

# Fragnet national contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2025

**Part 1: Political participation and equality in elections**

**Part 2: Protecting women victims of violence**

North Macedonia

## **Disclaimer**

This document was commissioned under contract as background material for a comparative analysis by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) for the project 'FRA Fundamental Rights Report 2025'. The information and views contained in the document do not necessarily reflect the views or the official position of FRA. The document is made publicly available for transparency and information purposes only and does not constitute legal advice or legal opinion.



# Frnet national contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2025

## Political participation and equality in elections

North Macedonia

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# 1. Inclusiveness of the 2024 elections

North Macedonia held Presidential and Parliamentary elections on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April and the 8<sup>th</sup> of May 2024. For the first time in its history, the country chose a female president, while it had two female candidates out of eight. In the parliamentary elections, women secured 47 out of the 120 seats, representing 39.2 % of the total.<sup>1</sup> In the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) assessment, the candidate registration for the 2024 elections was inclusive.<sup>2</sup> However, these elections were held in a polarised environment<sup>3</sup>, which resulted in a complete change of the governing coalition.

## Inclusiveness of the electoral process

The Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia was amended after the announcement of the elections in March and April 2024 through an expedited process in parliament, including changes in the identification of voters (Article 38).<sup>4</sup> Thus, law amendment amendments of the law did not go through an open process of public debate<sup>5</sup>, making it an exclusive process. However, one amendment did ensure inclusion. Namely, it allowed citizens to vote without possessing a valid personal identification document. Namely, according to Article 38 of the Electoral Code, for the 2024 elections, a voter could cast a vote with an ID or a valid license up to nine months before the day

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<sup>1</sup> Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia (Собрание на Република Северна Македонија), [Members of Parliament](#), 2024.

<sup>2</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 14.

<sup>3</sup> European Commission (EC) (2024), [North Macedonia 2024 Report](#), SWD (2024) 693 final, Brussels, 30 October 2024, pp. 21.

<sup>4</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([Законом за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 ([Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24](#)), March 2024.

<sup>5</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 7.

of the elections.<sup>6</sup> This amendment was necessary due to the need for changes in personal documents in North Macedonia. These changes required all citizens to update their personal documents as a result of the Prespa Agreement with Greece.<sup>7</sup> However there were delays in issuing new personal identification documents<sup>8</sup>, which left many citizens without valid ID documents. There were still issues with applying this provision; however, in the end, those whose documents had expired within nine months prior to the elections were allowed to use their documents.<sup>9</sup>

### Inclusion of non-majority communities

Electoral campaigns and political parties in North Macedonia are largely ethnically defined and divided. While the different political parties largely cater to one ethnic community, there are also cases when some parties have members from other ethnic groups or when coalitions exist between various parties of different ethnic groups.

The Electoral Code requires that when submitting the electoral list for members of parliament, the list must include the declaration of belonging to a certain community (Article 64 (2))<sup>10</sup>, which the ODIHR has recommended be removed as a requirement.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([\*Законом за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст\*](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>7</sup> North Macedonia, [Final Agreement for the Settlement of the Differences as Described in the United Nations Security Council Resolutions 817 \(1993\) and 845 \(1993\), The Termination of the Interim Accord of 1995, and the Establishment of a Strategic Partnership Between the Parties](#) [Prespa Agreement], 17 June 2018.

<sup>8</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 12.

<sup>10</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([\*Законом за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст\*](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>11</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024.

According to Article 21 (2), the electoral bodies also need to have 20% representation of citizens belonging to other communities for adequate and fair representation of all communities.<sup>12</sup>

The separation of political parties by ethnicity presents another challenge to inclusiveness, namely the use of language and the availability of information in different languages. According to the Electoral Code, under Article 69(2), the State Electoral Commission is required to present the lists in Macedonian and the language spoken by at least 20% of the country's citizens.<sup>13</sup> However, political parties are not required to share information with their voters in a given language. Thus, a language barrier exists, for instance, for an ethnic Macedonian or a Roma voter to understand what ethnic Albanian parties are offering.

In terms of linguistic access to information at the polling station, the Electoral Code stipulates that the work of electoral bodies at the local level must be carried out in Macedonian and the language spoken by at least 20% of the population at the local level as per Article 23 (3).<sup>14</sup> Therefore, voting materials were provided in Albanian in 25 municipalities, Turkish in five municipalities, Serbian in three, and Romani in one.<sup>15</sup>

In terms of representation in the electoral lists for the Presidential election, ethnic Albanians were well represented, with two out of eight candidates (25%) being ethnic Albanian, while the remaining candidates were ethnic Macedonian. Additionally, two out of eight candidates (25%) were women.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>13</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>14</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>15</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) (2024) [Election FAQs: North Macedonia, Parliamentary Election](#), May 8 2024, 30 April 2024, pp. 6.

<sup>16</sup> North Macedonia, State Electoral Commission (Државна Изборна Комисија) (2024), Final Report on the conducted elections for the President of the Republic of North Macedonia

In the 2024 Parliamentary elections, ethnic Albanians were well represented, but other communities, such as the Roma and the Turkish communities, were less represented.<sup>17</sup> Customarily, Roma, Bosniak, and Turkish parties formed coalitions with larger parties, and with the practice continuing the 2024 elections. However, for the first time, several of these parties joined a coalition with the majority ethnic-Albanian party DUI and their more traditional partners, such as the VMRO–DPMNE and SDSM coalitions.<sup>18</sup> This electoral coalition practice has advantages and disadvantages for political parties representing non-majority communities. While it can disadvantage them regarding numerical representation in parliament, it may provide opportunities to influence the coalition's agenda. Additionally, as smaller, they may also struggle to secure funds. Ethnic minority parties reported to the ODIHR that “the current system of distributing campaign funds and other assets hampered their ability to campaign on an equal footing.”<sup>19</sup>

### Gender representation

Based on the Electoral Code of the Republic of North Macedonia, with changes instituted in 2015<sup>20</sup>, Article 64(5) introduces a gender quota of 40% for electoral lists, requiring that among every three candidates in the list, one must be of the less-represented sex.<sup>21</sup>

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and elections for the members of the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia (*Конечен извештај за спроведените избори за претседател на Република Северна Македонија и избори за пратеници во Собранието на Република Северна Македонија 2024 година*), n.d., pp.12-13

<sup>17</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 6.

<sup>18</sup> International Foundation for Electoral Systems (2024) [Election FAQs: North Macedonia, Parliamentary Election](#), May 8 2024, 30 April 2024, pp. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 17.

<sup>20</sup> Westminster Foundation for Democracy (WFD) (2024), Analysis on the adoption and implementation of the promises of political parties for a greater political representation of women (*Анализа на усвојување и спроведување на заложбите на политичките партии за поголема политичка застапеност на жените*), 04.09.2024. [https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Analysis\\_on\\_the\\_political\\_parties\\_commitments\\_towards\\_greater\\_political\\_participation\\_of\\_women\\_MKD.pdf](https://www.wfd.org/sites/default/files/2024-09/Analysis_on_the_political_parties_commitments_towards_greater_political_participation_of_women_MKD.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик](#)).



The electoral bodies must also adhere to a gender quota, specifying that at least 30% of the less-represented sex must be included pursuant to Article 21 of the Electoral Code.<sup>22</sup>

While parties abide by the 40% gender quota, this is often applied literally, with the third or fourth position on the list assigned to a woman. This placement of women candidates is reflected throughout the lists, as though they made 43% of parliamentary candidates, they only led 21 of the 84 lists (25%). As the ODIHR report notes, “Women candidates were often placed in the lowest positions allowed by law, leading to a significant decrease in the number of elected women MPs following the elections.”<sup>23</sup>

This practice can be particularly disadvantageous and marginalising for women belonging to smaller parties and parties of ethnic minorities, as they are likely to get fewer candidates per the six electoral zones and, therefore, be not able to secure a seat. Due to North Macedonia’s electoral model, which has closed lists,<sup>24</sup> a voter can only vote on the list rather than individual candidates, which means that placement in the order of the list is very important. For instance, an ethnic Albanian political party will most likely get two to three seats in a zone where there are fewer ethnic Albanians, and if the carriers of the electoral lists are male, then they get the seat, leading to a disproportionate representation of ethnic minority women. There are 47 women members of parliament, of which ten are ethnic Albanian, whereas none declaratively belong to other non-majority communities. While only 39 women won seats through elections<sup>25</sup>, the other seats were opened up when members of parliament became officials in the government, thus freeing the space for the next candidate on the list.

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*Редакциски пречистен текст*), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>22</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text (*Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст*), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>23</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 14.

<sup>24</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 8.

<sup>25</sup> North Macedonia, State Electoral Commission (*Државна изборна комисија*), Conclusion on the Publication of Final Results in the allocation of mandates according to electoral units in the elections for members of parliament in the Assembly of North Macedonia on the

The results were also lacking regarding the inclusion of women in the electoral campaigns. As the ODIHR report notes, only 25% of airtime was dedicated to women candidates, and most of the focus was on female presidential candidates.<sup>26</sup> In comparison, they constituted only 30% of the speakers at electoral rallies.<sup>27</sup> Lastly, several women reported to the ODIHR mission that “they had experienced gender-based discrimination, unequal treatment in politics, and targeted online attacks due to their gender at various points in their political tenure.”<sup>28</sup>

### Persons with disabilities

Regarding the inclusion of persons with disabilities, the Electoral Code has two provisions: one for the accessibility of polling stations and one for the accessibility of information. Article 112-a states that a voter who has special needs and cannot access a polling station must be enabled to vote by the electoral board. In contrast, Article 173-a of the Electoral Code stipulates that the accessibility of the polling station is the responsibility of those institutions that manage the buildings.<sup>29</sup> Article 75, which regulates media representation, stipulates under sub-article 4 that the public radio service, as well as the television stations with national reach, must publish at least one of the daily news editions leading up to the elections using a format that is accessible to

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Elections held for members of parliament in the Assembly of North Macedonia held on 8.5.2024 ([Заклучок за објавување на конечни резултатите и распределба на мандати по изборни единици за избор на пратеници во Собранието на Република Северна Македонија од спроведените Избори на пратеници во Собранието на Република Северна Македонија одржани на ден](#)), 18 May 2024.

<sup>26</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 24.

<sup>27</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 16.

<sup>28</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 6.

<sup>29</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

persons with disabilities, including sign language, subtitles, and other tools.<sup>30</sup> The Guidelines for Broadcasters for the 2024 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (Article 75) also regulate this obligation.<sup>31</sup> In addition, before elections, the State Electoral Commission adopted *Guidelines for implementing Article 112-a of the Electoral Code for persons with disabilities*<sup>32</sup>, outlining the procedures to follow in offering support to persons with disabilities.

Regarding the accessibility of the polling stations, persons with disabilities had difficulties accessing them, as approximately half of the polling stations that ODIHR observed did not have access for persons with physical disabilities.<sup>33</sup> This lack of accessibility also violates the landmark ruling by the Appellate Court in Skopje in 2023, which found that the SEC failed to ensure that persons with disabilities have access to polling stations.<sup>34</sup> The Court obliged the government and the SEC to ensure access to flat roads, parking spaces, availability of handrails, and the appropriate environment within the polling stations, such as good lighting and freedom to move.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code. Editorially Revised Text ([\*Заколот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст\*](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

<sup>31</sup> North Macedonia, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (*Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни медиумски услуги на Република Северна Македонија*) (2024), Guidelines for broadcasters for the 2024 presidential and parliamentary elections (consolidated text) ([\*Упатство за радиодифузерите за претседателските и за парламентарните избори \(пречистен текст\)\*](#)), 26 June 2024.

<sup>32</sup> North Macedonia, State Electoral Commission (*Државна изборна комисија*) (2024), Guidelines for the implementation of Article 112-a of the Electoral Code- for persons with disabilities ([\*Упатство за примена на член 112-а од Изборниот законик – за лица со попреченост\*](#)), 06 March 2024.

<sup>33</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [\*Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission\*](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 30.

<sup>34</sup> North Macedonia, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (2023) [\*The Appellate Court confirmed that the Government and the State Election Commission directly discriminated against persons with disabilities in their access to the voting process\*](#), 20 December 2023.

<sup>35</sup> North Macedonia, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (2023) [\*The Appellate Court confirmed that the Government and the State Election Commission directly discriminated against persons with disabilities in their access to the voting process\*](#), 20 December 2023.

Regarding the accessibility of information on the elections for persons with sensory disabilities, the legal requirements were fulfilled by all TV stations, except for one (TV Klan), which only partially fulfilled this obligation.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> North Macedonia, Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (*Агенција за аудио и аудиовизуелни услуги на Република Северна Македонија*) (2024), Parliamentary Elections 2024 Electoral media representation from 18-22 April and from 25 April to 6 May ([Парламентарни избор 2024 година Изборното медиумско претставување од 18 до 22 април и од 25 април до 6 мај](#)), pp. 7.

## 2. Violence and intimidation during the 2024 elections

According to the OSCE ODIHR election monitoring mission, the elections, both the first round of presidential elections on the 24<sup>th</sup> of April<sup>37</sup> and the elections on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May (which included the second round of presidential elections), were peaceful and calm.<sup>38</sup>

However, there were some reported tensions and incidents that particularly marginalised the Roma community. Namely, in the municipality of Strumica, Roma electoral observers encountered threats and violence, which members of the then-governing party, SDSM, had reportedly initiated.<sup>39</sup>

In addition, certain activities may also hint at political pressure. One such instance is the presence of persons other than officials of electoral bodies at the polling station (20 instances identified by OSCE ODIHR (2%)) who kept track of the persons who voted. While this is not against the law, it constitutes a practice that can be argued to pressure voters.<sup>40</sup> Secondly, the State Electoral Commission (SEC) was observed to lack transparency, showing the potential for political party pressure. As the OSCE election report has noted: “in the decision-making process, some SEC members were observed voting along party lines, which may demonstrate a deviation from their legal obligations of professional performance. In most decisions dismissing complaints, the SEC did not substantiate its findings and conclusions.”<sup>41</sup> However, these decisions were upheld by the courts, which would not warrant further investigation into the work of the SEC. Due

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<sup>37</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 27.

<sup>38</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 29.

<sup>39</sup> Gudachi, V. (2024), ‘[Online Narratives and Discrimination: Stakes for Minorities in North Macedonian Elections](#)’, *BIRN*, pp. 20.

<sup>40</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 28.

<sup>41</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 31.

to the SEC being constituted of members whom political parties propose as per Article 27 of the Electoral Code<sup>42</sup>, it leaves the Secretariat vulnerable to political parties.

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<sup>42</sup> North Macedonia, Law on amendments and supplements to the Electoral Code Editorially Revised Text. ([Законот за изменување и дополнување на Изборниот законик. Редакциски пречистен текст](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia nr. 58/24 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија бр. 58/24*), March 2024.

### 3. Attempts at online and offline disinformation and manipulation of voters during the 2024 elections

The Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services<sup>43</sup>, which was adopted in 2013, is the law that regulates traditional media in North Macedonia. However, no law yet regulates online media and content<sup>44</sup>, meaning online space is largely unmonitored and open to disinformation. Indeed, in the process leading to elections, “there were no organised state efforts to identify or address disinformation and manipulative content.”<sup>45</sup>

A report which monitored disinformation by the Balkans Investigative Reporting Network identified 108 sources of online narratives “fuelling ethnic division, discrimination, fear-mongering, and use of historical memory to manipulate voter sentiment and undermine political opponents.”<sup>46</sup> The voter disinformation they analysed centres around four main themes: nationalism and fear-mongering, narratives targeting (or opposing) LGBTI communities and women, and narratives against the Roma community. The report highlights that language against ethnic groups by political parties was used to stir hatred, while targeting other groups, such as women and LGBTI communities, was either used to delegitimise these groups or make them targets of discriminatory, sexist, or hate speech. The report concludes, “the use of misinformation

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<sup>43</sup> North Macedonia, Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services ([Закон за аудио и аудиовизуелни услуги](#)), Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia No. 184 (*Службен весник на Република Македонија бр. 184*) 26 December 2013.

<sup>44</sup> North Macedonia, Transparency International MK (2024), [\(Dis\)information spread online the pre-election period](#), n.d.

<sup>45</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 17.

<sup>46</sup> Gudachi, V. (2024), [‘Online Narratives and Discrimination: Stakes for Minorities in North Macedonian Elections’](#), *BIRN*, pp. 9.

and harmful narratives, particularly targeting ethnic groups, poses a serious threat to the democratic process and social cohesion.”<sup>47</sup>

The OSCE ODIHR mission also highlighted that certain traditional and online media showed preferences for the candidates they endorsed, including posting more positive news about their activities. For instance, “Alfa TV and the online news portal Kurir.mk dedicated the majority of coverage to the VMRO–DPMNE-endorsed candidate (68 and 64 per cent, respectively).” The same practice was observed in Albanian-language media, where the online portals “Tetovasot.com focused on the candidate endorsed by BDI/DUI (47 per cent), while Lajmpress.org extensively covered the VLEN/VREDI-endorsed candidate (40 per cent), both in a largely positive tone.”<sup>48</sup> Such practices can mislead voters because they are covered in non-transparent ways, making voters vulnerable to disinformation and misinformation.

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<sup>47</sup> Gudachi, V. (2024), ‘[Online Narratives and Discrimination: Stakes for Minorities in North Macedonian Elections](#)’, *BIRN*, pp. 21.

<sup>48</sup> Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) (2024), Republic of North Macedonia, [Presidential and parliamentary elections 24 April and 8 May 2024, ODIHR Election Observation Mission](#), Final Report, 23 September 2024, pp. 24.



## Annex 1 – Promising practice

Promising practice	
Title (original language).	No promising practices were detected.
Title (EN).	
Organisation (original language).	
Organisation (EN).	
Government / Civil society.	
Funding body.	
Reference (incl. URL, where available).	
Indicate the start date of the promising practice and the finishing date if it has ceased to exist.	
Type of initiative.	
Main target group.	
Indicate level of implementation: Local/Regional/National.	
Brief description (max. 1000 chars).	
Highlight any element of the actions that is transferable (max. 500 chars).	

Promising practice	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as sustainable (as opposed to 'one off activities').	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as having concrete measurable impact.	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as transferable to other settings and/or Member States?	
Explain, if applicable, how the practice involves beneficiaries and stakeholders in the design, planning, evaluation, review assessment and implementation of the practice.	
Explain, if applicable, how the practice provides for review and assessment.	

# Franet national contribution to the Fundamental Rights Report 2025

Effectively protecting women victims of violence

North Macedonia

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# 1. Legal and Policy measures to address violence against women, including its criminalisation

If relevant, please describe what measures were taken to ratify or implement the Istanbul Convention or prepare for the transposition of the VAW Directive. If relevant, please describe particular aspects of these measures relating to:

- a. Technology-facilitated gender-based violence, specifically non-consensual sharing of intimate or manipulated material (Art. 5 VAW Directive), cyberstalking (Art. 6 VAW Directive), cyber harassment (Art. 7 VAW Directive) and cyber incitement to violence or hatred (Art. 8 VAW Directive).
- b. Reporting crimes of violence against women, including third-party reporting and/or the use of technology to report (online or in-app reporting) (Art. 14(1) VAW Directive).
- c. Secondary victimisation (e.g. negative treatment of victims by the police/criminal justice system) and repeat victimisation (e.g. common in intimate partner relationships), including adoption of immediate response measures such as barring orders (Art. 50 - 52 of the Istanbul Convention and Art. 16 (5) and 19 VAW Directive), restraining and protection orders (Art 53 Istanbul Convention and Art. and 19 VAW Directive), and other measures such as protecting victims against intimidation (Art. 56 Istanbul Convention and Art. 18, 20 and 21 VAW Directive).
- d. Women victims of violence who are public representatives, journalists or human rights defenders (for example, allowing this to be regarded as an aggravating circumstance, Art. 11 (n) VAW Directive).

**Table 1 – Legislative and policy measures**

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
North Macedonia, Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth (Министерство за социјална политика, демографија и млади) Regulation on the form, content, and method of maintaining the Register of	New legal instrument (bylaw)	In August 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth finalised the <i>Regulation on the form, content, and method of maintaining the Register of trained persons for implementing the initial and continuous education on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence</i> , due to be adopted shortly. The regulation is currently being translated before it is adopted by the Minister and published in the Official Gazette (as per the legal basis provided in Article 17 of the

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
trained persons to implement the initial and continuous education on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence ( <i>Правилник за формата, содржината и начинот на водење на регистарот на обучени лица за спроведување на почетна и континуирана едукација за родово базирано насилство врз жените и семејно насилство</i> ).		Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence). <sup>1</sup> This Regulation establishes a pool of eligible trainers for basic and continuous training on the prevention and protection against gender-based violence (drawing on Article 15 of the Istanbul Convention and Article 36 of the VAW Directive).
North Macedonia, Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth ( <i>Министерство за социјална политика, демографија и млади</i> ) Evaluation of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Convention Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Macedonia 2018-2023 ( <i>Евалуација на Акциски план за спроведување на Конвенцијата за борба против насилство врз жените и домашното</i>	New legal instrument (bylaw)	In 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth, with support from an external expert, finalised the <i>Evaluation of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Convention Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Macedonia 2018–2023</i> . The evaluation assessed the course of its implementation, including by identifying obstacles and success factors. The evaluation found that the action plan had been partially or significantly implemented. The harmonisation of national laws (objective 1) was highly rated, whereas other areas, such as establishing services for the protection of victims and prevention efforts, need more attention (as required under Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention and Articles 38 and 39 of the VAW Directive).

<sup>1</sup> Information shared by a representative of the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth during a meeting held on August 30, 2024.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
насилство на Република Македонија 2018-2023). <sup>2</sup>		
North Macedonia, Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth (Министерство за социјална политика, демографија и млади) National Strategy for the prevention and protection of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence (Национална стратегија за превенција и заштита од родово-базирано насилство и семејно насилство. <sup>3</sup>	Developing new policy	Following the <i>Evaluation of the Action Plan for Implementation of the Convention Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Macedonia 2018–2023</i> , in June 2024, the Ministry established a task force to draft a <i>National Strategy for the prevention and protection of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence</i> <sup>4</sup> (as required under Article 13 of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence). It is planned that the Strategy will cover a period of eight years, and will be implemented through two national action plans (four years each) and annual operative plans at the level of each state institution (drawing on Article 7 of the Istanbul Convention and Articles 38 and 39 of the VAW Directive).
North Macedonia, Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth (Министерство за социјална политика, демографија и млади) Rulebook on the form, content, and method of integrated collection of statistical and administrative data on the	Developing new legal instrument (bylaw)	During 2024, the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth jointly with the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Interior, worked on the draft text of the <i>Rulebook on the form, content, and method of integrated collection of statistical and administrative data on the situation of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence</i> , which is still not finalised. <sup>6</sup> The Rulebook will prescribe the form, content, and method for integrated data collection on gender-based violence against women and domestic violence, the entry point for collected data into the system for

<sup>2</sup> North Macedonia, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (Министерство за труд и социјална политика) (2017) , [Action Plan for Implementation of the Convention Against Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence in the Republic of Macedonia 2018-2023](#) (Акциски план за спроведување на Конвенцијата за борба против насилство врз жени и семејно насилство на Република Македонија 2018-2023). Information shared by a representative from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth during a meeting held on 30 August 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Information was shared by a representative from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth during a meeting held on August 30, 2024.

<sup>4</sup> Information was shared by a representative from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth during a meeting held on August 30, 2024.

<sup>6</sup> Information was shared by a representative from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth during a meeting held on August 30, 2024.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
situation of gender-based violence against women and domestic violence (Правилник за формата, содржината и начинот на интегрирано прибирање на статистички и административни податоци за состојбата со родово базираното насилство и семејното насилство) <sup>5</sup>		social rights and services, and the data that processed competent institutions are required to publish on their websites and in the Central Data Catalogue of the public sector, in accordance with the Law on the Use of Data from the Public Sector. <sup>7</sup> The draft Rulebook also defines the timeframe in which institutions must share the data with the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth, which will then transform this data into information relevant for addressing the phenomenon on a national level (drawing on Article 11 of the Istanbul Convention and Article 44 of the VAW Directive).
North Macedonia, Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth (Министерство за социјална политика, демографија и млади) National Program for Reintegration of Victims of Violence (Национална програма за реинтеграција на жртви на насилство). <sup>8</sup>	New policy document	The adoption of the <i>National Program for Reintegration of Victims of Violence</i> is an obligation arising from Article 99 of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. <sup>9</sup> During 2024, the Program was finalised, and its adoption is pending by the end of 2024. <sup>10</sup> The Program aims to regulate reintegration and rehabilitation services, such as supported housing, employment support, career counselling, and long-term financial aid, which are crucial in dealing with the social risks that gender-based violence and domestic violence survivors face after leaving the shelter centres. The Program will also regulate the establishment and sustainability of such specialised services at the local and national levels (drawing on Article 20 of the Istanbul Convention and Article 25 of the VAW Directive).

<sup>5</sup> Information was shared by a representative from the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth during a meeting held on August 30, 2024.

<sup>7</sup> North Macedonia, Law on the Use of Data from the Public Sector (*Закон за користење на податоците од јавниот сектор*), Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 27/2014 and no. 193/2024 (*Службен весник на Република Македонија*) 05 February 2014 and 18 September 2024.

<sup>8</sup> North Macedonia, [Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (*Закон за превенција и заштита од насилство врз жени и семејно насилство*), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 24/2021 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија*), 29 January 2021.

<sup>9</sup> North Macedonia, [Law on Prevention and Protection of Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) (*Закон за превенција и заштита од насилство врз жени и семејно насилство*), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 24/2021 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија*), 29 January 2021.

<sup>10</sup> North Macedonia, Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth (Министерство за социјална политика, демографија и млади) (2024), [Program for the reintegration of victims of violence](#) (Програма за реинтеграција на жртви од насилство), year 2024.



Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
North Macedonia, Law on Justice for Children (Закон за правда на децата), 21 March 2024. <sup>11</sup>	Articles 83; 166; 169; 170; 171; 173; 174 and 175	In 2024, the Assembly of the Republic of North Macedonia adopted the new <i>Law on Justice for Children</i> , which, among other aspects, regulates the measures of assistance for child victims of violence and child witnesses. <sup>12</sup> This Law complies with Directive EU 2016/800 of the European Parliament and of the Council on procedural safeguards for children suspected or accused in criminal proceedings, and Directive 2012/29/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012, establishing minimum standards for the rights, support, and protection of crime victims, and replacing the Framework Decision of the Council 2011/220/JHA.
North Macedonia, Ministry of Justice (Министерство за правда) Commission for Monetary Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes was established ( <i>Комисија за паричен надоместок на жртви од кривично дело со насилство</i> ). <sup>13</sup>	Established body	Following the adoption of the Law on the Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes in 2022, <sup>14</sup> in March 2024, a Commission for Monetary Compensation of Victims of Violent Crimes was established ( <i>Комисија за паричен надоместок на жртви од кривично дело со насилство</i> ). <sup>15</sup> The Commission is responsible for deciding on the right to monetary compensation for victims and determining the type and amount of financial compensation in accordance with the procedure prescribed by the Law (drawing on Article 30 of the Istanbul Convention and Article 24 of the VAW Directive). Two bylaws were adopted to enable the functioning of the Commission. In February 2024, the <i>Regulation on the form and content of the</i>

<sup>11</sup> North Macedonia, Law on the justice for children (Закон за правда за децата), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 66/2024 (Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија), 20 March 2024.

<sup>12</sup> North Macedonia, Law on the justice for children (Закон за правда за децата), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 66/2024 (Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија), 20 March 2024.

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje (2024) ' [The State Commission on Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes constituted in North Macedonia \(Конституирана државната комисија за надоместок за жртви од кривични дела со насилство\)](#)', press release, 29 February 2024.

<sup>14</sup> North Macedonia, [Law on the Payment of Monetary Compensation to Victims of Violent Crimes](#) (Закон за исплата на паричен надоместок на жртви од кривични дела со насилство), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 247/2022 (Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија), 17 January 2022.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe Programme Office in Skopje (2024) ' [The State Commission on Compensation for Victims of Violent Crimes constituted in North Macedonia \(Конституирана државната комисија за надоместок за жртви од кривични дела со насилство\)](#)', press release, 29 February 2024.

Legislative act / Policy measure (including web-link)	Specific provision / paragraph / page	Briefly describe the specific focus on women as victims of violence (including specific aspects asked about in a-d)
		<i>seal of the Commission for monetary compensation to victims of violent crimes</i> <sup>16</sup> was adopted. This document is necessary to start the Commission's work in receiving requests from the victims of violent crimes (drawing on Article 30 of the Istanbul Convention and Article 24 of the VAW Directive). In June 2024, the Minister adopted the <i>Regulation on the form and content of the request for monetary compensation for victims of violent crimes</i> . <sup>17</sup> This document is necessary to start the work of the Commission in receiving requests from the victims of violent crimes (drawing on Article 30 of the Istanbul Convention and Article 24 of the VAW Directive).

<sup>16</sup> North Macedonia, Regulation on the form and content of the seal of the Commission for monetary compensation to victims of violent crimes (*Правилник за формата и содржината на печатот на Комисија за паричен надоместок на жртви од кривично дело со насилство*), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 44/2024 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија*), 22 February 2024.

<sup>17</sup> North Macedonia, Regulation on the form and content of the request for monetary compensation for victims of violent crimes насилство (*Правилник за формата и содржината на образецот на барањето за остварување на паричен надоместок на жртви од кривично дело со насилство*), Official Gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 131/2024 (*Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија*), 20 June 2024.

## 2. Standing of victims of gender-based violence during criminal proceedings

Please briefly elaborate on the standing of victims of gender-based violence in 2024 during criminal proceedings (as witness, civil party, damaged party, auxiliary prosecutor or party to the proceedings).

### The standing of the victims in 2024

From 288 reported cases to the nine Public Prosecution Offices (PPO), 80 women gave statements before the PPO, and only 15 victims gave statements with an attorney present. In 172 criminal court proceedings, in 14 courts, only 17 victims participated in the court proceedings as witnesses, and only six gave their statements in the presence of an attorney. For example, the First Instance Court in Kicevo reported that none of the victims participated as witnesses and did not have legal representation during the criminal procedures. No court reported awarding compensation in criminal proceedings.<sup>18</sup> All courts that reported damage claims by the victims in the criminal court proceedings were referred to claim this right before a civil court.

According to the Ministry of Interior, during the period January–June 2024, 528 domestic and gender-based violence crimes were reported, out of which, in 443 of the cases (84%), the victim was a woman.<sup>19</sup> The most frequently reported crimes were bodily injury (317) and violation of security (194). In 13 cases, the victims reported serious bodily injury, two were cases of murder, and one was a case of attempted murder. The available data do not provide detailed insight into whether the reported crimes were technology-facilitated gender-based violence or whether they were committed against a woman journalist.

Based on information received by eleven public prosecution offices (PPO) from around the country,<sup>20</sup> a total of 323 cases of gender-based violence were reported in 2024. In most of the cases, the violence was reported by the victim directly to the police, and the police accordingly informed the prosecution office. In a few cases, however, the violence was reported by a third party, such as the lawyer of the victim, and in one case, the Court informed the prosecution office about the violence.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Kicevo (*Основно јавно обвинителство Кичево*), Access to public information A no.03-49/5 from 11 September 2024.

<sup>19</sup> North Macedonia, Ministry of Internal Affairs (*Министерство за внатрешни работи*), Decision for responding to a request for free access to public information no. 16.1.2.-1077/3 from 10 September 2024.

<sup>20</sup> On 5 September 2024, Request for access to public information was sent to 22 public prosecution offices in the country. By the end of September, 11 prosecution offices shared their reply, including, PPO Kriva Palanka, PPO Veles, PPO Kavadarci, PPO Ohrid, PPO Struga, PPO Gevgelija, PPO Gostivar, PPO Stip, PPO Bitola, PPO Tetovo, PPO Radovis, and PPO Kicevo.

<sup>21</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Kicevo (*Основно јавно обвинителство Кичево*), Access to public information A no.03-49/5 from 11 September 2024.

Regarding the social structure of the victims, only one PPO in Kavadarci reported that 100% of the victims were women. All other PPOs reported women being, on average, 80–87% of the victims, and the rest of the victims being men. Seven PPOs provided data beyond gender, out of which six reported disaggregated data on the ethnicity of the victims,<sup>22</sup> including Macedonian, Roma, Albanian, and Turkish, and six PPOs reported data on the age range of the victims<sup>23</sup>. No further breakdown on grounds of disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, or any other characteristic was provided.

From the information provided by PPOs on the involvement of the victims in the criminal proceedings, all victims gave statements before the prosecutor, but only around 25–30% of them were represented by an attorney,<sup>24</sup> contrary to Article 43 of the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. In PPO Gevgelija, this was the case with all, i.e. 100% of the victims.<sup>25</sup> Article 43 of the Law on prevention and protection against violence against women and domestic violence guarantees the victim the right to choose a person who will accompany them during the procedure before a competent authority. The companion helps the victim protect their interest and provides support in proceedings before officials and institutions help to find a solution to her case and support the victim. This person differs from the victim's right to have a legal representative during the proceedings. The question toward the prosecution offices and the courts was how often the victims provided statements before an accompanying person or an attorney. Based on the replies, the victims did not have support from a companion, and in one third of the cases, an attorney represented them.

As per the definition stipulated in the Law on criminal procedure, a victim of a criminal offense is any individual who has suffered some kind of damage, including physical or mental injuries, emotional suffering, property loss, or any other violation or endangerment of this or her rights and interests, as a consequence of a criminal offense that has been committed. Being a victim of a crime does not give the individual an automatic standing in a criminal procedure, but the victim should join the prosecution of the crime as an injured party (*оштетен*) to be able to claim rights during the procedure. The victim of a crime has the right to participate in the criminal procedure as an injured party by joining the criminal prosecution or for a damage claim. The victim has the same rights as other parties in the proceeding regarding the use of language, the right to be advised of their rights and to have a legal representative, to indicate facts and propose evidence, to access the case file, to cross-examine witnesses and to be present at the court hearings.

In accordance with the special regulation of the status of victims, any victim of a crime punishable by a prison sentence of at least four years has the right to legal counsel paid from

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<sup>22</sup> Data on the ethnicity of the victims provided by the Public Prosecution Offices in Kavadarci, Ohrid, Struga, Shtip, Gostivar, and Kicevo (*Податоци за етничка припадност на жртвите од Основно јавно обвинителство Кавадарци, Охрид, Струга, Штип, Гостивар и Кичево*).

<sup>23</sup> Data on the ethnicity of the victims provided by the Public Prosecution Offices in Kavadarci, Ohrid, Struga, Gostivar, Kicevo, and Gevgelija (*Податоци за етничка припадност на жртвите од Основно јавно обвинителство Кавадарци, Охрид, Струга, Штип, Гостивар и Кичево*).

<sup>24</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Kicevo (*Основно јавно обвинителство Кичево*), Access to public information A no.03-49/5 from 11 September 2024. North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Kavadarci (*Основно јавно обвинителство Кавадарци*), Delivery of information A 03 no. 117/24 from 06 September 2024. North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Ohrid (*Основно јавно обвинителство Охрид*), Access to public information A no.03-105/2 from 06 September 2024.

<sup>25</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Gevgelija (*Основно јавно обвинителство Гевгелија*), Delivery of information A no.0302-88/24 from 11 September 2024.

the state budget.<sup>26</sup> Data received by the prosecution offices illustrate that victims heard before these institutions reported crimes that entail lower prison sanctions and, thus, were not eligible for free legal support at this stage of the proceedings. The Law on Free Legal Aid<sup>27</sup> also excludes legal representation of victims in criminal proceedings, which leaves these victims unprotected and without proper information on their rights.

Moreover, the provision in the Criminal Code sanctioning bodily injury, one of the most frequent crimes that women victims of violence report, prescribes that the prosecution of this crime is upon a proposal by the victim. In practice, the police, the prosecution, or the court should dismiss the case once a victim withdraws from the proceedings. Around 20% of the victims withdraw from further pursuing the criminal proceedings against the perpetrator during the procedure before the prosecution office, and in towns where the reported victims are mostly Albanians, the withdrawal percentage is even 50% in Gostivar,<sup>28</sup> or 56% in Struga.<sup>29</sup> Upon ratification of the Istanbul Convention, North Macedonia logged in a reservation on Article 55, paragraph 1, with respect to Article 35 of this Convention regarding minor offences, pending alignment of the provisions of the relevant national legislation.<sup>30</sup> Yet, the comprehensive changes to the Criminal Code, adopted in February 2023, failed to introduce ex officio prosecution for the most frequent criminal manifestation—bodily injury—leaving prosecution vulnerable to victims' withdrawal from prosecuting the perpetrator.

During the period covered in this report, the basic public prosecutor's offices in the country reported two cases of criminal offences committed against journalists, but without specifying the gender of the victims.<sup>31</sup>

Data on cases of GBV were also obtained from the 26 first-instance courts in the country. Answers were received from 14, suggesting a possible discrepancy in the data collection by the courts.<sup>32</sup> While some courts collected data only on cases closed with a final judgment (for example, the Criminal Court Skopje—63 cases),<sup>33</sup> other courts also informed on the number of pending cases as well (for example, the First Instance Court Kavadarci).<sup>34</sup> No criminal

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<sup>26</sup> North Macedonia, [Law on Criminal Procedure](#) (Закон за кривична постапка), Official Gazette of the Republic of Macedonia no. 150/10, 100/12, 142/16 and 198/18 (Службен весник на Република Македонија), 18 October 2010, Article 53.

<sup>27</sup> North Macedonia, Law on Free Legal Aid (Закон за бесплатна правна помош), Official gazette of the Republic of North Macedonia no. 101/19 and 194/24 (Службен весник на Република Северна Македонија), 22 May 2019 and 19 September 2024.

<sup>28</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Gostivar (Основно јавно обвинителство Гостивар), Delivery of public information A no.107/24 from 19 September 2024.

<sup>29</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecutor Office Struga (Основно јавно обвинителство Струга), Decision A no.03-55/2 from 06 September 2024.

<sup>30</sup> Council of Europe (CoE), [Reservations and Declarations for Treaty No.210 - Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(CETS No. 210\)](#), Status as of 01 December 2024.

<sup>31</sup> North Macedonia, Public Prosecution Office of the Republic of North Macedonia (Јавно обвинителство на Република Северна Македонија), Information from 26 August 2024.

<sup>32</sup> On 2 September 2024, Request for access to public information was sent to 26 First instance courts in the country. By the end of September, 14 courts provided their reply, including, First Instance Court Kavadarci, First Instance Court Stip, First Instance Court Krusevo, First Instance Court Radovis, First Instance Court Ohrid, First Instance Court Gevgelija, First Instance Court Kratovo, First Instance Court Vinica, First Instance Court Sveti Nikole, First Instance Criminal Court Skopje, First Instance Court Strumica, First Instance Court Negotino, First Instance Court Kocani, and First Instance Court Kicevo.

<sup>33</sup> North Macedonia, First Instance Criminal Court Skopje (Основен кривичен суд Скопје), Response to request PJI 37/2024 from 17 September 2024.

<sup>34</sup> North Macedonia, First Instance Court Kavadarci (Основен суд Кавадарци), Decision SPI 10/24 from 23 September 2024.

proceedings on gender-based violence were initiated in the indicated period in three courts<sup>35</sup> and in one court, there was only one such case, but no information was provided on its status.<sup>36</sup>

Data from the courts align with the data from PPOs regarding the absence of legal representation of victims in criminal proceedings, the lack of procedural protection for victims during the court proceedings, and the trend of victims withdrawing from the prosecution in 22–37% of the cases.

The sentences in the cases finalised during 2024 indicate no improvements in the judges' practice of using the full range of possible punishments available under the law. The available data<sup>37</sup> indicate that in 60% of the decisions, the court issued suspended sentences with a probation period. It is striking that in one court, four out of seven cases were finalised based on an agreement between a victim with no legal representation and the perpetrator. This situation may lead to the conclusion that the courts lack knowledge of the standards enshrined in the Law on Prevention and Protection from Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence and the Istanbul Convention, particularly those requiring an understanding of the dynamics of violence and the effects of reconciliation and alternative sanctions, not only on the victims as an individual remedy but also on society as a general preventive measure against gender-based violence.

Access to justice for victims of gender-based violence means punishing the perpetrator with an effective, proportionate, and dissuasive sanction, as well as imposing a compensation obligation on the perpetrator to the victim. Data collected from the courts demonstrate that the criminal courts failed to provide an effective remedy for the victims or impose a compensation obligation on the perpetrator. Those victims who requested compensation in the criminal proceedings were referred to pursue their rights in civil proceedings.

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<sup>35</sup> North Macedonia, First Instance Court Vinica (*Основен суд Виница*). Notification on request to provide public information SPI -10/24 from 02 September 2024. North Macedonia, First Instance Court Kratovo (*Основен суд Кратово*). Decision SPI -11/24 from 03 September 2024. North Macedonia, First Instance Court Krusevo (*Основен суд Крушево*) Minutes from SPI -11/24, 11 September 2024.

<sup>36</sup> North Macedonia, First Instance Court Kocani (*Основен суд Кочани*), Delivery of a response to a request for information SPI no -14/24 from 04 September 2024.

### 3. Annex 1—Promising practice

Promising practice	
Title (original language)	No promising practices were identified.
Title (EN)	
Organisation (original language)	
Organisation (EN)	
Government / Civil society	
Funding body	
Reference (incl. URL, where available)	
Indicate the start date of the promising practice and the finishing date if it has ceased to exist	
Type of initiative	
Main target group	
Indicate level of implementation: Local/Regional/National	
Brief description (max. 1000 chars)	
Highlight any element of the actions that is transferable (max. 500 chars)	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as sustainable (as opposed to 'one off activities')	

Promising practice	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as having concrete measurable impact	
Give reasons why you consider the practice as transferable to other settings and/or Member States?	
Explain, if applicable, how the practice involves beneficiaries and stakeholders in the design, planning, evaluation, review assessment and implementation of the practice	
Explain, if applicable, how the practice provides for review and assessment	



## 4. Annex 2—Case law

Case law	
Deciding body (in original language)	Основен Кривичен Суд Скопје
Deciding body (in English)	First Instance Criminal Court Skopje
Case number (also European Case Law Identifier <a href="#">ECLI</a> , where applicable)	XI K no. 2084/23
Parties	
Decision date	22.03.2024
Web link to the decision (if available)	N/A
Which fundamental right(s) were referred to in the case?	Access to justice, private life, security.
Key facts of the case (max. 250 words)	<p>In May 2022, a Roma woman was physically attacked in a public space by her former partner, who brutally beat her, causing serious injuries to her back, spine, and head. He grabbed her head and, in an attempt to forcefully kiss her, he bit her entire lower lip, tearing it off and spitting it on the ground. He forcibly dragged her to his home, where he held her illegally for half an hour and continued to beat her while her lip bled. The victim's sister came to the perpetrator's home and helped her escape, after which the case was reported to the police.</p> <p>Following the attack, the victim had three operations on her lip, but the full function has not yet been restored, as she requires additional surgical interventions, which she cannot afford. In September 2023, the prosecution office submitted an indictment against the perpetrator for the crime of grave bodily injury based on Article 131, paragraph 3 of the Criminal Code, which covers cases of serious health impairment and the destruction of an important organ. At the court hearing, the defendant pleaded guilty, and the court sentenced him to a conditional sentence with protective supervision as an alternative measure. The victim was referred to claim compensation through a civil procedure. The defendant had a prior conviction for a similar crime and had served a prison sentence.</p>

Case law	
The key legal question raised by the Court	<p>In its judgment, the court undermines the seriousness of the crime and the brutality with which the defendant committed it. The justification for the decision makes no reference to the gendered nature of the crime or the victim's vulnerability. Instead, the court focuses primarily on the mitigating circumstances, providing significantly more argumentation in favour of alternative measures over imprisonment.</p>
Result of the case in terms of factual outcome, and in terms of assessment of the legal question raised	<p>This case continues the frequent practice of disregarding the gendered dimension of the crimes committed against women in cases of domestic violence. It also exemplifies the ongoing practice of courts issuing lighter sentences for serious crimes against women, even when committed by perpetrators with previous convictions for violent crimes.</p>