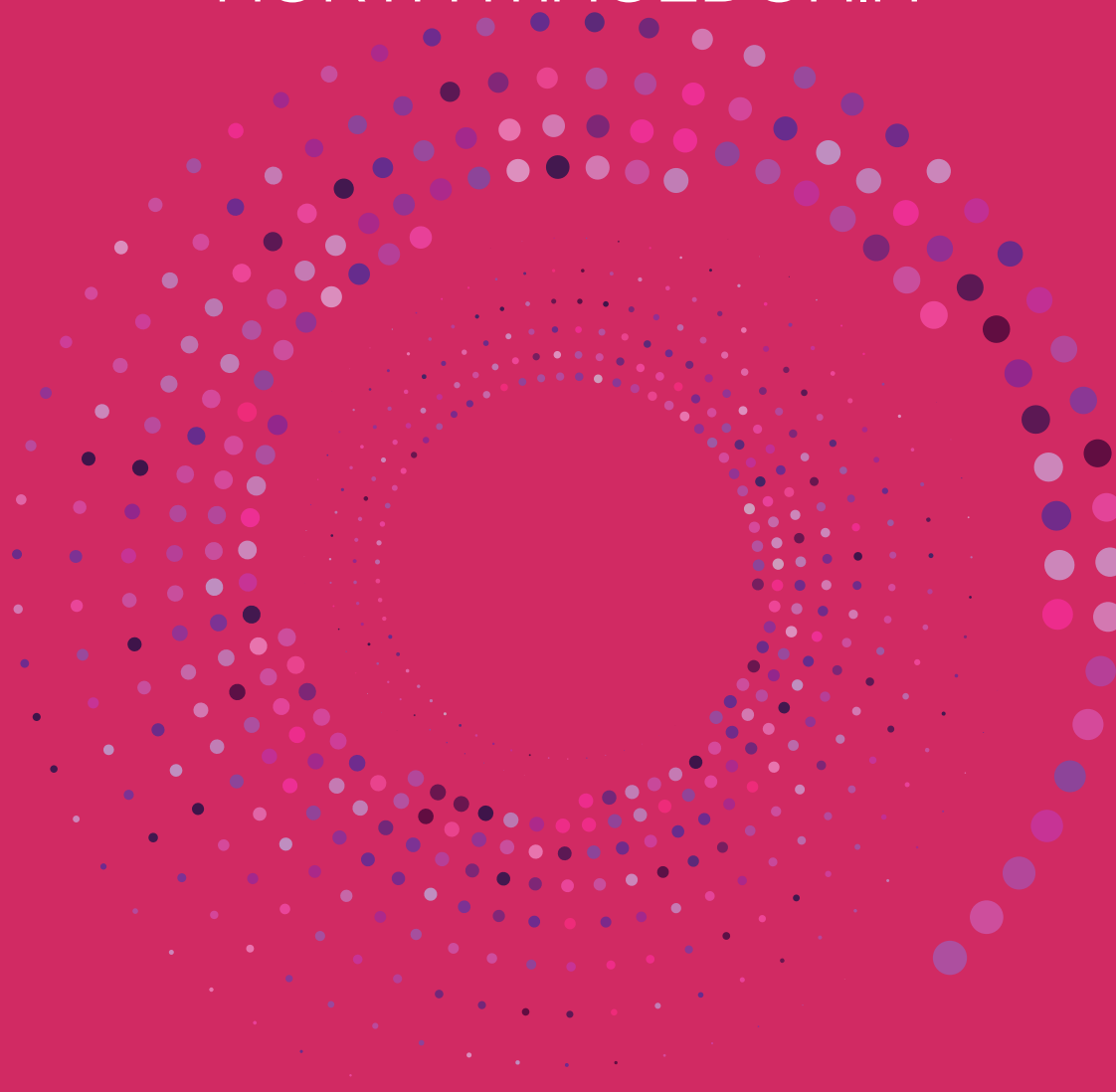


DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society
in the Enlargement Region
2021-2027

2025 Assessment

REPORT FOR REPUBLIC OF
NORTH MACEDONIA





This study was carried out by a team of experts under the supervision of the Hajde4EU project.

IPA beneficiary Analysis / Coordinator for the Republic of North Macedonia: Elizabeta Markovska Spasenoska

Team Leader: Behrooz Motamed-Afshari

Analysis and Strategy Expert: Selen Lermioğlu Yılmaz

Dialogue and Outreach Expert: Emina Nuredinoska

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List of Abbreviations

AML	Anti-Money Laundering
BCSDN	Balkan Civil Society Development Network
CAF	Charities Aid Foundation
CSO/CSOs	Civil Society Organisation/s
DG ENEST	European Commission Directorate-General for Enlargement and Eastern Neighbourhood
EC	European Commission
ECF	European Civic Forum
ENER	Unique National Electronic Register of Regulations
EPI	European Policy Institute Skopje
EU	European Union
EUD	EU Delegation
FATF	Financial Action Task Force
FRA	European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
HRBA	Human Rights Based Approach
IPA	Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance
KII	Key Informant Interview
LAF	Law on Associations and Foundations
LGBTIQ	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer
MCIC	Macedonian Center for International Cooperation
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism
MoJ	Ministry of Justice
MPSICR	Ministry of Political System and Inter-Community Relations (now Ministry for Inter-Community Relations)
MSPDY	Ministry of Social Policy, Demography, and Youth
RIA	Methodology for Regulatory Impact Assessment
SIGMA	Support for Improvement in Governance and Management
SLAPPs	Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
TACSO	Technical Assistance for Civil Society Organisations
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VAT	Value Added Tax
ZNM	Association of Journalists

Methodology

Common methodology (Western Balkans and Türkiye)

This assessment applies the common methodology used across the seven targeted countries to assess the DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021-2027, Hajde4EU's principal recurring analytical product, delivered annually as seven national reports and one regional report. It is an upstream advisory exercise for DG ENEST B1 and the EU Delegations and EU Office in Kosovo*, in which CSOs and independent media are subjects of analysis and dialogue partners, not direct beneficiaries.

The 2025 cycle applies the official, slightly revised methodology, retained to preserve comparability with the 2021 baseline and the 2023 and 2024 TACSO assessments. Assessment is organised around three Specific Objectives, scored through approximately 55-59 indicators, each combining an indicator-based grade with a qualitative narrative:

SO	Dimension assessed	What it measures
SO1	Legal and financial enabling environment	Registration, operation, freedoms of association/assembly/expression; state funding, fiscal framework, financial viability.
SO2	Public authority - civil society cooperation	Consultation and cooperation mechanisms, their mandate and effectiveness, inclusiveness (incl. HRBA-inclusive composition).
SO3	CSO capacity, sustainability and effectiveness	Organisational capacity, accountability, networking, and effectiveness in influence and service delivery.

Prior-year scores (2021-2024), particularly under SO3, are reference points only, not comparison baselines, due to inter-year methodological changes that widened the assessment's scope. For 2025, regional summary reports from the FRA Civic Space Update, ECF Civic Space Watch and the BCSDN Monitoring Matrix are appended where available for comparability, but not merged into the scoring.

Coordinators for IPA beneficiaries (and dedicated enabling-environment experts where needed) gather country-level evidence through a mixed-methods design: legal and desk review; structured online questionnaires targeting three groups (general CSOs, expert CSOs competent in the enabling environment, and public administration); key informant interviews; and focus groups. Evidence is processed through indicator-based scoring and qualitative narratives, verified through national validation meetings in June 2026 and internal Key Expert review, with working-draft consultation where agreed with EUDs. Internal or restricted Commission documents may inform data collection but are not cited.

The Republic of North Macedonia - country-specific approach to the methodology

The 2025 assessment for the Republic of North Macedonia is based on targeted desk review, survey data, specialised CSO input, key informant interviews and validation feedback. These sources are read together rather than in isolation. The General CSO Survey provides quantitative CSO percentages, the without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244/1999 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Specialised CSO Survey provides qualitative expert input used to confirm, nuance or challenge wider survey and desk-review findings, and the Public Institutions Survey provides an institutional perspective and a means of triangulation, not a substitute for CSO experience.

Evidence base at a glance

Instrument	Responses	Notes
General CSO Survey	61	61 in final export; used for respondent-level aggregation; denominators vary by question
Specialised CSO Survey	6	Circulated to 32 expert organisations; 6 substantive responses
Public Institutions Survey	18	11 central, 7 local
Key informant interviews	5	Qualitative triangulation; not statistically representative
Validation meeting	1	Online, 18 June 2026

Survey data

The General CSO Survey, which was publicly available and open to all CSOs was distributed from 20 May to 5 June 2026 via the Hajde4EU email database and platforms (LinkedIn¹, Facebook²) the Civil Society Resource Centre³, the EU Delegation to the Republic of North Macedonia and national CSO networks, with targeted outreach to grassroots and local organisations. It was further disseminated to grassroots and local organisations through direct invitations and one-to-one follow-up by the Coordinator for the Republic of North Macedonia. The questionnaire was anonymous and consisted for the most part of closed questions. As not every respondent answered every question, the number of valid answers typically decreases as the questionnaire progresses. Unless stated otherwise, the percentages in this report are calculated against the valid responses to each question rather than the full sample. In total 61 valid responses from general CSOs in the Republic of North Macedonia were recorded and used where respondent-level aggregation was required.

The Specialised CSO Survey was addressed to 32 expert organisations and networks with a track record on the enabling environment and on specific thematic areas, among them human rights, gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights, media freedom, minority rights, youth, disability rights, the rule of law and anti-corruption. Its purpose was qualitative: to let expert voices confirm, qualify or push back against what the General CSO Survey and the desk review suggested. The six substantive responses received were used for triangulation and validation of the General CSO survey findings and desk-review analysis.

The Public Institutions Survey, in turn, went to central, regional or entity-level and local bodies with experience of working with CSOs. Public institutions were reached through the list of relevant national and local institutions and distributed through the Public Officers Network. The 18 responses received (11 from central institutions and seven from local government) offer the institutional side of the picture and a point of triangulation, but it is not a stand-in for the experience of civil society itself.

¹ Hajde4EU, LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/hajde4eu>

² Hajde4EU, Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Hajde4EU>

³ Civil Society Resource Centre: <https://rcgo.mk/en/>

Respondent profile and reach

CSO respondents were concentrated in Skopje (39%), with the remaining 61% based in other cities across the Republic of North Macedonia, among them Prilep, Kichevo, Kriva Palanka, Bitola, Gostivar, Struga, Krivogashtani, Shtip, Radovich, Kavadarci, Kumanovo and Veles. Around 62% of identifiable CSO respondents were women. Outreach intentionally included local administrations; however, the aggregate survey export did not allow systematic cross-tabulation by level of administration for all indicators.

Other relevant respondent information: *(Percentages as reported; totals may not sum to 100 due to rounding or multiple response options.)*

The Republic of North Macedonia	
Type of CSO	82% registered association (50); 11% registered foundation (7); 2% registered platform/network (1); 2% vocational/professional organisation or union (1); 3% other (2)
Scope of work	44% national; 25% local; 16% regional/sub-national/entity; 15% international
Position in the CSO	38% Executive director; 16% President; 13% Manager; 11% Project staff; 7% Expert/consultant; 15% other
Thematic fields: top 5	46% youth and youth rights; 39% human rights; 39% social inclusion; 30% community building and development; 28% education, research and innovation
Thematic fields: bottom 5	1% sustainable energy and energy-efficient solutions; 1% open data; 1% amateur sports; 0% transport and urban development; 0% consumer protection; 0% animal rights
Age	16% between 18-35; 74% between 36-65; 10% 66+

Key informant interviews

Five key informant interviews were integrated into the report. They were used as qualitative triangulation and are not treated as statistically representative evidence.

An interview with a representative of the EU Delegation was held on 24 June 2026, focusing on the enabling environment and CSO capacities. An interview with a representative of the Civil Society Resource Centre was held on 26 May 2026, focusing on the enabling environment, the Law on Associations and Foundations, and the administrative burden on CSOs. An interview with a representative of the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia (Sector for Policy Analysis and Coordination) was held on 28 June 2026, focusing on the civil society strategy, the enabling environment and the capacities of public institutions. An interview with a representative of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society was held on 16 June 2026, focusing on the enabling environment, the role of the Council, and communication and coordination between the Council and public institutions. A final interview with a representative of the Association of Journalists was held on 28 June 2026, focusing on SLAPP lawsuits, hate speech and freedom of thought.

Validation

A validation meeting was held online on 18 June 2026 with seven participants representing the EU Delegation, the National Resource Centre, government, CSOs and CSO networks. The discussion focused on the participation of civil society in the preparation of legal frameworks and strategies concerning civil society work and development, with examples provided of limited CSO involvement in legislative development. Feedback confirmed limited transparency of public institutions in the distribution of funding to CSOs and addressed CSO capacities, with participants offering their interpretation of selected General CSO Survey data. Further fact-checking through analysis of CSO websites and social media profiles was proposed, and participants provided examples and interpretation of data on CSO governance, transparency and accountability drawn from their direct experience of working with CSOs.

Interpretation and context

Survey results are interpreted as indicative findings and read together with desk review, interview evidence and validation feedback. In the absence of other current CSO analysis at the time of preparation, the General CSO Survey was used as the predominant source for assessing CSO capacities. No specific contextual developments affected data interpretation for this cycle.



Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the 2025 assessment of North Macedonia's civil society environment against the DG NEAR Guidelines for EU Support to Civil Society in the Enlargement Region 2021–2027. The reporting period was shaped by local elections held in October 2025, ongoing efforts to reform the legal framework governing civil society, most notably through the draft Law on Associations and Foundations, and the suspension of USAID funding, which significantly reduced investment in civil society development across the country. Against this backdrop, the assessment finds that North Macedonia's legal environment for civil society remained broadly adequate, with meaningful progress in some areas, particularly the adoption of a new civil society cooperation strategy and the re-establishment of the formal government–civil society dialogue mechanism, while persistent structural weaknesses in public consultation quality, public funding transparency, and CSO financial sustainability continued to limit the sector's operating environment.

Specific Objective 1 - Conducive Environment for Civil Society:

Specific Objective 1 examines whether the legal, institutional and financial environment enables civil society organisations to operate freely, independently and sustainably. It assesses the protection of the fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression, safeguards against undue interference, the proportionality of regulatory requirements, access to domestic and foreign funding, public financial and non-financial support, taxation, philanthropy and volunteering, as well as the overall enabling environment for both registered organisations and informal civic initiatives.

North Macedonia's legal framework for freedom of association, assembly, and expression continued to meet most international standards in 2025, with no changes to the primary Law on Associations and Foundations (LAF) or the Law on Public Assemblies. A significant development was the Ministry of Justice's continuation of the process to amend the LAF, with a draft published on the National Electronic Register of Regulations (ENER) in December 2025. Key proposed changes include strengthening the legal recognition and clear regulation of the work of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society, introducing the legal basis for the secondary regulation of the system of public financing for CSOs, listing the public benefit sectors, and allowing international donor contributions to be complemented by the annual state budget allocations. In 2025, Freedom House ranked the Republic of North Macedonia 67th globally on its Freedom Score, while press freedom declined, dropping from 38th to 42nd in the World Press Freedom Index (score: 70.44, down from 73.78 in 2024). Hate speech increased significantly, with over 200 cases registered between January and June 2025 alone, more than double the 98 cases recorded in 2024, driven largely by local election campaigning and predominantly targeting ethnic and national communities.

CSOs' access to effective legal remedies was maintained in 2025, with no changes to the legal framework, and the proportion of CSOs reporting government decisions negatively impacting their rights continued to improve, declining to 7% in 2025 from 9% in 2024, 15% in 2023, and 20% in 2021. However, **the proportion reporting threats or attacks increased modestly to 15%** in 2025 from 13% in 2024. In addition, access to legal remedies in practice remains constrained for smaller organisations lacking resources for legal representation. SLAPP cases against journalists remained a persistent concern, with ongoing cases recorded in 2025.

The AML/CFT framework was amended in 2024 to address deficiencies identified by MONEYVAL's fifth round evaluation, with **no further changes in 2025**. CSOs are not classified as designated reporting

entities, but a downward trend was recorded for SO 1.3.b, with 13% of surveyed CSOs reporting at least one form of restriction (judicial harassment, discriminatory funding restrictions, or banking access issues) in 2025, compared with 7% in 2024. Banking-related difficulties are the most frequently reported issue, with 9% of CSOs reporting difficulties in opening bank accounts or sending and receiving money. Banks continue to apply disproportionate administrative burdens to CSO transactions, despite the sector being assessed as low risk for money laundering and terrorist financing. Beneficial ownership registration requirements, introduced in 2022, continue to impose high fees, EUR 1,050 for late registration, which create practical compliance burdens for CSOs.

The legal framework for **reporting and oversight does not impose higher burdens on CSOs** than on commercial entities. **Informal organisations and civic initiatives may operate without registration** and face no additional legal barriers to policy participation compared with registered CSOs. In practice, however, their ability to enter into contractual obligations or apply for public financing remains limited.

The **legal framework for CSO funding is broadly permissive**, allowing income from a wide range of domestic and foreign sources, including donations, grants, membership fees, and income-generating activities. **Tax incentives for giving are in place**: corporate donors may deduct up to 5% of taxable income (capped at EUR 60,000), while individual donors may deduct up to 20% (capped at EUR 400). Amendments to the Law on Donations and Sponsorships, intended to expand these incentives and reduce administrative burdens, were not adopted in 2025, despite being explicitly foreseen in the Civil Society Cooperation Strategy 2025–2028.

Public funding to CSOs in 2025 totalled 29 million EUR for 3,514 projects, down from almost 32 million EUR in 2024, with 75% distributed through the central budget and 25% through municipal budgets. Despite the volume of funds, the system remains structurally weak: 21% of the central-level funds were distributed without a public call, primarily by the Ministry of Sport (EUR 4,7 million distributed to 650 organisations without any public call), while discretionary decision-making and inconsistent evaluation practices were documented in other ministries. Perceptions improved modestly: 38% of CSOs rated public funding processes as transparent and fair in 2025, up from 13% in 2024, though 62% remained negative. Among those who applied, 52% were unsuccessful, an improvement from 60% in 2024 and 73% in 2023. Favouritism by authorities was cited as the main reason for rejection by 47% of unsuccessful applicants.

The volunteering framework remained unchanged in 2025. The Law on Volunteerism covers volunteering broadly but proposed amendments were not adopted. The National Strategy for Promoting Volunteerism (2021–2025) expired without replacement. CSO employment accounted for 0.32% of the total workforce, 2,564 employees out of 786,790, consistent with previous years (0.33% in 2021–2024).

Specific Objective 2 - Cooperation and Partnership between CSOs and Public Institutions:

Specific Objective 2 assesses whether civil society organisations are meaningfully involved in public decision-making processes and whether institutional mechanisms enable regular, transparent and inclusive dialogue between civil society and public authorities. The assessment covers the legal framework governing public consultations, the quality of consultation processes, participation in policy development and EU accession processes, as well as the effectiveness of institutional structures established to support government-civil society cooperation.

Public consultation processes continued to be formally regulated but inadequate in practice. In 2025, the Parliament adopted 54% of laws through expedited procedures, more than through regular procedures (46%), significantly limiting opportunities for meaningful civil society input. Of 133 law proposals considered by the Government, only 74 (56%) were subject to regulatory impact assessment, and only

27 of those (36%) were published on ENER for public consultation. Consultation reports in most cases listed stakeholders consulted without substantively addressing comments received. Proposals submitted by CSOs for the Government Work Programme declined by 37% compared with 2024 (22 proposals from 11 CSOs, down from 35 proposals from 19 CSOs), reflecting growing CSO demotivation due to lack of feedback. **CSO participation in working groups declined**, with civil society included in 55% of working groups formed in 2025, down from 79% in 2024. While 62% of surveyed CSOs reported participating in at least one consultation process, this dropped sharply to just 8% when both effectiveness criteria, access to drafts and at least 15 days to respond, were simultaneously met.

A major positive development in 2025 was the adoption in July 2025 of the **Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025–2028**, accompanied by a budgeted Action Plan, representing a significant improvement from 2024 when no valid strategy was in place. Equally notable, **the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society**, which had been non-functional in 2023 and 2024, held its constitutive meeting in April 2025 and convened six meetings throughout the year, adopting a working programme and engaging proactively on key legislative and policy issues. These developments represent a meaningful improvement from the previous two years and reflect restored institutional mechanisms for government–civil society cooperation. The Unit for Cooperation with CSOs also strengthened its capacity through new staffing and improved transparency via a redesigned webpage, though additional resources remain needed for sustained effectiveness.

Specific Objective 3 - CSO Capacities and Resilience:

Specific Objective 3 assesses the organisational capacity, sustainability and resilience of civil society organisations. It examines internal governance, strategic and financial management, accountability, organisational learning, communication, evidence-based work, stakeholder engagement and financial sustainability, recognising that resilient civil society organisations require not only an enabling legal environment but also sound governance systems, professional management, diversified resources and the capacity to adapt to changing political, economic and social circumstances.

Internal governance structures showed notable improvement. A total of 96% of surveyed CSOs reported having both an effective governing body and a governing document in 2025, compared with 44% in 2024, with the change partly reflecting a revised and more inclusive assessment methodology. The proportion conducting periodic conflict-of-interest checks rose to 46% in 2025 from 12% in 2024, though 17% reported no such accountability measures. Gender equality policies were adopted by 65% of surveyed CSOs in 2025, a significant increase from 34% in 2024 and 33% in 2021. **Organisational strategies are widespread**, reported by 85% of CSOs in 2025, consistent with previous years.

Transparency showed a mixed picture. Publication of annual reports and financial statements improved to 65% in 2025, up from 46% in 2024 and 43% in 2023. However, transparency regarding funding sources and amounts remains limited and has shown a declining trend, only 54% reported publishing this information in 2025. Communication capacities are strong, with 100% of CSOs using at least one online communication channel, Facebook remaining the most widely used (92%). Media partnerships increased to 40% in 2025 from 26% in 2024. **Evidence-based work is well embedded**, with 75% of CSOs undertaking some form of research. Network participation is high and stable at 85%.

Funding diversification faces growing structural pressure. In 2025, 82% of surveyed CSOs reported multiple donor sources, though only 54% had no single donor providing more than half of their budget, a decline from 60% in 2024. The suspension of USAID funding in early 2025, which had originally allocated nearly USD 37 million for 2025–2028 across multiple sectors, significantly disrupted the sector, forcing some organisations to reduce operations, terminate staff, and discontinue service provision for their beneficiaries. Funding from sources other than donors remains present but modest, with 65%

of CSOs raising some funds from other sources (down from 74% in 2024), and membership fees, individual donations, and income-generating activities contributing limited proportions of organisational budgets. These trends signal a sector under increasing financial pressure, with sustainability concerns likely to intensify as the effects of USAID withdrawal and broader donor reductions compound in the coming years.



IPA beneficiary Assessment

Specific Objective 1: A conducive environment for civil society to carry out its activities is in place.

SO 1.1 | All individuals and legal entities in the Enlargement Region can establish, join and participate in non-formal and/or registered organisations, can assemble peacefully and can express themselves freely.

Indicator 1.1.a – Extent to which relevant domestic legislation provides that:

- ➔ Associations can be established or registered without discrimination on any grounds.
- ➔ No unlawful restrictions are placed on the scope of their activities or pursuit of their objectives.
- ➔ Their termination may only occur following a decision by an independent and impartial court.
- ➔ No unlawful restrictions are placed on freedom of peaceful assembly.
- ➔ Freedom of expression is exercised by all, and no unlawful restrictions are imposed.

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

The Law on Associations and Foundations (LAF), adopted in 2010⁴, regulates the right to association without any discrimination. The right to free association is exercised through the formation of associations, foundations, unions, and organisational forms of foreign organisations for the achievement of their goals, activities, and the protection of rights, interests, and beliefs in accordance with the Constitution and law. The civil society organisations (CSOs) are registered in the Central Registry following a simple, fast and non-costly procedure.

During the reporting period, there were no reported cases of CSOs being denied registration or establishment on discriminatory grounds related to their founders' ethnicity, political affiliation, religion, gender, or other protected characteristics. The law allows organisations to engage in a broad range of activities, including advocacy, public policy engagement, service provision, protection of human rights, etc., provided these are in accordance with the constitutional order and legal framework. An example from 2025 concerns an organisation that faced difficulties related to the provision of an accommodation service for victims of human trafficking. Namely, the Administrative Agreement for providing the social service "Temporary Accommodation for Victims of Human Trafficking" with the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy had a duration limited to May 2026, coinciding with the expiration of the service license. Although a request for license renewal was submitted on time, the Licensing Commission

⁴ Official Gazette, 52/2010

for Social Service Providers has not made a decision on the application for over three months. This administrative delay has prevented the continuation of the Administrative Agreement, resulting in the cessation of state funding for the only specialised shelter for victims of human trafficking in the Republic of North Macedonia.

Chapter 10 of the current LAF regulates the termination and prohibition of the work of an organisation. A CSO may face termination if it fails to perform its legal and administrative duties, such as failing to hold mandatory Assembly meetings or neglecting to submit required financial reports for two consecutive years. Additionally, the organisation may cease to exist due to statutory amendments, a court decision, or if it has declared bankruptcy or completed liquidation proceedings. The work of an organisation may be prohibited if its activities aim to violently overthrow the constitutional order of the Republic of North Macedonia. Additionally, any promotion or incitement of military aggression, as well as the fostering of national, racial, or religious hatred or intolerance, will lead to a ban. Furthermore, engaging in terrorist activities or actions that violate the Constitution or laws, and infringing upon the rights and freedoms of others, are grounds for termination. Anyone can submit an initiative for the prohibition of the operations of organisations to the competent public prosecutor, who, based on the prior evaluation and evidence, will decide on opening a procedure before an impartial and independent court.

In 2025, the Ministry of Justice (MoJ) initiated continuation of the procedure to amend the LAF, which was last revised in 2022. The working group for the LAF was renewed while extending the invitations for new members to CSO Networks and Umbrella organisations. The working group also included government officials, representatives of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society and legal experts, to ensure a comprehensive approach to the amendments.

The key proposed novelties in the draft LAF published on the Unique National Electronic Registry of Regulations (ENER)⁵ relate to the state financing of CSOs, further defining the public interest and increasing the transparency and accountability of the CSO. Since the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society (the Council) was originally established through a bylaw (a Government decision), the current amendments to the LAF introduce specific articles that regulate the role of the Council, as well as the participation of CSOs in policymaking processes. The main idea behind this proposal was to strengthen the position of the Council by establishing it in law, thereby making its role more formal and binding. The draft law regulates the CSOs' state funding, emphasising the need for systematic planning and allocation of public resources. The proposed approach for public financing includes mechanisms for co-financing, allowing for a synergistic approach where international donor contributions can be complemented by state funds. In terms of public interest, the existing law defines the Public Benefit Organisations (PBOs), whereas the draft law aims to expand the definition and criteria for what constitutes public benefit interest. This expansion is designed to ensure that a broader range of civil society initiatives can qualify for public funding.⁶

The Law on Public Assemblies⁷ aligns with most international standards and has not changed in 2025. Similarly, as in the report for 2024, one issue remains that needs to be addressed to be fully in line with international standards. These include the requirement for prior notification for public assemblies organised by non-citizens and the legal definition of the minimum number (at least 20 people) of attendees necessary for a gathering to be classified as a public assembly.

There were no changes in the Law on Civil Liability and Defamation in 2025. To prevent arbitrary interpretation, the law specifies exceptions where liability for insult or defamation does not apply, serving

⁵ Draft Law on Foundations and Associations published on ENER 31.12.2025 accessible at: https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=-pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=73921

⁶ Publishing of the draft LAF followed an extensive consultative process in which CSOs provided comments to the draft law. To date, there is no publicly available revised version of the law.

⁷ Official Gazette nr. 31/2020

as safeguards against Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation (SLAPPs), even if they are not explicitly named. While these protections aim to prevent the misuse of legal actions to silence criticism, there is a need for better training for judges to ensure their effective implementation.

In 2025, Freedom House ranked the Republic of North Macedonia 67th⁸ in the world on the Global Freedom Score, as a partly free country, thus keeping the same ranking as in 2024. Regarding freedom of expression, the Republic of North Macedonia was ranked 42nd in 2025 (index score 70.44), representing a decline compared with the 38th position in 2024 (index score 73.78).⁹

The Constitutional Court ruled¹⁰ in favour of the rights of a journalist's public expression of thought. These rights were violated in two specific cases. In the first case, the Court found that both the Civil and Appellate Courts failed to recognise the capacity in which the journalist, the cameraman and organiser of the media team were present in Parliament during the events of 27 April 2017. The applicants, in their capacity as a journalistic team, were prevented from covering the events occurring in front of the Assembly due to the state's failure to fulfil its obligations that it was supposed to undertake. The Court emphasised that the state must create conditions that allow journalists to report freely (Court Decision 9/2025 from 19.11.2025). In the second case, the Court established that the applicant, as a journalist, was prevented from expressing her opinions and ideas freely, as the state failed to fulfil its positive obligation to protect the applicant and enable her to inform the public about the events in the Assembly on April 27, 2017 (Court Decision 8/2025 from 24.09.2025).

According to data from the Register of the Association of Journalists (ZNM), the violations of journalists' and media workers' rights have been declining between 2021 and 2024. However, in 2025, a slight increase was noted from four cases in 2024 to five in 2025. Interestingly, over the years, the cases of attacks on journalists have moved from physical to online threats and attacks. According to the Registry, a total of 90 cases have been recorded between 2014 and the present. Of these, 30 cases involve female journalists, while 60 cases concern male journalists or media workers¹¹. The Ministry of Interior published a link to the ZNM Register for easier navigation which can be considered a step forward.

Regarding SLAPP lawsuits against journalists and media workers, the numbers show an increase from four in 2021 to eight in 2024. In 2025, one case was registered from a private higher education institution.¹² It is important to note that although no evident increase is registered in 2025, the SLAPPs are continuously present, which shows that the pressure from the business elite on journalists exists in continuity.

According to the CIVICUS Monitor for 2025, the civic space in the Republic of North Macedonia remained narrowed, as in 2024 and 2023.¹³

Hate speech in the Republic of North Macedonia remains relatively high compared with 2024. In 2025, local elections took place in the Republic of North Macedonia, thus affecting the hate speech trend, especially in the periods close to the elections as well as post-election. While the 2024 hate speech was predominantly targeted towards marginalised groups, including civil society activists and CSOs, as well as cases related to sexual orientation, in 2025, most of the cases targeted ethnic and national communities. According to the reports of the Helsinki Committee in North Macedonia, from January to June 2025, over 200 cases of hate speech were registered, compared with 98 cases in 2024. However, in February and June, there was an increase in homophobic speech towards the LGBTIQ+ community.

⁸ Freedom House report 2025; <https://freedomhouse.org/country/north-macedonia/freedom-world/2025>

⁹ Reporters Without Borders 2025; <https://rsf.org/en/index?year=2025>

¹⁰ <https://ustavensud.mk/archives/36917>; <https://ustavensud.mk/archives/38026>

¹¹ Association of Journalists ; <https://znm.org.mk/povreda-na-novinari/>

¹² Association of Journalists; <https://znm.org.mk/en/the-government-has-initiated-the-process-to-establish-an-anti-slapp-mechanism-effective-solutions-are-now-expected/>

¹³ Civicus Monitor 2025; <https://monitor.civicus.org/explore/citizens-mobilise-for-accountability-following-deadly-nightclub-fire/>

The majority of cases occurred on social media, with insufficient moderation and sanctioning by the platforms. Despite the criminal charges filed, the Public Prosecutor's Office has not made any positive decisions regarding the cases¹⁴.

From 1 to 31 October, 2025, a period that included the first round of local elections held on 17 October and the second round on 31 October, there was a significant increase in hate speech in both public and online spaces. A total of 107 cases were registered on the web platform www.govornaomraza.mk, mainly targeting ethnic and national communities.¹⁵ In November 2025, a total of 90 cases of hate speech were recorded on the platform www.govornaomraza.mk, including the same trend of targeting ethnic and national minorities. In this period, the number of cases based on sexual orientation and gender identity increased to 12.

SO 1.2 | Public authorities protect CSOs from interference and attacks and respect their right to privacy.

Indicator 1.2.a – Extent to which CSOs have access to an effective remedy to challenge or seek review of decisions affecting exercise of their rights.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

There have been no noticeable changes in 2025 compared with the situation in 2024 regarding CSOs' access to an effective remedy to challenge or seek review of decisions that affect their rights. Namely, CSOs have the right to challenge or request a review of decisions that affect their rights, following the same criteria and procedures as other legal entities.

In practice, the situation is similar to that in 2024. As stated in the EU TACSO Assessment report for 2024, smaller CSOs face difficulties in accessing legal remedies due to limited resources for hiring lawyers or consultants and a lack of in-house expertise for drafting appeals or lawsuits. Pro bono legal services are limited. CSOs cannot access legal aid or exemptions from court fees, leading to a higher risk of fines and diminished credibility, which hampers their ability to fulfil their missions. In the case noted under Indicator 1.1.a, this situation severely jeopardises the continuity of services for protection, accommodation, rehabilitation, and support for victims of human trafficking, including child victims. Additionally, it posed a risk that the state may fail to fulfil its legal and international obligations to provide adequate protection and support for victims of human trafficking, in accordance with national legislation and ratified international instruments.

¹⁴ Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, Policy brief, September 2025; <https://mhc.org.mk/category/reports/special-report/>

¹⁵ Helsinki Committee for Human Rights <https://mhc.org.mk/category/reports/special-report/>

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying the government did not take any decisions that negatively impacted their ability to exercise their rights	% CSOs saying the government took decisions that negatively impacted their ability to exercise their rights
2025	93%	7%

In 2025, 7% of respondents to the CSO survey indicated that government authorities made decisions that negatively impacted their ability to exercise their rights. This percentage suggests that the overall situation has improved compared with 2024 (9%), 2023 (15%), and 2021, when 20% of CSOs reported that government decisions adversely affected their rights.

Indicator 1.2.b – Extent to which CSOs are protected by law from threats, attacks, judicial harassment and discriminatory treatment, in particular:

- ➔ threats, including intimidation, harassment, defamation, as well as hate speech online and offline
- ➔ attacks, including acts of violence, physical abuse, searches and damage to property
- ➔ judicial harassment, including arbitrary arrest and detention, unlawful interference with communications, and abuse of criminal, civil and administrative proceedings, or threats thereof
- ➔ discriminatory treatment, including disproportionate reporting requirements for CSOs.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In 2025, no new legislation was introduced concerning the protection of CSOs from threats, attacks, judicial harassment, or discriminatory treatment. In 2025, the Law on Prevention and Protection Against Discrimination and the Criminal Code remained unchanged. It is important to underline that domestic legislation still does not provide a specific definition of threats and attacks against civil society organisations. Regarding discrimination, CSOs are subject to the same provisions that apply to all citizens and legal entities. According to the LAF, the state authorities are obliged to act with organisations in accordance with the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Although by law the CSOs are protected from threats, attacks, judicial harassment and discriminatory practices, in practice the court cases of organisations that were victims of such attacks in the past do not have speedy resolution, as indicated during the validation focus group.

Indicator 1.2.c – Proportion of CSOs that operate effectively without threats, attacks, judicial harassment in terms of:

- ➔ number of complaints concerning lack of protection of CSOs;
- ➔ number of attacks on CSOs and their members;
- ➔ number of instances of damage to property;
- ➔ number of instances of discriminatory treatment in reporting;
- ➔ number of instances when CSO offices were unlawfully searched, or subjected to inspections;
- ➔ number of instances of interference with the communications of CSOs.

According to the CSO survey, 15% of participating organisations reported that either their organisation or their members had been subjected to at least one of the following situations: verbal threats, physical attacks, property damage, unlawful searches or interference with communications, while such occurrences were 13% in 2024, 11% in 2023 and 23% in 2021.

According to the CSO survey results in 2025, 11% of responding CSOs reported verbal attacks on their organisation or members, 4% property damage, while one organisation reported a physical attack on their members. In addition, one CSO reported unlawful or excessive searches or inspections and another one reported interference with communications.

While no CSO respondent to the 2025 survey reported SLAPP cases against them, 4% stated they were targets of smear campaigns by national or local authorities.

According to the general CSO survey, only 7% of the participating CSOs submitted an official complaint to the authorities. Reasons for not officially complaining were fear of safety risk when/if complained (2 respondents), disbelief in the effectiveness of the complaint system (2 respondents), and not knowing they had the right for remedy (1 respondent).

For comparison, the survey with public officials reveals that in 2025, some 86% of the public officials who responded find that the CSOs have operated without threats, attacks and judicial harassment to a very high (36%) and sufficient level (50%) respectively. Considering the survey with CSOs and their answers and validation focus group discussion, the perception provided by the public officials broadly corresponds to the reported situation.

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying that their organisation or its members were subject to threats, physical attacks, property damage, communication interference, unlawful searches	% CSOs that submitted an official complaint	% CSOs saying that the authorities interfered with the communications of their CSO
2025	11%	7%	2%

SO 1.3 | Measures used to fight extremism, terrorism, money laundering or corruption are targeted and proportionate in line with the risk-based approach, and respect human rights standards on freedom of association, assembly and expression.

Indicator 1.3.a – Extent to which laws to combat extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption do not unduly restrict the legitimate activities of CSOs

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In 2025, no changes were registered in the regulation for combating extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption. The Law on Prevention of Money Laundering and Financing of Terrorism was amended in 2024¹⁶, addressing deficiencies identified by the Report of the fifth round of evaluation from MONEYVAL regarding the system to prevent money laundering and terrorist financing. No provisions were introduced that may negatively impact the work of civil society organisations (CSOs).

The changes introduced in 2022 that required registration of a beneficial owner by all entities, including CSOs, still impose high fees. All those missing the deadline for over 90 days for registration shall pay EUR 1,050 EUR (MKD 64,000)¹⁷ as a fee to complete the process. In practice, CSOs continued reporting problems in communication with the banks. If the organisation does not have a registered beneficial owner, the entire work with the banks is problematic.

Indicator 1.3.b – Proportion of CSOs whose ability to undertake legitimate activities is not restricted by the implementation of laws to combat extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption, and in particular by:

- ➔ Being judicially harassed for their alleged connections with extremism, terrorism, money-laundering and corruption
- ➔ Discriminatory restrictions placed on funding
- ➔ Authorities or banks are preventing them from opening bank accounts, sending or receiving money

In 2025 survey, 13% of participating CSOs reported that they faced one of the following situations at least once: judicial harassment for alleged connections with extremism, terrorism, money-laundering or corruption, or their organisation was subjected to discriminatory restrictions as a consequence of receiving funding from a particular source, or their organisation was prevented, by government authorities or banks, from opening a bank account, or sending or receiving money. This is higher than in 2024 (7%), 2023 (11%) and 2021 (12%). On the contrary, 87% of responding CSOs reported not being restricted due to judicial harassment nor experienced discriminatory restrictions based on funding sources or difficulties accessing banking services; this was the same as in 2024 (87%), and similar to 2023 (86%).

¹⁶ Official Gazette No. 208/2024

¹⁷ Tariff of the Central Registry accessible at: <https://www.crm.com.mk/mk/za-tsrrsm/osnovni-informatsii-za-institutsijata/tarifa>

According to the 2025 survey, 3% of the organisations reported their members being subject to judicial harassment, while 2% were subject to discriminatory restrictions. Some 9% of the CSOs were prevented from opening bank accounts or faced restrictions in sending or receiving money. However, as mentioned above, the organisations face difficulties in operating with the banks. Namely, they face an administrative burden in opening subaccounts for the projects as well as in maintaining their accounts. Due to the unchanged and restrictive national policy, although the CSOs in the Republic of North Macedonia have been assessed as low-risk subjects for money laundering and financing terrorist activities, the banks apply an extreme administrative burden, which additionally overloads the organisations.

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying their members were subject to judicial harassment	% CSOs saying their organisation had been subjected to discriminatory restrictions	% CSOs saying they could not open a bank account or face restrictions sending/receiving money
2025	3%	2%	9%

SO 1.4 | Public authorities treat all CSOs equally with regard to their operations, and equitably with other entities (such as businesses).

Indicator 1.4.a – Extent to which laws:

- ➔ Do not require CSOs to submit more reports and information than businesses.
- ➔ Do not subject CSOs to more inspections and sanctions than business entities, all else being equal.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	5 – fully meets standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

No changes regarding this indicator were registered in 2025. The CSOs are obliged by the Law on Associations and Foundations to publish their annual reports on their websites. They also submit annual financial reports to the Central Registry if their yearly turnover exceeds EUR 2,500. Inspections and sanctions apply equally to CSOs and companies, with business entities facing additional obligations and penalties particularly regarding profit distribution. With this, this legal framework recognises the distinct nature of CSOs and business entities.

SO 1.5 | Central and/or local public authorities have enabling policies and rules for small community organisations and civic initiatives (grassroots organisations)

Indicator 1.5.a – Small community/local organisations and civic initiatives are allowed to operate by law without registering.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year		Compliance
2025		5 – fully meets standards
2024		5 – fully meets standards
2023		5 – fully meets standards
2021		5 – fully meets standards

In 2025, as in previous years, informal organisations and civic initiatives could operate freely without legal restrictions, though they face limitations when entering contractual obligations or applying for public financing, since national legislation recognises them only as groups of individuals without acknowledging their specific mission. Consultations on the draft LAF exposed two gaps: (i) it recognises only associations and foundations, as well as unions of organisations and foreign organisations, but not specifically the informal, ad-hoc initiatives, excluding them from state financing and policy consultations; (ii) it is also misaligning with the EU's DG NEAR Guidelines (2021–2027), which define civil society broadly to include informal and grassroots groups. Although this issue was discussed at length, including at the validation meeting, no changes were incorporated into the draft LAF (whose official version with comments is not public), so the score is retained at 5, consistent with 2024, as no substantive legal or practical change has occurred. The Law on Prevention and Protection against Discrimination is an exception, recognising informal groups and granting them the right to initiate *actio popularis* lawsuits in the public interest (Article 35).

Indicator 1.5.b – In law, unregistered small community/local organisations and civic initiatives enjoy the same right to participation in decision-making processes as registered CSOs.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year		Compliance
2025		4 – meets most standards
2024		4 – meets most standards
2023		4 – meets most standards
2021		4 – meets most standards

In the current legislation, no restrictions are foreseen at this point for smaller community organisations and informal initiatives.

In 2025, similarly to 2024, the Code of Good Practices for Civic Participation in decision-making processes¹⁸ has guided the involvement of volunteer groups, non-profit organisations, associations,

¹⁸ Official Gazette No. 99/11

foundations, and advocacy groups in policy discussions. However, the Code is a non-mandatory document, meaning that public authorities are not required to adhere to it, and its application depends on the discretion of individual institutions. The smaller organisations are not facing more legal barriers to public participation compared with other CSOs.

SO 1.6 | All CSOs are free to solicit and receive funding.

Indicator 1.6.a – Extent to which relevant laws allow CSOs to seek a broad range of funding, including from abroad, without undue restrictions as regards

- ➔ cash and in-kind donations from all sources
- ➔ funding from domestic public bodies
- ➔ funding from institutional, corporate or individual donors
- ➔ funding from foreign governments or multilateral agencies

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	5 – fully meets standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

In 2025, no changes were registered in the legal framework in the Republic of North Macedonia related to the financing of the CSOs. According to the LAF, the CSOs can obtain funding from various sources, such as membership fees, founding contributions, voluntary donations, gifts (in money, goods, property rights), bequests, legacies, activities that generate profit, rents and lease payments, as well as income from investments, dividends, interest, loans, and other revenues in accordance with the law and their statutes. In addition, the main funding sources continue to be the state budget, municipalities, the City of Skopje, and foreign donors. If a CSO receives funds from institutions or countries associated with unconstitutional activities or potential terrorism financing, it may face additional controls and restrictions to prevent money laundering and the misuse of funds. Although the adoption of recommendations provided by the FATF regarding Anti-Money-Laundering (AML) does not instruct banks to implement stricter controls on CSO transactions due to country policy, national central bank guidelines, bank association decisions, or decisions by bank headquarters, they still require extensive documentation to be provided, which comprises an administrative burden and additional financial management challenge for CSOs.

Indicator 1.6.b – Proportion of CSOs that can access a broad range of funding without undue government interference.

The findings from the CSO survey reveal no significant changes in the application of restrictive practices, such as arbitrary audits, frozen accounts, and foreign agent registration requirements. In 2025, surveyed organisations generally have not experienced these forms of administrative pressure, except one organisation (2%) that reported arbitrary audits. This result is consistent in general to 2024 when none of the respondents reported such cases and in 2023 and 2021, when only 1% and 2% respectively faced such issues.

SO 1.7 | Public financial and non-financial support to CSOs is available in IPA beneficiaries, and provided in a transparent, accountable, fair and non-discriminatory manner.

Indicator 1.7.a – The level of public funding available for CSOs and associations is clearly articulated in laws and regulations, and the rights and duties of the state body invested with the ability to set and revise the level of public funding available is clearly defined in law.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	2 – minimally meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

The situation regarding public funding at the central level in the Republic of North Macedonia remained generally unchanged compared with 2024. Public funding was regulated in different laws including the Law on Associations and Foundations, the Code of Good Practices for State Funding, the Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of Civil Society 2025-2028, and the corresponding Action Plan.

Challenges stemming from outdated legal regulations and practices continued to hinder the acquisition of public funds for civil society. These existing regulations do not meet the current demands of the sector, and there is a notable absence of a standardised system for distributing state funding to civil society organisations by public institutions. In addition, complications arose due to payment practices involving funds from various accounts and central budget lines, which are not designated for non-governmental organisations, such as budget lines 464, 472, and 425. This situation further complicated the oversight and auditing of state funding for civil society organisations.

The draft LAF in section X¹⁹ proposes certain regulation of the state financial support for CSOs, including: measures for state support, sources of public funding, alternative models for co-financing of projects primarily financed by foreign donors, areas of public interest, process of planning the priorities for financing, process for selection and distribution of funds to CSOs and obligations of the CSOs beneficiaries of public funding. In terms of the co-funding mechanism (funding of the % of the total budget of the grants required by some donors), the draft LAF provides two alternatives: the first for a centralised co-funding managed by the designated body at the central level, and the second alternative, including decentralised co-funding at the sectoral level. CSOs' comments on the draft law provided during the consultations at the beginning of 2026 relate to the system for public financing, including

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¹⁹ Draft Law on Foundations and Associations published on ENER accessible at: https://ener.gov.mk/Default.aspx?item=pub_regulation&subitem=view_reg_detail&itemid=73921

the co-funding mechanism and the procedure for selection of projects for co-financing.²⁰ However, although needed, the law does not define the comprehensive public financing model for civil society. Instead, the establishment of such a model is proposed to be regulated by the Government Decision.

In July 2025, a new Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025 – 2028 and an Action Plan were adopted²¹, foreseeing measures for reforming the system of public financing of the CSOs (priority area 1 of the strategy, specific goal 1.2, measure 1.2.1). The growing amount of EU 30 million state funds to be distributed to CSOs is specifically mentioned under measure 1.2.1 as one of the expected results within the Action Plan. In addition, this measure also includes establishing a Guarantee Fund for co-financing the projects primarily financed by foreign donors.

Indicator 1.7.b – Percentage of public budget actually disbursed to CSOs in a year.

In 2025, the distribution of public finances to civil society remains partially transparent. Public institutions still exercise their rights for discretionary decision-making and distribution of funding to civil society without public calls. Moreover, these practices are exercised by those Ministries that distribute significant amounts, such as the Ministry of Sport (please see the table below on the distribution of the central level funds to the civil society). According to the draft report for the distribution of funds to the CSOs published on the website of the Government Unit for Cooperation with CSOs²², the total amount of funds distributed to CSOs in 2025 was MKD 1,790,490,576 for 3,514 projects, representing 0.49% from the total planned state budget income and 11,9% of the CSOs' income. 75% of these funds are distributed through the central budget for 1,400 projects in total MKD 1,344,534,604 and 25% through the municipal budgets for 2,097 projects in total MKD 445,955,972 (these were mostly distributed to sports associations and clubs). Compared with 2024, a slight decrease of 1,2% is noted in the total share of CSO funding in the state budget. In the report for 2025, following the consultation between the Unit and the civil society, for the first time, the amounts distributed to the Red Cross were not included because the financing of this organisation is subject to regulation under other laws. Some 45% of the distributed funds in 2025 are for the social services providers, while 31% of the funds are distributed to the sports associations and federations.

Funds distribution	2024 (MKD)	2025 (MKD)
Total funding to CSOs	1,959,549,732	1,790,490,576
Central level funding	1,596,262,038 (81%)	1,344,534,604 (75%)
Municipal level funding	363.287.694 (19%)	445.955.972 (25%)

²⁰ Comments of the Macedonian Centre for International Cooperation include the following: While the proposed centralised model for managing public funds in Article 78 of the draft law requires legal regulation and the establishment of a competent authority within the state administration, the comments provided by the CSOs suggest the removal of a clause that allows the government to designate the authority responsible for fund distribution through a subordinate act. According to the Constitution of North Macedonia, laws must align with constitutional principles, meaning that critical institutional matters cannot be delegated to subordinate legislation. This creates a legal gap, as the law fails to specify which authority will manage public funds, potentially rendering the provision unconstitutional. It is recommended that the Ministry of Finance be designated as the responsible authority; if not, alternatives include the Ministry of European Affairs or the General Secretariat of the Government. Additionally, it is proposed to delete certain subsections from Article 78 to prevent excessive discretionary decision-making by the central authority regarding project co-financing. The mechanism should ensure legal protection for all projects submitted with appropriate requests. Furthermore, a revision of the sixth subsection clarifies that only leading organisations based in North Macedonia can apply for co-financing reimbursement, thus eliminating potential legal ambiguities and ensuring compliance with EU practices, where projects are typically multi-annual and span several budget years. This change aims to avoid restrictive timelines for submitting co-financing requests, promoting a more inclusive funding approach. Comments by the MCIC can be accessed at: <https://mcms.mk/en/news-and-publicity/news/2794-mcms-pridonese-vo-kreiranjeto-na-noviot-zakon-za-zdruzheni-ja-i-fondacii.html>

²¹ Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025 – 2028 and the Action Plan accessible at: <https://nvorabotka.gov.mk/mk-MK/strategija/strategii-po-godini>

²² Draft Report for the financing of programme activities of associations and foundations from the budget of the state administration bodies and the units of local self-government in 2025, Sector for Policy Analysis and Coordination, accessible at: <https://portal.nvo-sorabotka.gov.mk/post-body-files/12-ta-sednica-na-sovetot-za-sorabotka-megju-vladata-i-gragjanskoto-opstestvo-file-lhCR.pdf>

Data on the distribution of funds by the central level institutions are provided in the table below.

Ministry	Amount of funds provided	Through a public call	Without public call	Total CSOs	Through a public call	Without public call	Amount awarded for sport	Number of CSOs
Ministry of Defence	1,999,967		1,999,967	1	0	1		
Ministry for Inter-Community Relations	19,653,125	19,653,125		33	33	0	600,000	1
Ministry of Economy and Labour	1,408,785	1,408,785		7	7	0		
Ministry of Health	12,521,214	12,521,214		20	20	0		
Ministry of Education and Science	5,226,614	4,057,841	1,168,773	11	9	2		
Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth	855,048,257	855,048,257		104	104	0		
Ministry of Culture and Tourism	130,400,069	130,400,069		472	472	0		
Ministry for Digital Transformation	5,026,777	5,026,777		5	5	0		
Ministry of Environment and Spatial Planning	22,700,000	22,700,000		114	114	0	100,000	1
Ministry of Sport	290,549,796		290,549,796	650	0	650	290,549,796	650
Total:	1,344,534,604	1,050,816,068	293,718,536	1417	764	653	291,249,796	652

Indicator 1.7.c – Extent to which legal provisions regulating the award of public funding to CSOs ensure that:

- ➔ funding criteria are clearly defined, objective and publicly announced
- ➔ evaluation of proposals is clear and impartial
- ➔ conflict of interest is clearly regulated
- ➔ reporting requirements are clear and proportionate

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	2 – minimally meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

The legal provisions governing the award of state funding remained unchanged in 2025. The existing Law on Associations and Foundations indicates that associations and foundations can receive funds from the state budget, municipal budgets, and the City of Skopje. In addition, the Government, municipalities, and the City of Skopje can establish their own criteria for distributing and using these funds. Under the current framework, funds are based on annual plans and programmes adopted by the government and local government units.

The Code for Good Practices on State Funding from 2007 remains a relevant reference point for improving the system. The Code sets out criteria, evaluation process, and reporting requirements, and this is in line with the legislation, which, in practice, is not always the case. As a non-binding document, the Code lacks the legal force required to ensure compliance. Despite its comprehensive guidance, its implementation depends heavily on the willingness of institutions to adhere to its principles. Making this Code a binding legal norm could enhance transparency and accountability in funding procedures. The new Strategy on Cooperation with the Civil Society within the Action plan foresees a dedicated activity 1.2.1.1 planned for the second quarter of 2026 for making the Code a horizontal obligatory act.

The draft LAF published in December 2025, in section X, proposes a specific procedure and criteria for distribution of state funds, including defining the funding priorities, the call for funding and the selection process.

The absence of legal standards or norms requiring institutions to adhere to clear, objective criteria, particularly for preventing conflicts of interest, remained unchanged in 2025. This absence affects the monitoring and evaluation of the application process, resulting in limited transparency and accountability of state funding.

Indicator 1.7.d – Central governments make the information on awards publicly available and sufficiently detailed to identify individual awards.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	2 – minimally meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

According to the Metamorphosis index on the openness and transparency in 2025 (for 2024)²³, the overall performance of the executive branch in the Republic of North Macedonia (the Government, ministries, and executive bodies) shows a slight decline compared with 2023, reaching 63.71% fulfilment of openness indicators (compared with 67% in 2023). Compared to the remaining countries in the region, the results confirm that the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia has been a transparency and openness leader in the Western Balkan region for several years in a row. Nevertheless, in practice challenges remain, particularly regarding the availability of detailed information about awards to the public.

In 2025, the Ministries in general continued the practice of distributing funds to the CSOs as in the previous years, with some of them being transparent and making the information publicly available and others keeping the practice of discretionary decision-making. The Ministry for Inter-Community Relations published a call for financial support of associations and foundations in 2025. The public call was announced on the website of the Ministry and not on the General Secretariat of the Government, as previously requested by the CSOs and in compliance with the Code of Good Practices for State Funding. The organisations reported difficulties accessing the public call announced on the website of the Ministry. While the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society was not yet constituted and thus not included in the selection of the programme priorities for financing the CSOs under this programme, two representatives of the Council were included as members in the Commission for the distribution of funds to CSOs through the public call of the Ministry of Inter-Community Relations. The report prepared by the Council's representatives from their participation in the Commission revealed inconsistencies in the evaluation of the projects, "A key shortcoming of the process was precisely the absence of such a collective effort by the Commission to ensure fair and impartial ranking of the project proposals, with the subjective factor having the greatest weight and a dominant role in the ranking", and a lack of dedication of the institutional members of the Commission to the process of selecting projects for funding.²⁴

Another challenge was reported by the organisations facing difficulties related to the provision of social services and the distribution of funding in this regard. According to the validation focus group discussion, right after the local elections in 2025, the Ministry decided to cut many of the social services and started allocating funds for some new services and new providers while discontinuing the existing ones. This was challenging not just for the service providers, but moreover for the end beneficiaries

²³ Metamorphosis 2025, accessible at: https://metamorphosis.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2025/10/finalna-analiza_ot-vorenost-na-izvrsna-vlast_mk-final-cip.pdf

²⁴ Report on the participation of the Council's representatives in the work of the Commission for distribution of funds to CSOs and foundations in 2025, accessible at: <https://nvosorabotka.gov.mk/mk-MK/sovet/zapisnici-i-dnevni-redovi-od-sednicite-na-sovetot/4-ta-sednica-na-sovetot-za-sorabotka-megju-vladata-i-gragjanskoto-opstestvo>

who depend on this kind of service, especially elderly persons. In addition, the payments to the social service providers were delayed, which caused delays in payment of the salaries for the employed persons, thus making it difficult for the organisations to survive and maintain their personnel and the licenses.

The public call of the Ministry for Social Policy, Demography and Youth for the provision of social services was published and open only for three days, which was against the EU standards and the Code of Good Practices in public financing. Considering this situation, the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society reacted, and after that, the Ministry opened the call for 30 days.

According to the survey with public officials, the majority of them (82%) find that the relevant authorities make the information on awards of public funding to CSOs sufficiently (55%) and fully (27%) publicly available. Although this observation may be a result of the individual practices exercised by the respective institutions represented in the survey, still the provided answers do not match the situation in practice.

Indicator 1.7.e – Proportion of CSOs indicating that the provision of domestic public funds is transparent, fair and non-discriminatory.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	2 – minimally meets standards
2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	1 – does not meet standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

According to the CSO survey results for 2025, the majority of the respondent CSOs (62%) find the provision of domestic public funds insufficiently transparent and fair (53%) and not transparent and fair at all (9%). This is a similar pattern observed in previous years (68% in 2024, 65% in 2023 and 69% in 2021).

Compared to previous years, in 2025 there is an increase in the percentage of CSOs that find the provision of public funds sufficiently and very transparent and fair. Namely, 38% of the CSOs in 2025 find the provision of public funds transparent and fair (6% very + 32% sufficiently transparent and fair), compared with 13% in 2024 and 19% in 2023.

Similarly as in 2024, the public officials who responded to the 2025 survey find the provision of public funds very transparent, inclusive and with publicly available criteria for award.

With regards to the proportion of CSOs applied for public funding, an increase is seen: in the 2025 CSO survey, 62% of responding CSOs stated that they applied for public funding, compared to 36% in 2024, 42% in 2023 and 54% in 2021. Among those who applied in 2025, 52% were unsuccessful, an improvement from the 60% in 2024, 73% in 2023 and 81% in 2021, indicating some progress in accessing funds.

Reasons for rejection showed that 47% cited favouritism by authorities (higher than 42% in 2024, but down from 61% in 2023), while 12% noted intense competition as a factor, a decrease from 25% in 2024 but a rise from 7% in 2023.

Survey Results

	% CSOs that did not apply for public funding	% CSOs applied for public funding and were not successful	% CSOs applied for funds and were successful
2025	38%	54%	46%
2024	36%	60%	N/A
2023	42%	73%	N/A
2021	54%	81%	N/A

Indicator 1.7.f – Public funding does not exclude CSOs on the basis of constituency representation

There are no regulations and legal acts that exclude CSOs from public funding on the basis of constituent representation.

In 2025, 11% of the CSOs felt excluded from the public funding based on constituencies, which is a slight decrease compared with 17% in 2024, similar to 10% in 2023, and down from 15% in 2021. The organisations that perceived their rejection as due to the authorities not wanting to fund work with the people they serve and represent work on human rights, minority rights, youth rights, and gender equality and LGBTIQ+ rights. With due attention to the limitations of the survey, this is an important finding that deserves further analysis and monitoring.

SO 1.8 | Individuals and corporations enjoy tax benefits for their donations to CSOs.

Indicator 1.8.a – Tax legislation allows for tax relief as regards:

- ➔ Individual giving
- ➔ Corporate giving

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

In 2025, no new developments were identified in relation to advancing the legal framework on sponsorships and donations and the tax reliefs for individuals and corporations who donate to the CSOs. The legal framework continued to be governed by the Law on Donations and Sponsorships²⁵. According to the current framework, businesses can deduct up to 5% of their taxable income for donations qualified as being in the public interest. However, this amount cannot exceed EUR 60,000. Individuals can

²⁵ Official Gazette nr.47/2006; 86/2008; 51/2011; 28/2014 и 153/2015

deduct up to 20% of their taxable income for donations qualified as being in the public interest, but this amount cannot exceed EUR 400.

The process for amending the Law on Donations and Sponsorships started back in 2022 by the Ministry of Justice, in collaboration with the Network for Financial Sustainability of Civil Society Organisations. Although the draft was published for feedback in January 2024, it was not adopted by the end of the year. The proposed amendments aimed to expand tax incentives to promote philanthropy and support for public interest activities. Key measures included a personal income tax reduction of up to 20% for individual donors, capped at MKD 24,000 (approximately EUR 400), corporate profit tax deductions of up to 10% for long-term donations, VAT exemptions for donated goods and services, and exemptions from inheritance and gift tax for property donations. These changes aimed to simplify the donation process, reduce administrative burdens, and enhance financial support for civil society initiatives, with expectations for adoption in 2025. Although this was also envisaged as a measure for 2025 in the Civil Society Cooperation Strategy 2025 - 2028, the new Law has not yet been adopted.

The Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society in 2025 initiated a discussion for monitoring the process of preparation of the Law on Donations and Sponsorships.

Indicator 1.8.b – Proportion of private individuals who have given money to a CSO.

No data for the Republic of North Macedonia were presented in the World Giving Report for 2025. According to the Charities Aid Foundation's World Giving Index 2024, in North Macedonia, 45% of people donated money in 2024, compared with 39% in 2023, 51% in 2022, and 45% in 2021.

SO 1.9 | Tax benefits are available to CSOs.

Indicator 1.9.a – Extent to which applicable tax laws provide for the following:

CSO income generated from grants, donations, and membership dues, income from economic activities, investment income, real property, gifts and inheritance is not subject to taxation;

Any excess revenue or profit generated through economic activity and used for mission-related purposes by CSOs is not subject to corporate income/profit tax.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

In 2025, tax benefits for CSOs in the Republic of North Macedonia remained unchanged since 2021, allowing organisations registered under the LAF to continue being exempt from profit tax as long as they comply with legal requirements. Non-taxable revenues include membership fees, charitable contributions, donations, grants, gifts, and funds from various government budgets, while property donations for public interest are exempt from property tax for five years.

CSOs engaged in economic activities must pay a 1% tax on revenues exceeding MKD 1,000,000 (EUR 16,000), but only on the amount above this threshold.

In December 2025, the Ministry of Social Policy, Demography and Youth continued the process of preparing the Law on Social Enterprises. According to the Action Plan for implementation of the Civil Society Cooperation Strategy 2025 - 2028 Activity A 1.2.1.1. (Adoption of a Law on Social Enterprises) foresees the adoption of this law in the first quarter of 2026. The Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society emphasised the importance of this law and the need to organise a consultative process with the CSOs once this law is prepared and published on ENER.²⁶

The recent reflection of the civil society on this law is that the process of preparation was very extended and long, causing insufficient reflection on the real field needs within the current legal solution.

SO 1.10 | The policies and legal environment provide incentives and facilitate volunteering for and employment in CSOs.

Indicator 1.10.a – Laws regulating volunteering are adopted.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

No changes were introduced into the legal framework on volunteering in 2025. Volunteering in the Republic of North Macedonia is governed by the Law on Volunteerism²⁷, but proposed amendments to this law were not adopted in 2024. The amendments aimed to clarify the roles of volunteer organisers, set requirements for host organisations, introduce volunteering opportunities in public institutions, and establish a volunteer register within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. They also sought to formally recognise the National Council for the Promotion and Development of Volunteering, which would oversee the implementation of strategies to promote volunteering.

According to the Action Plan for implementation of the Civil Society Cooperation Strategy 2025 - 2028 measure M.1.2.3. (Promoting and developing volunteering) foresees amending the Law on Volunteering and establishment of a National Volunteering Council in 2026 and 2027.

²⁶ The draft Law on Social Enterprises was published on ENER in February 2026. The CSOs provided their comments on ENER and during the public debate organized for the draft law. Most of the comments relate to the mechanisms to protect social entrepreneurship principles, the requirement for 50% income from economic activity and a proposal to defer the income requirement for five years, restrictions on subsidiaries gaining social enterprise status, disallowance of profit reinvestment into parent organisations, risk of creating new legal entities, need for alternative approaches to define vulnerable groups.

²⁷ Official Gazette nr. 85/07 и 161/08

Indicator 1.10.b – Government volunteering strategies and programmes support volunteering for CSOs and have sufficient resources allocated for implementation.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

The National Strategy for Promoting Volunteerism (2021–2025) and its Action Plan expired in 2025, while the government did not initiate the process for the preparation of a new strategy and the establishment of a new National Council for Promotion and Development of Volunteering. In practice, incentives and support for volunteering have not progressed, with volunteers still receiving tax-free reimbursements for expenses related to their activities, such as training, meals, and transportation. CSOs that offer internships through employment programmes can also access subsidies to help cover costs associated with volunteers. However, state-supported initiatives designed to promote volunteering have not adapted or evolved, which restricts opportunities for enhancing volunteer participation.

Indicator 1.10.c – Proportion of CSOs that benefit from state employment strategies and programmes.

In 2025, 9% of CSO respondents in the survey benefited from government employment strategies and programmes. This is an increase compared with 2024, when only 3% of respondents stated that they accessed such benefits, though slightly below the 11% in 2023 and 10% in 2021.

	% CSOs saying they benefit from state employment strategies and programmes
2025	9%
2024	3%
2023	11%
2021	10%

Indicator 1.10.d – Proportion of CSOs that benefit from state volunteering strategies and programmes.

In 2025, 84% of the CSOs had not benefited from the government's volunteering strategies and programmes, with the most common reason given being that no such programme exists. The CSOs that reported benefiting stated that they engaged a volunteer in accordance with the Law on Volunteerism. The percentage of those benefiting (6%) is similar to previous years (5% in 2024, 6% in 2023 and 7% in 2021).

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying they benefit from state volunteering strategies and programmes
2025	6%
2024	5%
2023	6%
2021	7%

Indicator 1.10.e – Proportion of employees in CSOs in relation to the total workforce.

According to the World Bank data, the workforce in the Republic of North Macedonia for 2025 was 786,790²⁸. The number of employees in the civil society in 2025 was 2,564²⁹, comprising 0.32% from the workforce. The percentage remains similar to that in the previous years.

2021 %	2022 %	2023 %	2024 %	2025 %
0.33	0.32	0.33	0.33	0.32

Indicator 1.10.f – Percentage of people who have volunteered to give their time to an organisation.

No data for the Republic of North Macedonia is available under the World Giving Report for 2025. Previously, the percentage of the population who volunteered their time to an organisation in North Macedonia was 9% in 2024 and 2023, and 11% in 2021. According to the ILO historic statistics, the overall number of volunteers based in organisations was around 10% of the total population³⁰.

²⁸ World Bank 2025 accessible at: <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?locations=MK>

²⁹ Central Registry website

³⁰ ILO portal on volunteering available at: <https://knowledge.unv.org/country/north-macedonia>

Specific Objective 2: Strengthened cooperation and partnership between CSOs and public institutions.

SO 2.1 | Public authorities and institutions include CSOs in decision and policy-making processes.

Indicator 2.1.a – Laws, by-laws, strategies, other acts of public interest and policy reforms are effectively consulted with CSOs in that:

- ➔ CSOs have access to the draft document from the beginning of the drafting process to the end of the adoption procedure;
- ➔ At least 15 days are allowed for commenting before the draft document enters the adoption procedure;
- ➔ The use of extraordinary/expedited procedures to adopt legislation without allowing for consultation is an exception and duly justified;
- ➔ Reports on results of public consultations, including reasons for rejection of comments, are published in a timely fashion;
- ➔ Working groups members from CSOs are selected based on a public call, clear criteria and in line with equal treatment;
- ➔ Working group members from CSOs include representatives of society as a whole, including women's groups, LGBTIQ+ groups, migrant groups, minorities, disability groups, and others as appropriate, in line with the Human Rights Based Approach.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	2 – minimally meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

The Code of Good Practices for Civil Society Participation in the Policy-Making Process³¹ establishes that collaboration between the government and the civil society can occur through informing, consulting, dialogue, and partnership at all stages of policy creation. This includes setting priorities for the annual government work program, drafting laws and subordinate acts, and implementing or amending legislation. According to Article 14 of the Code, the Government General Secretariat annually invites CSOs to contribute to the preparation of the Annual Work Program. The National Electronic Register of Regulations (ENER) serves as a central hub for publishing proposed laws before they are submitted for government procedures, allowing for stakeholder comments. ENER is a continuously evolving tool, and its utilisation by stakeholders is crucial for the overall consultation and legislative process. According to the newly adopted Rules of Procedure of the Government³² the time for consultations on ENER was increased from 20 to 30 days.

³¹ Official Gazette No. 99/11

³² Official Gazette 276/24

Article 10 of the Law on the Organisation and Work of State Administration Bodies³³ mandates state authorities to engage citizens and civil society through public announcements and consultations when drafting laws and regulations. However, the implementation of these measures remains inadequate. Two important documents, the Methodology for Policy Analysis and Coordination³⁴ and the Methodology for Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA)³⁵, offer guidance for inclusive consultation processes, but progress in aligning practice with these policies is limited³⁶. Annual reports from the Ministry of Public Administration highlight the shortcomings in the application of the RIA process.

According to the Parliament report for 2025³⁷, the proportion of laws adopted in regular procedure was smaller than those adopted in expedited. Namely, 54% (121/224) of laws were adopted in extraordinary/expedited procedures whereas 46% (103/224) were adopted in regular procedure. In 2025, there were also 16 ratifications.

According to the report for the consultation process in preparing proposals for laws and strategies, the use of the ENER and other mechanisms for collaboration with civil society organisations in 2025³⁸, out of a total of 133 law proposals established by the Government of the Republic of North Macedonia, 74 (56%) were subject to regulatory impact assessment (RIA), and 27 of those law proposals (36%) were published in the ENER, representing an increase of 2.8 percentage points compared with 2024 (33.7%). More than half of the law regulations that are subject to RIA and were submitted to the Government include reports on the consultative process. However, in most of these reports, there is no analysis of the comments and consultation, but only the key stakeholders to be consulted are provided. There is a decrease in the number of comments and the number of laws commented on by the CSOs compared with the previous years. In 2025, the Government adopted nine strategies, out of which four (44%) were published on ENER for public consultation. Following the call for contributions from the civil society in preparing the Government Work Program of the Republic of North Macedonia for 2025, a total of 22 proposals were submitted by 11 civil organisations, which represents a decrease of 37% compared with 2024, when 35 proposals were submitted by 19 civil organisations. According to the CSOs this is a result of demotivation of the organisations that provide comments over the years and do not receive information if the comments are integrated, in what way, or an explanation of the reasons for rejection.

The participation of the CSOs in working groups for developing regulations and strategy proposals continues to decline. In 2025, the ministries formed working groups for 69 law and strategy proposals, with representatives of civil organisations included in 38 working groups (55%), representing a decrease of 24.2 percentage points compared with 2024, when, out of a total of 29 working groups formed, 79% (23 working groups) included representatives of civil organisations³⁹. For example, the CSOs were not included in the working group for preparation of the new Law on Media. The Association of Journalists (ZNM) was invited for individual consultation on the draft law. However, ZNM was not part of the working group. There was a public debate organised for this law as the only consultation involving a wider public.



³³ Official Gazette 58/2000 and 21.07.2000

³⁴ Official Gazette 52/2006

³⁵ Official Gazette 37/2008

³⁶ The draft Law on Associations and Foundations in Article 86 proposes obligatory provisions for the public institutions for public announcement of the consultative processes and documents, and inclusion of the CSOs in working groups and bodies.

³⁷ Report for the work of the Parliament of the Republic of North Macedonia for the period 1.1.2025 - 31.12.2025 available at: www.sobranie.mk/content/izvestai/godishenzveshtaj2025g.pdf

³⁸ Report of the Unit for Cooperation with the CSOs accessible at: <https://portal.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/post-body-files/9-ta-sednica-na-sovetot-za-sorabotka-megju-vladata-i-gragjanskoto-opstestvo-file-Qjix.pdf>

³⁹ Report of the Unit of the Government for Cooperation with the CSOs accessible at: <https://portal.nvosorabotka.gov.mk/post-body-files/9-ta-sednica-na-sovetot-za-sorabotka-megju-vladata-i-gragjanskoto-opstestvo-file-Qjix.pdf>

The working group for amending the LAF, as the most important legal act concerning the functioning of the CSOs, was established by the MOJ by directly approaching selected civil society organisations. The representative of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society was not initially invited to participate. It was included later after the official request was sent to the MoJ.

According to the Rules of Procedure of the Committee for Monitoring the Instrument for Growth and Reforms of the Western Balkan (Reform Agenda), the civil society representatives are included as participants in this oversight mechanism. According to the conclusions from the first meeting of the Committee, for future meetings, civil society participants will be selected according to agreed Rules of Procedure. The Secretariat will select civil society organisations to ensure a balanced mix of sectoral expertise. To facilitate this, the Secretariat will request the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society to nominate representatives from CSOs for each sector. Nominations should be submitted at least one month before the relevant meeting. Additionally, if deemed necessary, the Committee or Coordinator may propose additional CSO representatives to ensure comprehensive participation.

According to the 2025 CSO survey, 52% of responding CSOs are represented in working groups at least in one of the following levels: government level, parliament level and municipal level. Among those who are represented, 59% of them have government-level membership, 52% in municipal working groups and 11% at parliament level.

With regard to the CSO survey, the question used to assess CSOs' involvement in effective consultation processes was revised this year to provide a more nuanced and detailed picture. In previous years, CSOs were asked whether they had been included in an effective consultation process, with "effective" defined as having access to draft documents from the beginning of the process and having at least 15 days to provide feedback. This year, the two criteria were split into separate questions, asking respondents independently whether they had access to drafts and whether they had at least 15 days to respond and whether both conditions were met within the same consultation process.

This methodological change reveals a striking gap between participation and quality: while 62% of responding CSOs reported being involved in at least one consultation process either with full access to draft documents or 15 days to respond, this figure drops sharply to just 8% when the consultation process met both criteria simultaneously; indicating that meaningful, effective consultation is an exception. This percentage was 23% in 2024, 35% in 2023 and 31% in 2021.

Among the CSOs engaged in consultation in 2025, 78% were involved in more than one of the following types of consultation: government, parliamentary or municipal level, the civil society strategy and EU accession-related processes. For 16% of these CSOs, the experience met both criteria of effective consultation; 72% had access to documents throughout the whole consultation process, while 44% had at least 15 days to respond.

In addition, participating CSOs in the validation focus group working at local level emphasised that consultative processes at the local level are different, with CSOs being included in the final stages, when little space is left for a meaningful contribution of the civil society.

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying they were effectively consulted by authorities
2025	62% (8% when both effectiveness criteria are met)
2024	23%
2023	35%
2021	31%

The public officials in the survey in large majority find the consultations with the CSOs very effective and sufficiently effective, whereas 93% stated the provided recommendations by the CSOs were further integrated. This attitude is similar to that in the 2021-2024 analyses. Some of the positive examples for consultations are the preparation of the draft LAF, draft Law on Climate Action, draft Law on Nature and the development of the ICT strategy.

Indicator 2.1.b – CSOs are effectively included in oversight mechanisms.

This indicator was not assessed.

Indicator 2.1.c – Proportion of CSOs that have participated in consultations during preparation of state reports under international human rights and other legal obligations, and the implementation of treaty body recommendations.

This indicator was not assessed.

SO 2.2 | Public authorities and institutions acknowledge the importance of civil society in societal policy debate and EU integration processes.

Indicator 2.2.a – Extent to which CSOs assess the attitude of public officials towards civil society as supportive

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	1 – does not meet standards
2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

In the 2025 CSO survey, 12% of the CSOs found the attitude of public institutions mostly supportive (8%) or very supportive (4%). This was lower than in previous years: 2024 (16%) and 2023 (26%), and the same as 2021 (12%). Some 38% of responding CSOs rated the approach as negative.

It is important to note that comparisons with previous years should be interpreted carefully, as the indicator measured attitudes of public institutions towards CSOs in 2025, whereas earlier assessments focused on public officials' attitudes. In addition, in previous years the 'neutral' option was not offered

to respondents, and its addition in the 2025 survey decreased the percentages of both positive and negative perceptions. Half of the respondents rated the attitude as neutral.

The interviews with the key CSO stakeholders revealed similar opinions. Namely, although cooperation with civil society is present, this is mostly due to the proactiveness of the CSOs. There is a lack of capacity with the public institutions (excluding the Government Unit for Cooperation with the CSOs) to effectively support and engage with the civil society.

On the contrary, similar to the previous year, the majority of the public institutions responding to the 2025 survey found their approach sufficiently supportive (78%) and very supportive (22%).

Survey Results

	% CSOs that assess the attitude of public institutions as supportive	% CSOs that assess the attitude of public institutions as not supportive
2025	12%	38% (+ 50% neutral)
2024	16%	70%
2023	26%	62%
2021	12%	73%

SO 2.3 | Public authorities contribute to civil society strengthening by cooperating with civil society through strategic policy frameworks and relevant institutional mechanisms.

Indicator 2.3.a – Proportion of CSOs that were effectively consulted in the preparation of civil society cooperation strategies.

The preparation of the Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025 – 2028 began in November 2024, with a public call from the Unit for Cooperation with CSOs to all interested civil organisations to participate with their proposals for measures and activities for the new Strategy. In January 2025, a working group was formed from representatives of state institutions and civil organisations who actively worked on developing the Draft Strategy and Action Plan. On 14 May 2025, the Draft Strategy along with the Action Plan was published in the ENER for public consultations until 12 June, 2025. Two consultative meetings for the Strategy were held in an online format, and the following final consultative meeting was held in person with the presence of CSOs and government representatives, representatives from the ministries and the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society.

Some 33% of the organisations that responded to the survey stated they were involved in the preparation of the Civil Society Cooperation Strategy and Action Plan 2025 – 2028 by having access to the draft document from the beginning until the end.

Indicator 2.3.b – IPA beneficiaries have adopted currently valid civil society cooperation strategies

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

The Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025 – 2028 was adopted on 8 July 2025.⁴⁰ This is the fifth strategy and, in comparison to the previous one, focuses on two priority areas: creating a conducive environment for the functioning and development of civil society, as well as strengthening the partnership between civil organisations and public institutions.

Indicator 2.3.c – Civil society cooperation strategies are accompanied by adopted budgeted action plans.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

The Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025 – 2028 is accompanied by an Action Plan. Despite its adoption, the Action Plan has its shortcomings: the budget required for its implementation also foresees funding from international donors and not only the state budget itself. The finances for strategy implementation foreseen from the state budget are limited and not sufficient, while the expected funding from international donors is rarely specified and is described more as potential donor support. Hence, the score is not 5 but 4 (meets most standards).

Indicator 2.3.d – Proportion of CSOs that rate civil society cooperation strategies as relevant and effective.

In 2025, only 6% of participating CSOs found the strategy both relevant and effective. This is much lower than previous years: 9% in 2024, 18% in 2023, and 10% in 2021.

In terms of effectiveness, 9% of participating CSOs found the Strategy effective, while 29% rated it as relevant.

CSOs' negative perceptions regarding the strategy's relevance and effectiveness can be explained by

⁴⁰ MKD news portal

the limitations of its Action Plan: the Action Plan for the implementation of the Government's Civil Society Cooperation 2025 - 2028 contains a total of 32 activities, of which three are planned to be implemented by the end of 2025, 9 activities by 2026, 5 activities by 2027, and 15 activities by 2028. In 2025 the activities for preparation of the draft LAF were completed while the consultative process and submission of the draft LAF to the Venice Commission was not completed in 2025.

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying the civil society cooperation strategy is relevant and effective
2025	6%
2024	9%
2023	18%
2021	10%

Indicator 2.3.e – Public structures responsible for the implementation of civil society cooperation strategies are appropriately resourced.

The Unit for Cooperation with the CSOs is established as one of two units comprising the Sector for Policy Analysis and Coordination in the General Secretariat of the Government. The Unit is responsible for monitoring and coordinating the implementation of the Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society. It works to enhance collaboration between the Government and the civil society by involving civil organisations in the policy-making process and creating conditions for the financial sustainability of the civil society. Additionally, it provides technical and administrative support for the work of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society, the Commission for the Distribution of Financial Resources designated for funding program activities of associations and foundations, and the Commission for organisations with public interest status⁴¹.

In 2024, the Unit experienced staffing issues and limited capacities to perform its duties. However, due to the reduced workload of the Unit following the inactivity of the Council for Cooperation between the Government and Civil Society, it managed to provide necessary support to the ongoing processes. In 2025, the workload increased following the process of preparation of the Civil Society Cooperation Strategy 2025 – 2028 and the re-establishment of the Council. One new staff member was employed in the Unit, which supported the effective functioning. With the new staffing, the Unit successfully manages the administrative and technical support to the Council, including preparation of the meeting minutes, communication, administering the website and comprehensive reporting. However, additional employment as foreseen with the organisational structuring will provide long-term effectiveness and sustainability of the Unit.

The finances for the functioning of the Unit include salaries for the employees foreseen in the overall government budget. No other resources are allocated to the Unit to support the implementation of the Strategy and the Action plan. However, the Unit manages to organise necessary activities utilising the existing government premises and the support provided by the EU-funded projects. The transparency of the Unit was improved by introducing a new webpage properly resourced with the necessary information and materials about civil society, the cooperation between the government and the CSOs, the functioning of the Council and reporting documentation.

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⁴¹ NVO Sorabotka 2025 accessible at: <https://nvosorabotka.gov.mk/mk-MK/za-nas/za-nas>

Indicator 2.3.f – Mechanisms for dialogue between civil society cooperation councils and central governments meaningfully include CSOs in that:

- ➔ they have an agreed programme of work
- ➔ they have agreed rules of procedure
- ➔ they meet regularly
- ➔ rules allow CSOs to call the meetings and contribute to agenda setting
- ➔ there is adequate follow-up to conclusions and recommendations

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	1 – does not meet standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

In 2024, the Government introduced amendments to the Decision⁴² on Establishing Council for Cooperation between the Government and the Civil Society, which was enacted in December 2024. The amendments aimed to enhance the Council's functionality and engagement by introducing deputy members and restructuring its composition. Key changes included reducing member numbers, updating ministry representatives, and reassessing CSOs' work areas. A new voting system allowed organisations to vote for candidates within their designated areas, with a minimum vote requirement for election legitimacy. These changes were expected to improve the Council's effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and collaboration. Following the Government decision, the Unit for Cooperation with the CSOs implemented a transparent process for nomination and election of the members and deputy members.

The constitutive meeting of the Council took place in April 2025, followed by six consecutive meetings until the end of 2025. During 2025, the Council adopted the working programme and was proactive regarding the key issues, such as participation in the working group for drafting the LAF, participation in the Commission for the distribution of funds for associations and foundations and initiating discussions about the important regulations that comprise the legal environment for the work of CSOs, such as the Law on Social Enterprises, the Law on Volunteerism and the Law on Donations and Sponsorships and participation in the consultative process for the Strategy of the Government for Cooperation with and Development of the Civil Society 2025 – 2028. According to the minutes publicly available on the website of the Unit for Cooperation with the CSOs, the work of the Council is transparent based on predefined meeting agendas and comprehensive discussions that result in clear conclusions. Follow-up on conclusions and recommendations can be traced from one meeting to another.

⁴² Official Gazette No. 268/2024

Specific Objective 3: CSOs' capacities and resilience to carry out their activities are reinforced.

SO 3.1 | CSOs' internal governance structures follow the principles of good governance.

Indicator 3.1.a – Proportion of CSOs that have an independent and effective governing body, with clear terms of reference to oversee the organisation's strategic goals, impact, management, legal compliance, and accountability.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

This indicator was assessed differently in 2025. In previous years, the relevant question in the CSO surveys required that the effective governing body is appointed by the assembly, with no executive director or any other paid staff member of their organisation as a voting member of the governing body, and also that their organisation has a governing document, a statute, articles of association or similar founding document. This interpretation is a rather narrow and limited interpretation of an effective governing body, not only because it leaves out unregistered or small organisations or those with no paid staff, but also because organisations may have different means and methods of their own to select/appoint/decide their governing bodies, as well as conflict of interest measures. Thereby, in 2025, the question was formulated differently and inquired about the existence of a governing body (e.g. assembly, board or council responsible for oversight, legal compliance and accountability together with a governing document (e.g. statute).

Therefore, in 2025, the question was formulated differently and inquired about the existence of a governing body (e.g. assembly, board or council responsible for oversight, legal compliance and accountability) together with a governing document (e.g. statute).

Consequently, the percentage of CSOs that responded positively to this question in 2025 was considerably higher than in previous years: according to the 2025 survey, 96% of participating organisations reported having both a governing body and a governing document.

On the evidence available, and given the re-interpretation of the question in 2025, the compliance score raised to 4 – meets most standards. Due to the reasons mentioned above, the percentages in the previous years are significantly lower, down to 40% in 2021.

According to the analysis based on the self-evaluation mechanism of the Civil Society Resource Centre, CSOs Mirror for Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability⁴³ the average rating of good governance is 82.3 out of 100 index points, which is a high rating and in accordance with the CSOs survey results for 2025. Therefore, with due attention to the limitations of the survey and the newly changed methodology, the score is raised to 4 – meets most standards.

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⁴³ CSOs Mirror of the Good Governance, Transparency and Accountability accessible at: <https://rcgo.mk/ogledalo-na-graganskite-organizacii/>

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying they have an independent and effective governing body
2025	96%
2024	44%
2023	44%
2021	40%

Indicator 3.1.b – Proportion of CSOs that regularly check potential conflicts of interest with regard to the political, economic and personal relationships of their governing body

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	1 – does not meet standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

This indicator was assessed differently in 2025. In previous years, the relevant question in the CSO surveys asked how often governing body members were signing a conflict-of-interest declaration, which is a rather narrow interpretation of the indicator standard, not only because it would leave out unregistered CSOs, but also because organisations may have different ways and means for assessing conflict of interest. Therefore, in 2025, the survey question asked how often organisations check for potential conflicts of interest in general. On this basis, the 2025 survey shows an improvement in regular conflict-of-interest screening, with the management of potential conflicts of interest within CSOs improving considerably in 2025 compared with previous years.

Some 46% of responding CSOs reported checking potential conflicts of interest with regard to the political, economic and personal relationships of their governing body periodically (29% every year, 15% every two years and 2% more often than annually). With the limited interpretation in earlier years this was 12% in 2024, 13% in 2023 and 22% in 2021.

In addition, 37% of responding CSOs reported conducting this check once upon entry into the role (45% in 2023, and 35% in 2021), while 17% had no such accountability measures.

Based on the respective change in interpreting the applicability of this indicator, the compliance score is now raised to 3.

Indicator 3.1.c – Proportion of CSOs that share relevant information on their organisation, using the means and channels that are accessible to all stakeholders in terms of publishing.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	2 – minimally meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

In 2025, 38% of responding CSOs reported sharing their governing document, governance structure and the names of their board members on their websites. This is the same as in 2024 (38%), slightly lower than 42% recorded in 2023, and higher than 2021 (36%).

In 2025, the survey also asked CSOs whether they publish this information on their social media channels, an increasingly used publicly accessible medium. An additional 4% of CSOs reported that they use social media to publish all three types of information. Combined with the 38% that share them on their websites, the total share of CSOs publishing these three types of transparency information rises to 42%. However, as publication of all three types of information via the website is used to interpret the indicator's compliance score, the 42% finding keeps the score at 2 – minimally meets standards.

Indicator 3.1.d – Proportion of CSOs that have an organisational gender equality policy.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

Introducing gender equality policies in the work of the CSOs is an important factor in the socio-economic development of the society. 65% of the respondent CSOs stated they have a gender equality policy, a larger share of CSOs than in the 2021-2024 period. The increase in CSOs adopting gender equality policies is a positive indicator of progress towards gender equity in the civil society sector. This was 34% in 2024, 35% in 2023 and 33% in 2021

Indicator 3.1.e – Proportion of CSOs that have an organisational strategy, including vision, mission and goals.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

Existence of the organisational strategy that includes vision and mission is key in sustaining the long-term orientation of the CSOs and guiding their organisational development. In 2025, 85% of CSO respondents in the survey stated they have an organisational strategy, a similar finding to previous years. Namely, according to the CSO survey in 2024, 79% of respondents reported having these key documents, the same as in 2023 (79%) and similar to the 85% in 2021

SO 3.2 | CSOs are able to communicate the results of their activities to the public.

Indicator 3.2.a – Proportion of CSOs that have at least one online channel of communication.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	5 – fully meets standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

All organisations that answered about online communication have at least one online channel for communication with the public. Namely, 92% of the organisations use Facebook, followed by Instagram and the website, with approximately 70% for both options. LinkedIn, YouTube and messaging applications range between 35% and 37%. The results are very similar to those from the 2021-2024 surveys. Namely, Facebook remains the most widely used platform, chosen by a similar proportion of respondents, from 97% in 2023 and 96% in 2021 to 95% in 2024. Similarly, website usage remained similar, from 77% in 2023 and 68% in 2021, though decreasing to 60% in 2024. Instagram usage shows an increase in 2025, compared with 54% in 2024, 59% in 2023, and increasing from the baseline 40% reported in 2021. YouTube usage is similar in 2025 to 2024, when it was utilised by 31% of the respondents, which was lower than the 43% in 2021 and 42% in 2023. In addition, messaging platforms have shown relatively stable usage, from 33% in 2021 to 36% in 2023 and 37% in 2024. Conversely, X (formerly known as Twitter) was used by 8% of the CSOs in 2025, a decrease from 12% of the respondents in 2024, 17% in 2023 and 24% in 2021. Although the majority of CSOs use online communication to reach their constituents and the public, the effectiveness of the outreach is also an important indicator that needs to be established.

Indicator 3.2.b – Proportion of CSOs that have specialised communication staff.

This indicator was not assessed.

Indicator 3.2.c – Proportion of CSOs that cooperate with the media.

According to the 2025 CSO survey, 40% of responding CSOs reported making partnerships with the media in 2025. This is considerably higher than previous years with 26% in 2024, 32% in 2023 and 38% in 2021.

In previous years, the question related to this indicator asked only about partnerships with the media. This year, however, in addition to partnership, CSOs were also asked whether they consulted with the media. When this is also included, 81% of responding CSOs in 2025 either consulted with or had partnerships with the media.

Survey Results

	% CSOs saying they cooperate with the media
2025	40%
2024	26%
2023	32%
2021	38%

SO 3.3 | CSOs are transparent about their programme activities and sources of funding.

Indicator 3.3.a – Proportion of CSOs that publish their annual reports and financial statements.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In 2025, 65% of the CSOs published their annual report and financial statement via their website or in hard copy. This is considerably higher than previous years, where it was 46% in 2024, 43% in 2023 and 52% in 2021.

The transparency index within the CSOs Mirror conducted by the National Civil Society Resource Centre is 72.25 out of 100 revealing a similar level of transparency.

Taking this year's increase into consideration, the score is now raised to 4 – meets most standards.

Indicator 3.3.b – Proportion of CSOs that publish information on their sources of funding and amounts received in the previous year.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	2 – minimally meets standards
2023	2 – minimally meets standards
2021	2 – minimally meets standards

In 2025, 54% of responding CSOs published their sources of funding and amounts received via their website or in hard copy. This is higher than in previous years: 34% in 2024, 37% in 2023 and 35% in 2021.

For comparison, in 2025, 65% of organisations disclosed where their funding originated, compared with 59% in 2024, 60% in 2023 and 68% in 2021. In addition, 54% of responding CSOs disclosed funding amounts in 2025, compared with 46% in 2024, 42% in 2023 and 2021.

Indicator 3.3.c – Degree of public trust in CSOs

This indicator used Balkan Barometer findings for comparison; however, RCC's 2025 report has not been published yet and hence no relevant information can be provided for 2025. However, in previous years the percentages of public trust in CSOs fluctuated between 54% and 32%.

SO 3.4 | CSOs monitor and evaluate the results and impact of their work.

Indicator 3.4.a – Proportion of CSOs that have carried out an evaluation of their work in the last year.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In 2025, 85% of responding CSOs reported conducting at least one type of evaluation. This is higher than in previous years: 70% in 2024, 82% in 2023 and 80% in 2021. Some 71% of CSOs stated that they had project level evaluations, 21% evaluation of their strategies and 27% evaluation of internal processes. Compared to previous years, the primary focus of evaluations has remained consistent. Among the 15% of CSOs that did not conduct evaluations, the main reasons cited were a perceived absence of necessity or insufficient financial resources.

SO 3.5 | CSOs use research and evidence to underpin their work.

Indicator 3.5.a – Proportion of CSOs whose work is based on evidence generated through research.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	4 – meets most standards

In 2025, 75% of the respondent CSOs have used some form of research in their work to generate evidence, noting a slight decrease from 2024 (80%), similar to the 77% in 2023 and the same as the 75% in 2021. Among the research methods utilised, focus group discussions remained the most common in 2025, used by 52% of the CSOs, similar to 2024, with 50% of CSOs using this method. Targeted surveys with specific groups followed, with 40%, similar to 2024 (38%). Other forms such as desk research, field research and public opinion surveys ranged between 22% and 25%. These preferences align with the trends seen in 2023 and 2021. Still, some CSOs did not carry out any research to support their advocacy efforts. This figure in 2025 was 25%, an increase compared with 2024 (17%), 2023 (14%) and 2021 (11%).

Indicator 3.5.b – Proportion of CSOs whose work is informed through consultation with people who have a stake in their current or future work.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	5 – fully meets standards
2024	5 – fully meets standards
2023	5 – fully meets standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

Some 92% of the organisations included in the CSO survey reported engaging in consultation with at least one of the following stakeholders: members, local communities, national government, local government, public institutions, academic institutions and the private sector. This proportion is similar to previous years with the same percentage in 2024, 94% in 2023, and 94% in 2021.

This year, the relevant question for this indicator was designed differently from previous years, with a view to obtaining a more detailed understanding of CSOs' engagement practices. In the 2025 survey, the question asked about engagement in two separate forms, consultation and partnership, whereas previous years covered consultation only. An additional 2% of responding CSOs stated that they engaged with these stakeholders through partnerships only. Combined with the consultation proportion (92%), the percentage of CSOs engaged in consultation and/or partnership with these stakeholders rises to 94%.

The most frequent consultations in 2025 were with members (77%), followed by local constituents (67%). In 2025, a significant proportion of CSOs consulted with the media (65%), local governments (56%) and public institutions (50%). Compared to previous years, the trends remain similar, with consultations with their own members being the lead.

In addition, this year's survey included a question inquiring about CSOs' engagement practices with other CSOs. 71% of responding CSOs reported consultation with other CSOs working in the same thematic area, and 67% with CSOs working in different thematic areas.

SO 3.6 | CSOs work in fair and respectful partnership to achieve shared goals.

Indicator 3.6.a – Proportion of CSOs taking part in local, central and international CSO networks.

Networking comprises a significant part of the work of the CSOs included in the survey. In 2025, 85% of the CSO respondents in the survey took part in the local, national and international CSO networks. The percentage is slightly higher than in 2024 (81%) and 2023 and 2021 (82%). National networks remain the most common form, with 75% of CSOs engaged in them, followed by international networks (56%) and local networks (27%). This trend has remained consistent over the years. Despite the widespread participation in networks, 14% of CSOs remain unaffiliated, a proportion that has stayed unchanged compared with previous years.

Survey Results

	% CSOs taking part in local, central and international networks.
2025	85%
2024	81%
2023	82%
2021	82%

A further relevant finding on networking concerns partnership practices with other CSOs in the Republic of North Macedonia: 77% of respondents to the 2025 CSO Survey reported partnerships with CSOs working in the same thematic field, while 54% stated that they acted in partnership with CSOs from other thematic fields.

Indicator 3.6.b – Proportion of CSOs engaged in cross-sectoral partnerships with academia, social partners and the private sector.

In 2025, 48% of the responding CSOs established cross-sectoral partnerships with at least one of the following stakeholders: academia, social partners and/or the private sector. This is considerably lower than previous findings with 60% in 2024, 64% in 2023 and 72% in 2021. This may be due to a minor change in the survey methodology: this year, the relevant question for this indicator was designed differently from previous years, with a view to obtaining a more detailed understanding of CSOs' engagement practices. In the 2025 survey, the question asked about engagement in two separate forms, consultation and partnership, whereas previous years covered partnership only. In addition to the 48% partnership figure, 25% of CSOs reported having consultations with at least one of these cross-sectoral stakeholders, which is a further form of engagement. Combined (48% + 25%), the proportion of CSOs having some form of engagement with cross-sectoral stakeholders rises to 73%. For exact comparison, however, the data provided in the table below include partnerships only.

Some 42% of the respondent CSOs in the survey established partnerships with academia, 15% with social partners and 31% with the private sector. Similar trends are visible in the previous years. The partnership with the social partners declined from 22% in 2024 and 23% in 2023 to 15% in 2025.

Survey Results

	% CSOs engaged in cross-sectoral partnerships
2025	48%
2024	60%
2023	64%
2021	72%

SO 3.7 | CSOs have a diversified funding base.

Indicator 3.7.a – Proportion of CSOs whose sources of donor income are diversified.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	3 – moderately meets standards
2024	3 – moderately meets standards
2023	3 – moderately meets standards
2021	3 – moderately meets standards

The diversification of funding is an important factor for securing organisational sustainability. In 2025, the CSOs respondents in the survey collected funds from diverse sources. Some 82% of CSOs included in the survey secured funding from more than one funding source, while for 54% of the CSOs no single donor source provided more than half of the budget. Compared with previous years, this presents a decrease from 2024 (60%), but a slight increase from 2023 (53%) and 2021 (51%).

The proportion of CSOs without donor support in 2025 was 11%, marking a considerable decrease from 2024 (16%) and 2023 (22%), and matching the baseline year (11% in 2021).

For the third consecutive year, the European Commission was identified as the most significant donor, chosen by 71% of respondents in 2025. This represents an increase compared with 2024 (46%) and 2023 (65%) reflecting the Commission's dominant role in supporting CSOs. In 2021, the European Commission was ranked as the second-largest donor. The international CSOs emerged as the second most significant funding source in 2025 selected by 46% of the CSOs. Closely behind are the local government and the bilateral donors (foreign government) selected by 44% of respondents. In 2024 both the national and local government were selected as the second most significant source by 42% of the respondents. In 2023, the figure was 47%.

2025 was marked by the closure of USAID, one of the biggest development programmes. According to the MCIC report from 2025⁴⁴, USAID funding to the Republic of North Macedonia was significantly reduced from January 2025, ending three decades as a key partner in democratic reforms and civil society growth. Of the nearly USD 37 million originally allocated for 2025–2028, almost all was cancelled, affecting democracy and governance, rule of law, anti-corruption, youth engagement, and media freedom, leaving many ongoing programmes with an uncertain future. The withdrawal of United States assistance is the largest single funding event of the reporting year. USAID-administered assistance is estimated at about USD 30 million a year, roughly one fifth of the sector's income, supporting 44 projects since 2016. Revenue growth among the 100 largest organisations fell from 10.2% (2023–2024) to 2.2% (2024–2025), while employment in that group fell 16.8%, with the sharpest declines concentrated in these same areas. Because 2025 accounts still reflect earlier multiannual grants, the full impact is expected in 2026, so 2025's relative stability should not be read as resilience. The European Parliament's June 2025 resolution on North Macedonia called for mitigation of the freeze's effects. (MCIC, The Civil Sector in Numbers, July 2026)

Indicator 3.7.b – Proportion of CSOs raising funds from sources other than donors (e.g. membership fees, corporate/individual giving and income-generating activities)

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	4 – meets most standards
2024	4 – meets most standards
2023	4 – meets most standards
2021	5 – fully meets standards

In 2025, 65% of the CSOs in the survey raised funds from sources other than donors. The 2024 CSO survey indicated that 74% of CSOs had at least one source of income apart from donor funding, the same proportion as in 2023, while in 2021 it was 82%. Hence, this year marks a considerable drop in the proportion of CSOs raising funds from sources other than donors.

It is also important to note that 8% of responding CSOs conduct their activities with no funding at all, from donors or other sources, relying entirely on a voluntary basis and in-kind support.

In 2025, membership fees comprise between 1% and 25% of the budget for 29% of CSOs, followed by income generated from economic activities and individual donations, that comprise the same budget percentage for 21% of the CSOs. Crowdfunding is the source of funding for 33%, followed by income from the organisations' own businesses and social enterprise, or service and goods provisions for 27% of the CSOs.

⁴⁴ <https://mcms.mk/en/our-work/research-and-publications/researches/2693-vlijanieto-od-prekinot-na-finansiskata-poddrshka-ta-na-usaid-vrz-makedonskoto-gragjansko-opshtestvo.html>

SO 3.8 | CSOs have effective, empowered and developed human resources.

Indicator 3.8.a – Proportion of CSOs that employ staff.

According to the 2025 survey, 69% of the CSOs reported employing at least one staff member. Some 56% of the organisations employ between one and five persons, 19% between six and ten, 8% between 11 and 20, and 6% more than 20 persons. Similar distribution trends are visible in the previous years.

With 69% of organisations employing at least one paid staff member and a median budget of EUR 7,000, North Macedonia's CSOs show a relatively high level of professionalisation. Location is by far the strongest predictor: Skopje-based organisations employ paid staff at a striking 96% with a median of five, while non-Skopje organisations drop to 43%, yet the pattern reverses entirely for volunteers, where non-Skopje organisations reach 89% engagement against just 50% in the capital, suggesting that organisations outside Skopje compensate for lower staffing capacity through strong volunteer mobilisation. Budget also plays a significant role: larger-budget organisations employ paid staff at 72% compared with just 33% among smaller ones, while volunteer engagement shows the opposite pattern: smaller-budget organisations are more volunteer-active. Thematically, a clear specialisation axis emerges: CSO resilience, disability rights and labour rights organisations are fully professionalised (100% paid staff) but weak in terms of volunteers, while arts and culture (30% paid, 90% volunteer), health (38% / 88%) and environment and climate (60% / 93%) rely almost entirely on volunteer labour, pointing to structurally different operating models across thematic fields.

Survey Results

	% CSOs that employ staff
2025	69%
2024	67%
2023	77%
2021	69%

Indicator 3.8.b – Proportion of CSOs that have organisational human resources policies.

Traffic Lights Colour Coding

Year	Compliance
2025	1 – does not meet standards
2024	1 – does not meet standards
2023	1 – does not meet standards
2021	1 – does not meet standards

In the 2025 CSO survey, only one CSO (2%) reported having all nine key human resources policies in place (recruitment, diversity, equality and inclusion, gender equality, disciplinary, grievance/complaints, performance appraisal, redundancy, bullying and harassment, and safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults policies), mirroring the situation from 2024 where no CSO reported having them, and from 2021 and 2023 (with only one organisation having all policies).

In 2025, 33% of the respondent CSOs reported having at least five of the listed documents regulating human resources. The most common policy was diversity, equality and inclusion policy (54%), followed by the bullying and harassment policy (42%) and the recruitment policy (37%).

The proportion of CSOs lacking any human resources policies continued to decrease: 23% in 2025, compared with 42% in 2024, 32% in 2023 and 28% in 2021.

Indicator 3.8.c – Proportion of CSOs that have advertised publicly their staff and volunteering vacancies in the last year.

This indicator was not assessed.

Indicator 3.8.d – Proportion of CSOs that have organisational policies encouraging recruitment of a diverse workforce.

This indicator was not assessed.

Indicator 3.8.e – Proportion of CSOs whose staff and volunteers have attended a training course in the past year.

This indicator was not assessed.



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Comparative Scores Table per Indicator 2021-2025

		2025							2024							2023							2021						
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
		SO1 - Enabling Environment for CSOs																											
1.1.a	Extent to which relevant domestic legislation provides for freedoms of association, assembly and expression	3	3	4	4	4	2	1	3	3	4	4	4	2	1	3	3	4	4	4	2	1	3	4	4	4	4	3	1
1.2.a	Extent to which CSOs have access to an effective remedy to challenge or seek review of decisions affecting exercise of their rights	3	4	4	3	4	2	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	3	4	3	4	4	3	2
1.2.b	Extent to which CSOs are protected by law from threats, attacks, judicial harassment and discriminatory treatment	3	2	4	3	4	2	1	4	2	4	4	4	3	1	5	2	4	4	4	3	1	5	3	4	4	4	3	1
1.3.a	Extent to which laws to combat extremism, terrorism, money laundering and corruption do not unduly restrict legitimate activities of CSOs	4	3	4	4	4	3	1	4	3	4	5	4	3	1	4	2	4	5	4	3	1	4	2	4	5	4	3	1

		2025							2024							2023							2021						
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
1.4.a	Extent to which laws (1) do not require CSOs to submit more reports and information, and (2) do not submit CSOs to more inspections and sanctions, than business entities	5	5	5	5	5	3	1	5	4	5	5	5	4	1	5	4	5	5	5	4	1	5	5	5	5	5	4	1
1.5.a	Small community/local organisations and civic initiatives are allowed to operate by law without registering	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	2	5	4	5	5	5	5	2
1.5.b	In law, unregistered small community/local organisations and civic initiatives enjoy the same right to participation in decision making processes as registered CSOs	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	4	4	2	4	4	4	3	4	5	2	4	4	4	3	4	5	2
1.6.a	Extent to which relevant laws allow CSOs to seek a broad range of funding, including from abroad, without undue restrictions	5	3	5	5	5	4	2	5	3	5	5	5	5	2	5	3	5	5	4	5	2	5	4	5	5	4	5	2

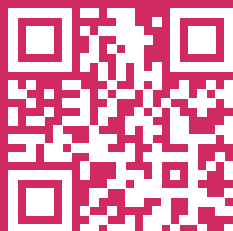
		2025							2024							2023							2021						
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
1.7.a	The level of public funding available for CSOs and associations is clearly articulated in laws and regulations, and the rights and duties of the state body invested with the ability to set and revise the level of public funding available is clearly defined in law	1	2	4	5	2	2	1	1	1	4	5	2	2	1	1	1	4	5	2	2	1	1	1	4	5	1	2	1
1.7.c	Extent to which legal provisions regulating the award of public funding to CSOs ensure that it is clear, impartial and well regulated	4	2	4	3	2	2	1	4	3	4	3	2	2	1	4	3	4	3	2	2	1	3	3	4	3	2	2	1
1.7.d	Central governments make the information on awards publicly available and sufficiently detailed to identify individual awards	2	2	4	5	2	2	2	2	2	4	5	2	3	2	1	2	4	5	2	2	2	1	2	4	5	2	2	2
1.7.e	Proportion of CSOs indicating that the provision of domestic public funds is transparent, fair, and non-discriminatory	2	1	3	2	2	1	1	1	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1
1.8.a	Tax legislation allows for tax relief as regards individual and corporate giving	2	3	5	5	3	3	2	2	3	5	3	3	3	2	2	3	5	4	3	3	2	2	3	5	4	3	3	2

		2025							2024							2023							2021						
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
1.9.a	Extent to which applicable tax laws provide for appropriate tax benefits for CSOs	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3
1.10.a	Laws regulating volunteering are adopted	3	4	1	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	2	3	2	1	2	4	1	2	3	2	1
1.10.b	Government volunteering strategies and programmes support volunteering for CSOs and have sufficient resources allocated for implementation	1	1	2	3	3	3	1	1	1	2	1	3	3	1	1	3	2	1	3	3	1	1	3	2	1	3	2	1
SO 2 - Cooperation Between Government and CSOs																													
2.1.a	Laws, bylaws, strategies, other acts of public interest and policy reforms are effectively consulted with CSOs	3	2	3	3	2	2	1	3	2	3	4	2	2	1	3	2	3	4	2	1	1	3	2	3	4	2	2	1
2.2.a	Extent to which CSOs assess the attitude of public officials towards civil society as supportive	1	1	2	3	1	1	1	3	1	2	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	2	1	2	1	1	1	1
2.3.b	Currently valid civil society cooperation strategies are adopted	1	2	1	5	5	5	1	1	1	1	5	5	5	1	5	1	5	5	5	5	1	5	1	5	1	1	1	1
2.3.c	Civil society cooperation strategies are accompanied by adopted budgeted action plans	1	2	1	5	4	4	1	1	1	1	5	3	1	1	1	1	5	5	3	5	1	1	1	5	1	1	1	1

		2025							2024							2023							2021							
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	
2.3.f	Mechanisms for dialogue between civil society cooperation councils and central governments meaningfully include CSOs:	2	1	1	3	5	2	1	3	4	1	1	1	3	1	4	4	3	1	1	4	2	4	4	3	3	5	1	2	
SO 3 - Capacity and Accountability of CSOs																														
3.1.a	Proportion of CSOs that have an independent and effective governing body with clear terms of reference	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	2	3	3	2	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2
3.1.b	Proportion of CSOs that regularly check potential conflicts of interest with regard to the political, economic and personal relationships of their governing body	3	2	3	3	2	2	3	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2	1	2	1	1
3.1.c	Proportion of CSOs that share relevant information on their organisation using means and channels that are accessible to all stakeholders	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	1	2	1	2	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	3	1	3	2	2	2	2	2	1	3	
3.1.d	Proportion of CSOs that have an organisational gender equality policy	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	2	3	3	2	3	2	2	3	3	

		2025							2024							2023							2021						
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
3.1.e	Proportion of CSOs that have an organisational strategy, including vision, mission, and goals	4	4	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	5	4	3
3.2.a	Proportion of CSOs that have at least one on-line channel of communication	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5
3.3.a	Proportion of CSOs that publish their annual reports and financial statements	3	3	2	4	4	3	3	2	2	1	2	3	2	2	2	3	2	2	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	4	3	3
3.3.b	Proportion of CSOs that publish information on their sources of funding and amounts received in the previous year	3	3	2	3	3	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2
3.4.a	Proportion of CSOs that have carried out an evaluation of their work in the last year	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5
3.5.a	Proportion of CSOs whose work is based on evidence generated through research	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	5
3.5.b	Proportion of CSOs whose work is informed through consultation with people who have a stake in their current or future work	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5

		2025							2024							2023							2021						
		AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR	AL	BA	XK	ME	MK	RS	TR
3.7.a	Proportion of CSOs whose sources of donor income are diversified	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	4
3.7.b	Proportion of CSOs raising funds from sources other than donors	3	5	3	3	4	4	5	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	5	4	5
3.8.b	Proportion of CSOs that have organisational human resources policies	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1



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