and the online displayed information on user satisfaction from the one-stop shops' platform.

Even though the communication with the MES through FOI was correct, the materials and data received were lacking substance. Specifically, the report for 2020 has a total of 407 respondents and the report from 2021 has a total of 535 respondents, but these reports did not contain any demographic information of the respondents, except that they were employees in primary schools and high schools. When asked through the FOI if they have demographic information of their respondents, the MES answered that they do not and that they do not collect such information. This gap makes it hard to determine if the survey used for creation of this report was representative at all, which is related to the objectivity and the expediency of the report.

In 2007 the Ministry of Information Society and Administration (MISA) published a Manual for Measuring the Satisfaction of Users of Services in the Public Sector⁴ which contains clear instructions and suggestions on the methodology for measuring citizens' feedback, which unfortunately is not followed (in this case) by the MES. On the other hand, as a good practice and an example, the Agency for Administration (AA) has its 2019 report on measuring the satisfaction of the users of the services of the AA⁵ published online and the collection of data is conducted in a fashion that the Manual prescribes. This report gives clear answers to the demographic information of the respondents.

The data from the "evaluation reports" tab on the one-stop shop website (<https://etu.uslugi.gov.mk/pages/home>) are lacking demographic information as well as respondents. There are published questions that nobody answered, as well questions that only one person answered, which makes the "evaluation report" irrelevant. In conclusion, the MES does not meet this requirement.

Requirement 4: Service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups

The users of the services that the MES provides can be divided in two categories. The first group are the internal users, which are the employees in the educational sector; the second group is the external users, which are the citizens. The first group consists of mostly educators in elementary, secondary, higher education institutes, and administrative staff. This group has competences to provide direct services to the external users which are mostly students and their parents i.e. more precisely, children up to the age of 14 and young people from the ages of 15 to 29. In this group there are individuals with disabilities to which the public services have to be adapted to cater for their needs, to the extent needed for them to use the public services as independently as possible.

The Republic of North Macedonia has adopted the Law on Prevention and Protection from Discrimination,⁶ the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities⁷ and the National Strategy for Equality and Non-discrimination⁸ (2018-2020). According to the **Law on the general administrative procedure** from 2015 (which can be considered as *lex specialis* regarding service delivery), the administrative procedures rest on (amongst other things) the principle of equality, impartiality and objectivity (article 8) and the principle of service orientation of public bodies (article 9). These principles are incorporated in the provisions of this Law with the aim of ensuring equal access to public services for everyone. This Law gives general provisions on the equality of accessibility of public services, and on the other hand the *lex specialis* in the field of equality is the **Law on prevention and protection against discrimination** from 2020, that stipulates it is applicable (among other things) in the field of access to goods and services (article 3 paragraph 2 section 7) and that its provisions are binding to all state institutions (article 3 paragraph 2). Furthermore, this Law states that the obliged parties must pay attention to "Appropriate adjustment" (article 4 paragraph 4) as well as "Access to infrastructure, goods and services" (article 4 paragraph 5). The Law also stipulates the disabilities as a basis for a discriminatory offense (article 5). The Law recognises two main forms of discrimination i.e. direct and indirect discrimination (article 8).

These documents oblige the state to respect the rights of people with disabilities. This implies that the state has a positive obligation to this social category by creating policies that will enable people with disabilities to independently use the public services as much as they can. For those purposes the state institutions have a practice of appointing a person for communication with citizens who have a certain type and degree of disability and have an internal procedure for communication with citizens who have a certain type and degree of disability. Many of the public institutions, as well as the MES have published the names of their responsible

4 <https://bit.ly/3l410mT>

5 <https://bit.ly/3FOajqY>

6 <https://bit.ly/38jackx>

7 https://vlada.mk/sites/default/files/dokumenti/zakon_zaratifikacija_konvencija.pdf

8 <https://bit.ly/39YFxta>

employees that work with vulnerable groups. According to the job systematisation uploaded on the MES website, the Ministry has employees who work exclusively on the topic of vulnerable groups; namely, the MES has the following job positions that work with vulnerable groups: councillors for dealing with students with deviant behaviours in elementary school and high school and councillors that work with students with special educational needs in elementary school, high school and higher education institutes/universities. Additionally, the contact information (phone number and email address) is published on the MES website, under the tab “contacts”, which is easily accessible for citizens.

However, regarding the procedure for communication with citizens who have a certain type and degree of disability, the government institutions have failed to publish it online in a visible place and the MES is not an alone in this practice.

On the website of the MES (www.mon.gov.mk) on the task bar of the website, there is a tab called “regulation” that contains eight sub-tabs named: (1) Rulebooks; (2) Standards; (3) Instructions; (4) Concepts; (5) Bylaws/ Decrees; (6) Protocols; (7) Calendars; and (8) Laws. On these sub-tabs there are only the following two documents related to dealing with vulnerable individuals: (1) Guidelines for the procedure for reporting and protecting a student victim of any of the forms of violence, abuse and neglect; and (2) Rulebook on the manner of assessment of students with disabilities. Additionally, the MES has created and uploaded the strategic document Conception for an Inclusive Education⁹ and is responsible for its implementation in educational institutions.

However, most of the education related services are provided through the MES in close cooperation with other educational institutions which gives the MES the role of an intermediate between the citizens and the educational institutions like the student dormitories, schools or universities which directly deliver concrete services like accommodation, enrolment in education etc. . These institutions also have the obligation and a greater responsibility for employing persons responsible for communicating with vulnerable groups of citizens, but since they are not the subject of analysis, we will not go further explaining their obligations and performance.

We can conclude that the MES partially meets this requirement, due to the fact that all the services are user friendly with clear instructions, accessible for everyone in the same manner, but there are not specific services for vulnerable groups. However, the MES has special vacancies whose job descriptions are related to working with vulnerable groups, which means that there is room and potential for improvement in this sector for this particular requirement.

Requirement 5: Different channels for accessing sector-specific services are made available to users

The MES, according to the conducted website review and the answer obtained through FOI, provides approximately 67 services (listed in the Annex I), out of which all are available on the primary website, out of which 46 are available on the central government website for e-services <https://uslugi.gov.mk/> and less than half of the services are available on the sector-specific e-service platform <https://e-uslugi.mon.gov.mk/>.

All the central services that the MES provides for the citizens are listed on their main website (www.mon.gov.mk). The services are listed in a tab named “open calls and scholarships”, where the services are randomly listed as open calls published at set times, without any structure or coherence. This list of services has an informative character and there are links that lead to the government e-services platform only on some of the published services. Those are several services that are most commonly used (enrolment in education, enrolment in student dormitories, and applying for scholarships) and they are linked to the sector specific

⁹ <https://mon.gov.mk/stored/document/Koncepcija%20za%20inkluzivno.pdf>

e-service platform <https://e-uslugi.mon.gov.mk/> . However, the rest of the services are not linked to the central government e-service platform <https://uslugi.gov.mk/>.

All the services are available through physical/traditional form in the MES headquarters as well as through the one-stop shops in Skopje, Tetovo, Ohrid, Kumanovo and Bitola (<https://etu.uslugi.gov.mk/pages/home>). Ten of the services¹⁰ that are provided by the MES on a central level are available locally in physical form through these one-stop shops for public services. According to the information gathered through an interview with a MES employee, the Ministry is working with the one-stop shop for public services to further upgrade its available services.

However, not all listed services are available online, so the services which are available online are accessible through different online government portals: (1) National portal for e-services <https://uslugi.gov.mk/> and (2) the MES e-service platform <https://e-uslugi.mon.gov.mk/#/login>. The online platforms are sufficiently structured with clear instructions for how to use the available online services. These platforms are user-friendly and accessible both on computers/laptops and smart phones. Unfortunately, they lack mutual coordination and integration among themselves, so citizens could easily access one online platform on which they can use the services, without having to browse various government portals to determine which platform they can find a particular service on.

The MES platform (<https://e-uslugi.mon.gov.mk/#/login>), can be considered to be fully functional e-service platform, which unfortunately does not incorporate many of the MES services. The user needs to have a profile to access a service and after the final step of the application process on this platform for a particular service, the users receive an e-mail confirmation of the application process, which is significant for the further i.e., final use of the particular service as well as for situations such as applying legal remedies when the user is prevented from using the service. This is both in-line with the service orientation of the administration as well as the principles of the rule of law and legal certainty.

However, research regarding the promotion of public services from 2020 shows that barely 45.6% of the respondents answered that they were informed about the existence of the portal, although not all of them received it as an electronic service.¹¹ Other research from 2020 regarding the quality of the enrolment in student dormitories as a public service shows that 72.9% of the respondents were not informed about the accessibility of the service on the <https://uslugi.gov.mk/> portal and 68.2% have never used a digital service.¹²

From this brief analysis, we can conclude that the MES partially meets this requirement, due to the lack of integration and coordination of several online platforms on which the MES services are available and because not all but the majority of services offered can be accessed and obtained using both channels. This situation makes it difficult for the user to determine the channel for using a particular service that the MES provides.

10 - Awarding a scholarship for a student in a sports academy
- Issuing a decision for the second cycle of studies
- Issuing a decision for the first cycle of studies
- Issuing a decision for the third cycle of doctoral studies
- Promotion of a teacher to the title of teacher-mentor
- Recognition and equivalence of certificates for primary education acquired abroad
- Recognition and equivalence of certificates for primary education acquired abroad - for foreign citizens
- Decision for nostrification and equivalence of certificates and diploma for secondary education obtained abroad
- Acquiring the title of "teacher-advisor"
- Enrolment in the List of Providers of Digital Skills Training

11 Evaluating policy for promotion of public services; Centre for Change Management, Skopje 2021; pg. 26

12 Collection of research on public service delivery at the central level; Centre for Change Management, Skopje 2020; pg.121

Requirement 6: E-services are developed and available to users

The services of the MES available online and according to the UN classification for digital government at stage IV which implies an integration of three types of online interactions (G2G, G2B and G2C) are elaborated below.

Stage I of the UN classification is “Emerging presence” which means existence of information, which is limited and basic. Stage II is “Enhanced presence” which means the government provides greater public policy and governance sources of current and archived information, such as policies, laws and regulation, reports, newsletters, and downloadable databases. Stage III is “Transactional presence” which means two-way interaction between the citizen and the government. Stage IV is “Connected presence” and it represents the most sophisticated level in the online e-government initiatives. It can be characterised by an integration of:

- **Government-to-Government (G2G)** involves sharing data and conducting electronic exchanges between the governmental players. This involves both intra- and inter-agency exchanges at the national level, as well as exchanges at the national, provincial, and local levels. This component is sufficiently covered by the Law on General Administrative Procedure and the Law on Obtaining and Exchanging Evidence and Data Ex officio from 2013.¹³ The aim is to facilitate the process of public service delivery in such a way that the institutions would collaborate and exchange the necessary documents, so it would not be the citizens’ obligation to again submit previously provided documents. However, the general situation in the country regarding this level of interaction is not on a high level, and there exists the potential to develop and for the institutions to become proactive in sharing documents. Recent research shows that 13.7% of students were asked for such documents when applying for accommodation in dormitories¹⁴ which the institutions can obtain by cooperating with each other.. With the intent to further strengthen the interoperability, the Government established an interoperability platform (<https://mioa.gov.mk/?q=mk/node/1320>) and adopted a National Framework for Interoperability¹⁵ in 2016. On some of the calls for the services that the MES provides it points out that particular documents will be gathered ex officio by the institution and this practice significantly eases the process of receiving a service. This is done on those calls for which application the citizen has to provide documents that are produced by another institution and that is not the case with all the MES services.
- **Government-to-Business (G2B)** involves business-specific transactions (e.g. payments, sale and purchase of goods and services) as well as provision of online of business-focused services. The Law on Public Procurement regulates these kinds of transactions between the private and the public sector. All public procurements are conducted through a central government online portal (<https://bit.ly/3swwHJc>) and it is coordinated by the Public Procurement Bureau. The public procurements are a broad and separate topic that deserves its own analysis and it is beyond the scope of this report to cover the whole problem here since it is a central level jurisdiction and not a sector-specific competence. For the purpose of this analysis it is safe to say that generally the public procurements in education sector are functioning fully online and through the public procurement portal.
- **Government-to-Consumer / Citizen (G2C)** involves initiatives designed to facilitate people’s interaction with government as consumers of public services and as citizens. In this part, the MES is a leader on a national level when it comes to digital transformation of sector-specific public services. However, G2C also includes options for participation in the consultation and decision-making process, which in the Republic of North Macedonia is conducted through the central government platform ENER (<https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx>). This platform in its essence holds the concept of e-democracy where citizens can comment, suggest and discuss changes in the policy making and legislative processes.

From our research we can conclude that the availability and stage of development of e-services provided by the MES is different for each service. Most of the services in this sector are available online (stage III), but they are dispersed on different channels i.e. web portals. Additionally, this sector lacks sufficient promotion of the services that are available online and mutual coordination between the web portals. However, the services that the MES provides online can be considered to be developed at level IV sophistication. Therefore, we can consider this requirement to be partially met.

13 <https://bit.ly/37FwSo>

14 Evaluating policy for promotion of public services; Centre for Change Management, Skopje 2021; pg. 18

15 <https://bit.ly/3swX6Hb>

Requirement 7: Information on the accessibility of sector-specific services is available to users

On the official website of the MES there are no published data regarding the accessibility of services it offers online, or in person. For the purpose of the analysis, according to the guidelines, we conducted a website review as well as communication through FOI with the MES and we can conclude that there is no information of that character which is displayed publicly online. When asked through FOI if the MES has information on the accessibility of the services that it provides, the answer was that they do not have such information. On the central government platform www.uslugi.gov.mk there is information about the total number of registered users (74,220), the total number services (838), how many of them are available online (75), the number of institutions registered on the platform (1,288), the total number of submitted requests from citizens (20,510), and the total number of requests in the last 30 day (696). The same method is applicable for the one-stop shops website (<https://etu.uslugi.gov.mk/pages/home>) which displays the total number of served users (+35k), the number of registered public institutions (14), and the total number of services available (122). However, this is not information related to the sector specific services that are the topic of this analysis, but a sum of all public services uploaded on the portals.

In conclusion, the MES does not fulfil this requirement due the fact that there is not any form of information displayed on the primary MES website related to the accessibility of the sector-specific services. However, there is space and willingness for enhancement in this direction according to the interviewed employee.

Requirement 8: Data relevant to sector-specific services is available in open formats

According to the Law on Using Data from the Public Sector¹⁶ from 2015, institutions are obliged, in accordance with their technical capabilities, to publish data that they create in the performance of their competencies, unless the information is classified.

The MISA with the support of the Centre for Change Management (CCM) created the Strategy for Open Data 2018-2020¹⁷ and accordingly created the <https://data.gov.mk/> national portal which incorporates all government institutions including the MES.

Institutions can publish their data on their own websites or on the central government web portal which is focused exclusively on publishing data in open formats. This web portal is sufficiently structured, and it incorporates most of the state institutions. The topic of open data is a central activity of the government that is coordinated from top to the bottom. Coordinated by the MISA, and for the purpose of enhancing an open data culture, it should coordinate with the other sectors more intensively, not just by obtaining and publishing information in open data formats, but by also stimulating the creation and publication of such data from all sectors.

On its website, the MES has three documents available in open formats, but has uploaded only one of them on the national open data platform. Nevertheless, that one is regularly updated. The MES should continue uploading all available information in open data formats not just on the MES website but also on open data platforms. The MES should focus on creating more information available in such a format. Accordingly, we consider that the MES partially meets this requirement.

¹⁶ <https://bit.ly/3yy5qtU>

¹⁷ https://cup.org.mk/publication/Strategija%20za%20otvoreni%20podatoci_mk.pdf

Final assessment of the requirements

Requirement	Final assessment
Requirement 1: Users are enabled to voice their opinion on the quality of services received.	Partially met
Requirement 2: Information on citizen feedback and satisfaction with received services is published.	Not met
Requirement 3: Published data on citizen feedback is sufficiently detailed and segregated.	Not met
Requirement 4: Service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups.	Partially met
Requirement 5: Different channels for accessing sector-specific services are made available to users.	Partially met
Requirement 6: E-services are developed and available to users.	Partially met
Requirement 7: Information on the accessibility of sector-specific services is available to users.	Not met
Requirement 8: Data relevant to sector-specific services is available in open formats.	Partially met

III.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- 1. Requirement 1 - Users are able to voice their opinion on the quality of the service received** – Every citizen that uses the sector-specific service should have the right and possibility to voice their opinion, so a survey for assessing citizen satisfaction should be publicly displayed online on the MES website and incorporate an assessment section (for example a rating scale from 1 to 5) at the end of the application on every e-service. The MES needs to collect the feedback from citizens, analyse it, publish it, present it (ideally through info-graphics to be more perspicuous for citizens) and use it as a guide for further improvements of its services.
- 2. Requirement 2 - Information on citizen feedback and satisfaction with received services is published** – The MES needs to create a proper methodology for collecting data and perform an annual survey that allows for citizens' satisfaction to be measured. Also, the MES should work on publishing the results on its website and promoting it on social media channels as well. This is not just for the sake of transparency, but for the sake of further improving the services for citizens. This kind of research, which should be conducted by the relevant institutions, is the basis for the policy making, thus keeping citizens' opinions and needs in mind.
- 3. Requirement 3 - Published data on citizen feedback is sufficiently detailed and segregated** – When the MES conducts a measurement of citizens' satisfaction according to proper methodology it should have a representative character. Therefore it should provide at the very least data breakdown per the following categories regarding the respondents: gender, age, education, and territorial distribution.
- 4. Requirement 4 - Service provision is adapted to the needs of vulnerable groups** – The topic of adapting public services to the needs of vulnerable groups is in the competencies of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy and naturally recommendations relating to this topic are going to be directed toward that sector. What can be considered as helpful is creating a national strategy for adapting public services to the needs of vulnerable groups and adopting a proper action plan for its implementation and by conducting assessments that would be evaluated annually both on a sector-specific level and on a general i.e. national level.
- 5. Requirement 5 - Different channels for accessing sector-specific services are made available to users** – As a first step, the MES should create a catalogue with all the services with information regarding where they can be accessed online, in physical/traditional form or in both forms. In this manner, the MES would also have a specific "review of services" tab on their website besides the "open calls" tab on which all the open calls are published, which is the citizens only way to discover the type and number of services provided by the MES. Furthermore, the dispersion of the provided online services of the MES on several online government portals is a systemic question that needs to be addressed for the sake of easy access for the users. So, there should be separate online portals for each of the sector-specific services, or all public services should be available on one sufficiently structured online portal with clear instructions. This would stimulate citizens to use e-services, since those portals will be coherent with clear directions from the start.

- 6. Requirement 6 - E-services are developed and available to users** - The MES needs to coordinate with the national ENER platform regarding the promotional and outreach activities to stimulate civic participation.
 - 6.1.1. The MES has proven to be a proactive public institution that builds its IT capacities and develops e-services. However, the MES should work on digitalisation of every service it provides.
 - 6.1.2. The MES needs to undertake training activities of its employees to stimulate digital literacy and to raise awareness for the importance of continuous use of digital tools for accessing public services.
- 7. Requirement 7 - Information on the accessibility of sector-specific services is available to users** – The MES should conduct systemic research regarding the accessibility of the services it provides, that would be conducted on an annual basis and publish the research results on its website. This action could be conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Labour and Social policy as a joint activity towards achieving equality in access to services for all.
- 8. Requirement 8 - Data relevant to sector-specific services is available in open formats** – Regarding the sector specific data published in open formats, the MES needs to update its information on the central government portal <https://data.gov.mk/> since it has only one data set published. Additionally, the MES should produce more data sets, prioritise them and then focus on promotional activities of those data sets in open format so it can be reused by other entities.

APPENDICES

Free access to information requests

Institution	Date of sending	Date of receipt
Ministry of Education and Sciences, Republic of North Macedonia	01.04.2022	11.04.2022

Interviews

Institution/Organisation	Position	Date	Place
Ministry of Education and Sciences, Republic of North Macedonia	Advisor for investments in education and science	20.05.2022	Centre for change Management offices

Other sources

1. Law on the introduction of a quality management system and a common framework for evaluating the operation and provision of services in the civil service; 2013.
2. Law on General Administrative Procedures; 2007.
3. Law on Obtaining and Exchanging Evidence and Data Ex officio; 2013.
4. Law on prevention and protection from discrimination; 2019.
5. Law for using data from the public sector; 2015.
6. Strategy for Public Administration Reform; 2018-2022.
7. Action plan for implementation of National Strategy for PAR 2018-2022.
8. Annual report on the implementation of the action plan for PAR 2018.2022; 2019.
9. Common assessment framework (CAF), Ministry of Information Society and Administration, North Macedonia; 2020.
10. Evaluating policy for promotion of public services; Centre for Change Management, Skopje; 2021.
11. Conception for Inclusive Education; Ministry for Education and Sciences; 2020.
12. Collection of research on public service delivery at the central level; Centre for Change Management, Skopje 2020.
13. Strategy for Public Administration Reform 2021, Ministry for Information Society and Administration, Skopje, Skopje.
14. Strategy for Open Data (2018-2020), Ministry for Information Society and Administration, Skopje.



institut alternativa

