

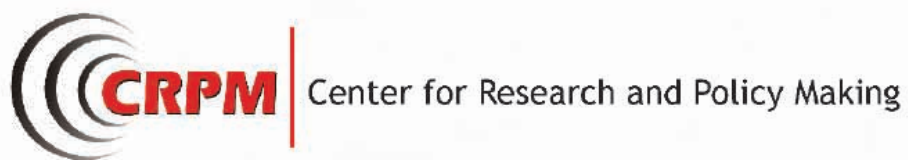


Center for Research and Policy Making



# ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN MACEDONIA

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Research | Analysis | Trainings | Policy advice



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## *PREFACE*

In Macedonia the policy making process lacks participatory approach during all stages of the decision making process. This is even more evident in the initial stage when the specific public policy is being designed. It is usually an elitist process, neglecting the opinion of the stakeholders that are mostly concerned by the final policy outcome. Policy making generally neglects the gender aspect of the societal problems. The inclusiveness of the policy making process and the responsiveness of the public policies could be guaranteed only by supplying the decision makers with evidence based policy analysis. Gender based analysis (GBA) is an effective tool that is already being used in developed countries in order to include the gender sensitive approach particularly in the initial phase when public policies are being drafted and discussed among relevant stakeholders. Governments worldwide have obliged themselves to implement the concept of GBA on central and local level introducing the gender sensitive approach of programs and policies proposed by public institutions.

The present situation in Macedonia is such that the gender issue is seen only as some kind of formal requirement in the policy making without any substance or real implications in the implementation of the policies. Due to more politicised "hot" issues that the Macedonian society faces, this issue has been marginalized and was mentioned mostly in non- legally binding declarative documents. Even when mentioned in the legislation, the appropriate mechanisms for achieving gender equality through applicable, monitored and effective policy making are not implemented.

Hence, the publication "Achieving gender equality in Macedonia" aims to overcome this gap and to provide relevant gender analyses of seven specific areas, which are of paramount importance for the improvement of the women status in the Macedonian society.

## DEFINITIONS

Note to the Reader:

When conducting this research, there was at times confusion among our partners about what was meant by gender neutral policies and gender sensitive/aware policy making. The following is an in-depth explanation of the terms and concepts on which this study is grounded.

**Gender** is the socially constructed differences between men and women. This is different from sex, which is the biological difference between men and women. When we say that men and women are not the same, we refer not only to differences in biology (biological/sex differences) but also to the different roles that have been created by society (gender differences).<sup>1</sup>

**Gender roles** are in a constant state of flux in response to changing social and economic conditions. For example, in a crisis situation, women may take on traditional male roles, e.g. heads of families, industrial workers or soldiers. The gender roles we play change throughout the course of a day. For example, if a mother stays home from work to take care of her sick child, she is playing a traditionally “female gender role”. That same mother, once the child is healthy, may go outside of the home to work and/or act as the main wage earner for the family – in this, she is playing a traditionally “male gender role”. Society will determine how each role will change – but it should be understood that one role cannot change without impacting another. Because gender is constructed by society and not fixed, stereotypical notions of male and female roles can be challenged. In all societies, these roles have evolved and have changed throughout a culture’s history. The term “gender roles” and “gender stereotypes” are often used interchangeably. These are the roles that tradition has created.<sup>2</sup>

**Gender aware policy appraisal:** The policy document that appraises certain policy for which gender analysis is made is called gender aware policy appraisal. *Gender Analysis* is the methodology applied to development problems to identify and understand the dimensions and relevance of gender issues and gender-based constraints. Analysis includes understanding the differences between men’s and women’s roles, rights and opportunities.<sup>3</sup> Gender analysis is a mandatory technical analysis for development of Strategic Plans and policy development. Analytical work performed under gender analysis must address at least two questions: (1) how will gender relations affect the achievement of sustainable results; and (2) how will proposed results affect the relative status of men and women. Addressing these questions involves taking into account not only the different roles of men and women, but also the relationship and balance between them and the institutional structures that support them.

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1 “Advancing Gender Equality – Using CEDAW and UN Security Council resolution 1325, Training Module for Gender Equality Advocates”, UNIFEM Regional Project “Women for Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building in the Southern Caucasus”, Dec 2006.

2 Ibid

3 A Guide to Gender Integration and Analysis: Annex to ADS 200 Series

**Gender Awareness**

Recognition that women and men perform different roles in society and therefore have different needs which must be recognized.

**Gender Equality**

Equal rights and opportunities for women , men, girls and boys in all sectors, political, social , legal and economic.

**Gender Sensitivity**

Being aware that women and men perform different roles and have different needs which must be planned for accordingly.

**Gender Framework**

This is a tool for streamlining the analysis of needs and issues of men, women girls and boys (especially their relationships in society). It is also a guide for approaching methodologies and policies of an organisation.

**Gender Balance**

This is an ideal situation where women and men boys and girls live harmoniously enjoying equal opportunities and have mutual respect for each other.

**Gender Focus**

This refers to specifically addressing the needs of women and men, girls and boys in the society as determined by their gender.

**Gender Blind**

This is a conscious or unconscious way of doing or saying things without recognising or considering differences in position, needs and feelings based on gender.

**Gender Bias**

This is a positive or negative attitude/practice towards either female or male.

**Gender Stereotyping**

The assigning of roles, tasks and responsibilities to a particular gender on the basis of preconceived prejudices.

**Gender Discrimination**

A difference in treatment of people based entirely on their being male or female. This difference contributes to structural inequality in society.

**Gender Disaggregated Data**

This is a classified information on the basis of genders e.,g men, women, girls or boys. This data provides important indicators of gender needs.

**Gender Equity**

Just treatment, balanced recognition and appreciation of both women's and men's potential.

## **Gender Analysis**

Critical examination of issues affecting both women and men within a given situation or policy.

## **Gender Mainstreaming**

Addressing gender issues in all development policies and projected programmes irrespective of sector or type of project. Mainstreaming is therefore the very opposite of a policy strategy of segregating gender issues into separate “women’s projects” The term mainstreaming is used by those who see women’s development as being essentially concerned with women’s participation and empowerment to address the issues of gender inequality. From this perspective the mainstreaming of gender issues entails the transformation of the development process.

### *Gender Policies:*

#### **Gender Neutral Policy.**

Seeks to target selected men and women in order to realize certain pre-determined goals and objectives, but such a policy leaves the existing divisions of resources responsibilities and capabilities intact. In this context such a policy is gender sensitive but does not change the structural status quo in a given situation.

#### **Gender Specific Policy.**

Is intended to target and benefit a specific gender in order to achieve certain policy goals or to meet certain gender specific needs more effectively. Gender specific policy is in a way gender sensitive because its interventions are intended to meet targeted needs of one or other gender within existing distribution of resources and responsibilities. These kinds of interventions are most often welfare oriented but with potential of achieving transformatory impact when critically planned for. In this way the difference between a women-specific policy and a gender -blind policy is based on the analysis of gender specific constraints and one that is based on prior assumptions about proper roles of women.

#### **Gender Transformative Policy.**

Targets women men or both and recognizes the existence of gender specific needs and constraints of each or both categories, but also seeks to transform the existing gender relations in a more equitable direction through the redistribution of resources and responsibilities. Gender redistribute is the most challenging policy intervention because it doesn’t not simply seek to channel resources to women within the existing social framework but in principle questions the existing status quo.



## CONTENT

1	Women representation in politics Authors: Sanja Kostovska MES / Ilija Talev MA	9-19
2	Women participation within the public administration Authors: Sanja Kostovska MES / Ilija Talev MA	20-34
3	Gender and employment Author: Marija Risteska MPA	36-50
4	Women's effective property and inheritance rights in the Republic of Macedonia Author: Anastas Vangeli MA	51-74
5	The Effects that Physical Infrastructure has on women's Productive Time in Rural areas Author: Riste Zmejkoski	76-90
6	Girls in secondary education: How to increase the enrollment? Author: Ana Mickovska- Raleva MPhil	91-106
7	The Youth Has a Right To Sexual Education (Gender Analysis of the Need for Introduction of Sexual Education ) Author: Sanja Kostovska MES	107-128

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# ACHIEVING GENDER EQUALITY IN MACEDONIA

# 1

## Women representation in politics

Authors:  
Sanja Kostovska MES  
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## CONTENT

<i>1. Introduction</i>	12
<i>2. Political representation of women</i>	12
<i>3. Political representation at local level</i>	16
<i>4. Overview of the legal framework</i>	16
<i>5. Conclusion and recommendations</i>	18

## 1. Introduction

Modern democracies take pride in their capacity to secure equality for all citizens regardless of their age, gender, religion, ethnic origin etc. However, all societies have to deal with the issue of gender equality, and in almost all cases it is an ongoing process.

It is a matter of common sense to conclude that gender sensitive policy-making is best achieved through equal participation of men and women in the decision-making process. This goes hand-in-hand with the concept of empowering women, defined as a “bottom-up process of transforming gender power relations, through individuals or groups developing awareness of women’s subordination and building their capacity to challenge it. The ultimate goal of women’s empowerment is for women themselves to be the active agents of change.”<sup>1</sup> In order for policy outcomes to take into consideration the needs and concerns of both groups, the institutional architecture in a democratic society should be founded on the principles of equal opportunities for men and women.

The 2004 UN Combined initial, second and third periodic reports on the State Parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women states the following regarding the Republic of Macedonia:

*“According to the present data, the lack of participation in the authorities and in the decision-making process is one of the main problems involving gender discrimination, generally shared by all women, with the exception of an insignificant minority. To overcome the democratic deficit resulting from the insufficient presence of women in all power structures, the relevant factors in the country should focus their efforts on resolving problems related to the contents and the process of decision-making, rather than on the discrimination as an isolated factor.”<sup>2</sup>*

## 2. Political representation of women

The political representation of women is crucial precondition for better influence and inclusion of women in the policy-making. The minimum threshold of 30% women’s representation at all levels and sectors is the accepted international standard. Unfortunately, the statistics show that this is still far from being fully realised. Globally, the achievement of the equal standing of women and men at all levels in decision-making is long and hard process. This is due to several reasons: <sup>3</sup>

- Strong patriarchal political culture

1 Development Corporation Ireland, Department of Foreign Affairs, “Gender Equality Policy”, April 2004, available at <http://www.irishaid.gov.ie/Uploads/Gender%20Equality%20Policy.pdf> last accessed: 30.04.2009

2 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, “Combined initial, second and third periodic reports of States parties” 5 August 2004, p. 13.

3 Milica G. Antic and Sonja Lokar, The Balkans: from total rejection to gradual acceptance of gender quotas; Women, Quotas and Politics; edited by Drude Dahlerup; Routledge Research in Comparative Politics; Pg.159

- Weak women's movement
- Poor or non-existing national mechanisms for promoting and securing gender equality
- Unfavourable electoral systems
- Unstable party systems
- Male dominated political elites

There are many factors that influence the level of women's representation in politics. One of the most important factors is the type of the electoral system, which often emerges as a major obstacle on the path of women's breakthrough into politics. Research<sup>4</sup> has shown that women advance more in proportional representation systems, rather than in majority electoral systems. Namely, in 2004, of 182 countries that hold elections women averaged 8.5% of members of parliament in majority system, 11.3% in combined and 15.4% in proportional representation systems.<sup>5</sup> According to other research<sup>6</sup>, in systems of proportional representation on average 6% higher number of women is elected. Thus, 13 countries out of the top 15 with highest female representation have proportional representation system.

As an additional argument in this direction, one can use the Macedonian experience. Following the changes of the electoral system, from majority to proportional, the representation of women in politics increased. However, the electoral system is not the only precondition that impacts the gender balance in politics, but also other electoral rules, in particular those referring to the type of the candidate lists (open/closed) have strong impact. Some experts dealing with electoral policy support the idea of introduction of preferential voting or replacement of the closed candidate lists with open lists within the proportional system<sup>7</sup>. It should provide better citizen's participation in the electoral process and better accountability of the elected candidates. But, the question is what will be the impact on the gender balance in the political life, once such measures are introduced? The experience in many countries showed that open list voting often works to the disadvantage of female candidates (unless women in the country are exceptionally well politically organised)<sup>8</sup>. On the other hand, the experience in PR systems shows that "closed" lists often lead to higher female representation in politics compared to the "open" lists, and is representative only if there is a quota for female candidates<sup>9</sup>. Irrespective of the mode, whether it is an "open" or

4 A Review of the Role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women; Beyond numbers: supporting women's political participation and promoting gender equality in post-conflict governance in Africa; January 2006; [http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/documents/UNIFEM\\_WomensParticipationInGovernance\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/documents/UNIFEM_WomensParticipationInGovernance_Africa.pdf)

5 Ibid.

6 Press release, Inter-Parliamentary Union, No.324, New York/Geneva, 5 March 2009, <http://www.ipu.org/press-e/gen324.htm>

7 Aleksandra A. Mitevaska, Preferential voting system is the way out of the crises, Globus, 18.03.2008, <http://www.globusmagazin.com.mk/?ItemID=C7FD1D38C1A337489C86A409A0C525EA>; Interview with Gordana Siljanovska, Dnevnik, 18.03.2006, <http://star.dnevnik.com.mk/default.aspx?pbroj=2468&stlD=34319>

8 [www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/osagi/wps/publication/Chapter3.htm)

9 A Review of the Role of the United Nations Development Fund for Women; Beyond numbers: supporting women's political participation and promoting gender equality in post-conflict governance in Africa;

“closed” list, the position of women on the candidate lists is critical for their entrance into politics.

At global level<sup>10</sup>, 18.3% of the seats in the parliaments belong to women. Compared to the statistics from 1995 (11.3%) this is significant improvement, a 60% increase. The minimum threshold of 30% female representation in the parliaments has been achieved only in 15% of the parliaments worldwide. Even though this percentage is not very high, it should be seen as a significant achievement in the past decade. Moreover, an increase of the women’s share of seats has been noted in 60% of parliamentary renewals, whereas stagnation or setback in 40% of the renewed parliaments. Even today, there are parliaments where women representation is under 10%. Unfortunately, these are not isolated cases, but constitute ¼ of all parliaments in the world. Interestingly, Macedonia is pointed out as a positive example<sup>11</sup> and is one of the countries where more than 30% of the MPs are women. At the moment, the number of women in the Macedonian parliament is 39, which represents 32,5 % of the total number of MPs. This is a result of the modifications in the electoral law that obliged the political parties to submit party lists with at least a third of the candidates being women<sup>12</sup>. This is not a huge change from 2006 when 36 out of 120 MPs were women (30%), but it does establish a positive pattern that can have significant influence on gender sensitive policy-making in the parliament. For example, the informal group of women MPs was formed in 2003 when the first significant increase of women MPs occurred. The mission of this informal grouping is to “achieve gender equality, to advance women’s rights and their active involvement in the process of decision-making in the country.”<sup>13</sup>

*Table 1. Women and men in RM-publication of the State Statistical Office, 2006*

	1990-1994	1994-1998	1998-2002	2002-2006	2006-2008	2008-2012
No. of women	5	4	9	21	36	39
% of women	4%	3%	8%	18%	30%	32.5%

Regardless, of the significant improvement at parliamentary level, female representation should not be seen only as a technical fulfilment of a quota. This should be an ongoing process geared towards achieving and maintaining integrated gender balance.

However, a conclusion cannot be drawn only on the bases of parliamentary representation of women. Hence, relevant information on the gender balance in the

January 2006; Pg.12 [http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/documents/UNIFEM\\_WomensParticipation-InGovernance\\_Africa.pdf](http://www.humansecuritygateway.info/documents/UNIFEM_WomensParticipation-InGovernance_Africa.pdf)

10 Press release, Inter-Parliamentary Union, No.324, New York/Geneva, 5 March 2009, <http://www.ipu.org/press-e/gen324.htm>

11 Ibid

12 The wording in the law is very gender neutral. No sex is particularly mentioned, but the term “the sex least represented” is used

13 Website of the Parliament of the Republic of Macedonia, link: <http://www.sobranie.mk/default.asp?ItemID=1E5CC2E6B937104396BBBD37928383D9> last accessed: 30.04.2009

Macedonian political sphere is provided by the number of women in the other branches of government.

At the level of government line ministries the following pattern emerges:

- 2 female ministers out of 22 (Interior + Culture);
- 3 female deputy ministers (education and science, Information society, and environment);
- 6 state secretaries (interior, justice, finance, economy, local self-government, transport and communication);

COMMENTARY: The level of female representation on these key functions is very low. Few women play decisive roles as top managers in line ministries.

Similar unfavourable situation for women is recognised at local level. Although, there is a positive trend in the last 4 electoral cycles at the level of the local municipal councils, achieving a gender balance is far away. At local level there is still much work to be done to fulfil the current legally stipulated minimal threshold of 30%.

*Table 2. Women and men in RM-publication of the State Statistical Office, 2006*

	1996	2000	2005	2009
Number of female mayors	0	3 (2%)	3 (4%)	0
Number of female in the local councils	105 (6%)	161 (8%)	315 (23%)	369 (26,7%)

The concept of decentralization is compatible with improved representation of the local interests and groups; however it has not overcome the dramatic gender gap at this level. Moreover, issues of special interest for women were completely marginalised in the local elections debate, which is a strong indicator for the low level of the gender awareness. Interestingly, none of the 13 women running for mayor won in the first round or advanced to the second round of the 2009 local elections.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, some elected female municipal council members (especially the less educated women from minority communities) were subjected to pressures to resign their mandate in favour of male candidates.<sup>15</sup> There are municipalities, mostly rural, with none or only one woman in the local council.

It is evident that the highest political posts at central and local level are traditionally "reserved" for men. The problem should be tackled in a comprehensive and consistent manner, through legislative changes, affirmative action and measures, raising awareness activities, and improvement of the socio-economic status of women.

<sup>14</sup> Election Observation Mission The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia Presidential and Municipal Elections, Second Round, 5 April 2009, OSCE, [http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2009/04/37147\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2009/04/37147_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Ibid



### 3. Political representation at local level

Significant improvement is noted in the last three local electoral cycles regarding the political representation of women. This is mostly due to the electoral legislative changes. Thus, the same positive trend noticed at national level with regard to the political representation of women is recognised at local level, but the pace of reform at local level differs. At parliamentary level women are represented with more than 30%, while in the majority of the municipalities (55 out of 84) the percent is less than 30%.<sup>16</sup> In 7 municipalities there is only one or not a single woman on the local council.

For more detail overview of the situation, two municipalities were analysed; Struga with an ethnic Albanian majority population, and Strumica, with an ethnic Macedonian majority.

There is noticeable progress in political representation of women in both municipalities. The affirmative clauses introduced in the electoral legislation had especially positive impact in the case of Struga. Although, the percent of women in the local council is less than 30%, still dramatic improvement is noted from 2000. On the other hand, in Strumica the crucial step forward was taken at the local elections 2005, when the number of women in the local council reached the quota of 30%, with even more improvement for the latest 2009 local elections.

Table 3

Municipality	Number of women in the local council		
	2000	2005	2009
Struga	(5.3%) <sup>17</sup>	4 (14.8 %)	7 (25,93 %)
Strumica	2 (10.5%)	7 (30.4 %)	8 (34,78 %)

### 4. Overview of the legal framework

The electoral law provides the legal basis and the legal obligation for the political parties to act in compliance with the principle of gender balance for the elections.

The electoral law sets a minimum threshold for women participation at all levels in politics. Thus, the submitted candidate list for Members of Parliament (MPs), for local councils and Skopje council, in every three places at least one should be reserved for the less represented sex [Article 64 Paragraph 5]. Political parties that fail to meet these requirements, *inter alia* the aforementioned criterion on gender balance, will not be registered for elections.

The present electoral law replaced the previous laws that regulated the election of the Members of Parliament and the local elections separately. The preceding

<sup>16</sup> List of the local councilors elected on the last local elections 2009, <http://www.zels.org.mk/>

<sup>17</sup>“29.06.2009, Interview conducted with a representative of the human resources sector -Struga municipality; in 2000 the number of women in the local council was minimal, with representation of 1or 2 women out of 19 councilors in the municipal council.”

laws stipulated a minimum criterion of at least 30% of the candidates on the electoral list to belong to the underrepresented sex. The introduction of these affirmative clauses has contributed for a dramatic increase of the number of women parliamentarians and women representatives in the local councils. However, the situation is still far from nearing gender balance.

Before the introduction of any affirmative clauses in the legislation, the level of female participation was very low. The main reason<sup>18</sup> for that were the political parties, who had placed female candidates at the very bottom of the electoral candidate lists. Thus, the chances for women to be elected for political position were minimal. Luckily, the introduction of affirmative clauses in the legislation for local and parliamentary elections, and setting a quota of 30% for the less represented sex (which required half of that number to be placed on the upper and the rest on the lower part of the candidate lists) did increase the number of women, although not at a satisfactory level. One of the obstacles was the restrictive interpretation of this clause by SEC, which has enabled the political parties to circumvent the article and to candidate less women. Namely, the manual that SEC had issued for the local election 2005 stipulated that in the municipalities where the local councils were consisted of 15 members, 30% represented 4,5 council members. SEC interpretation of the law implied that the political parties had to nominate 4 women for the candidate lists, which in reality was less than 30%. The low level of gender awareness within the institutions dealing with elections was an additional obstacle that hindered the faster progress of political representation and participation of women.

The new electoral law aimed to overcome the loophole noted in the previous regulation. Thus, the new law stipulated that in every three posts at least one will be reserved for the less represented sex. Improvement in the political representation of women was evident; however, a lack of political will within the political parties to candidate women at the top positions (such as mayors, and the first two top positions of the candidate lists) persisted.<sup>19</sup> In response there is an initiative<sup>20</sup> for the introduction of a quota for female mayors. The initiative is in its initial phase and at the moment it is lobbied at the level of political parties. By now only one political party has discussed<sup>21</sup> the initiative at the highest party level, and unfortunately did not support it. Furthermore, another political party that discussed the issue, in an unofficial communication, signalled that it is not very interested to support such an amendment of the electoral law.

The political unwillingness common to most of the political parties is due to the fact that most of the highest political posts are taken by men, and logically the male politicians do not want voluntarily to give up their political space in favour of their female counterparts.

Although the comparative analyses do not point out the specific quota model for improvement of the political representation of women, at the level of mayors, this idea should be seriously considered, and wide debate should be raised in which all relevant parties will be consulted. The theory relies on the conclusion that quotas as a posi-

18 Interview with Savka Todorova, president of SOZM (the national women organization), 11.06.2009

19 Ibid

20 Interview with Liljana Popovska, MP, 1.07.2009

21 Ibid

tive measure are not applicable for political posts elected on the basis of the majority electoral system, where it is only possible to elect one person, same as in the case of mayors or president of the country. However, theoretically there is possibility for the introduction of quota, meaning, that out of the total number of candidates for mayors nominated by the political parties, a minimum threshold is set for candidates of the less represented sex. Unfortunately, this issue is very little or not at all discussed at academic level. On the other hand, it is possible that this kind of positive action could face resistance from the opponents of the affirmative measures, by the argumentation that it would be direct interference in inner organization and functioning of the political parties. Furthermore, it is questionable whether and to what extent this kind of an amendment of the electoral law (the political parties to be obliged to candidate at least 30% of the less represented sex for mayoral candidates from the total number of mayoral candidates) would contribute for better representation of women at mayoral level. Even if this affirmative clause is integrated within the electoral law, the political parties could circumvent it easily by nominating women candidates for mayors in the municipalities where certain that they will not win the elections. Thus, the political parties will fulfill the legal obligation, but it will not have major impact on the ground in terms of better political representation of women at these posts.

There is another loophole in the electoral law that undermines the gender balance and has to be tackled. In case of termination of the mandate of a MP or a local council representative, the rest of the his/hers mandate will be taken over by the next candidate on the electoral candidate list (art.153[1]; art.155[1]). In the spirit of the principle of gender balance it is recommendable that the MPs or the local council representative whose mandate has ceased are replaced not by the next candidate on the list as it is stipulated in the law, but by the next candidate of same sex. This will prevent the pressures registered at local level, especially in the rural municipalities, where the elected women were forced to resign in favour of the male candidates on the list.

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

Macedonian society is burdened by many prejudices and it is not the easiest place for women to realise their political ambition. Thus, measures should be undertaken to provide better representation of the women. A potentially big stumbling block is the lack of political will within the political parties to work and contribute in this direction. Any affirmative measures shall mean that the posts currently occupied by men will have to be more evenly distributed between the two sexes. It is hard to believe that anyone voluntarily will "give up" his post. This could be changed only under a strong pressure by the women who did manage to get into a high political post, strong coordinated action from the NGO sector, and the international community.

### Quotas for better political representation of the underrepresented sex?!

*Legislative changes introducing quotas for mayors of the underrepresented sex should be seriously considered. Therefore, wide and transparent debate should be raised among all relevant stakeholders and electoral experts.*

### **Amendment of the electoral law, in particular Article 153 and Article 155**

*The amendment should stipulate that the MP or the local council representative, whose mandate has ceased, shall be replaced by the candidate of the same sex next in line on the list. This will prevent misuse of the quota for women political representation, especially at local level. Only this could address the pressure women face after their election to resign in favour of the male candidates.*

### **Trainings for political parties**

*Trainings should be conducted for all political parties, to explain the importance of the gender balance in the political life. These trainings should target not only women but also men, given that usually men in high positions in these parties are the deciding factor (and the main obstacle) for women attaining their equal status in political life.*

# 2

## Women participation within the public administration

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## CONTENT

1. <i>Introduction</i>	22
2. <i>Representation of women in the public administration</i>	23
3. <i>Participation in the local administration</i>	26
4. <i>Overview of the legal framework</i>	27
5. <i>EU position regarding the equal opportunities of women and men regarding the access to employment in the public sector</i>	29
6. <i>Conclusion and recommendations</i>	32

## 1. Introduction

A proper gender balance in the state's institutions and the public administration is arguably the most important part of achieving gender equality, since participation of women in these institutions is crucial for the process of gender mainstreaming in the formulation of public policy. The benefits of achieving equality on this broad state organizational level further trickle down and set examples for introducing such changes, formal and informal rules further in the private sector as well.

According to the Economic and Social Committee of the United Nations, gender mainstreaming is:

*"...the process of assessing the implications for women and men of any planned action, including legislation, policies or programs, in all areas and at all levels. It is a strategy for making women's as well as men's concerns and experiences an integral dimension of the design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes in all political, economic and societal spheres so that women and men benefit equally and inequality is not perpetuated. The ultimate goal is to achieve gender equality."*<sup>1</sup>

Equal participation and representation of women should be first and principally ensured at all levels of government and the public administration. Further down, the legal framework and informal rules should also promote equal participation in other sectors (private sector, non-governmental organizations, citizens' organizations, political parties etc.).

Macedonia's progress in the sphere of gender equality is driven by several factors: Macedonia's aspirations to join the European Union; Macedonia succeeded the 1979 Convention on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, CEDAW (in 1994), signed the Optional Protocol to CEDAW in 2000, ratified it on June 24, 2003, and it came into force on October 17, 2003.

In addition, Macedonia was a party to the Beijing Platform and Program for Action in 1995, which resulted in formulating a National Plan for Action on Gender Equality by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy in 1999.

As a result, the country has created a national mechanism of gender equality represented by the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. Furthermore, municipalities have started to fulfil the legal requirements to form equal opportunities committees. In 2007 only 30 had formed them; in 2008 the number rose to 79 out of 85.

This study will focus on the role of women in the public administration in the Republic of Macedonia. The World Economic Forum in 2008 ranks Macedonia 53rd (coefficient 0.691/1.000) on the list of 130 countries where research was conducted on the subject of gender equality. In 2007 Macedonia was ranked 35th (coefficient 0.697) out of 128 countries and in 2006 27th (coefficient 0.698) out of 115 countries. Therefore, one can conclude that there is in fact an overall deterioration of the level

<sup>1</sup> "Gender Mainstreaming- An Overview", Office of the Special Adviser on Gender Issues and Advancement of Women, United Nations, New York 2002

of gender equality in the country, despite some attempts to remedy the previous legal obstacles to achieve greater participation of women in the various spheres of society. These will be discussed later on in this analysis.

According to the WEF 2008 report, in the gender sub-indexes Macedonia ranks as following:

- Labor force participation rank=89, score 0.66
- Wage equality for similar work= 24, score 0.75
- Estimated earned income (PPP US\$) rank= 86, score 0.48
- Legislators, senior officials, managers rank= 64, score 0.37
- Professional and technical workers rank= 1, score 1.00

The category that is most relevant for this research is the fourth one that ranks Macedonia 64th with a very low overall score of 0.37. This demonstrates that women do not hold functions and offices of higher rank that would potentially enable them to design and initiate gender sensitive policies. The following section will cover the official numbers and assess the representation of women in the public administration. For the purposes of this research, the assumption is that more female representation can lead to improved gender mainstreaming of national policy processes and consequently can improve gender equality.

## *2. Representation of women in the public administration*

Over the past three years the number of civil servants at all levels and in all branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial and local) has been growing steadily. In 2007 the total number of civil servants in government was 11,830, while in 2008 it rose to 13,203, an increase of 11.6%. At the same time, the number of women grew from 6,094 in 2006 to 6,822 in 2008, an increase of 11.95%. This is a very positive development as it is evident that the principle of proportionality is clearly respected when hiring new civil servants. The following section will assess whether this proportional growth has been maintained at the levels of seniority within the ministries and other government and local institutions.

*Table 1. Representation of women and men in public administration*

	2006	2007	2008
Women	6,094	6,424	6,822
Men	5,736	6,106	6,381
Total:	11,830	12,530	13,203

*Source: Civil Servants Register (2006.2007 and 2008), Civil Servants Agency*

At first sight, the public administration seems gender balanced, with 51% of the civil servants being women. Furthermore, the total number of women and men analyzed from the aspect of the seniority level is more or less balanced. At one of the highest positions in the public administration "General Secretary" there are even twice more women than men (Annex 1).



## 2 Women participation within the public administration

However, the image is different when the data is analysed on the basis of two indicators:

- The ethnic background of the civil servants
- The position of women at different levels of local administration

The numbers are striking, when women participation at different seniority levels is analysed according to the ethnic background of the civil servants.<sup>2</sup> Only the civil servants from the Macedonian ethnic community are represented in gender balanced numbers. Interestingly, at the highest positions at national level, there are more female civil servants than male, who belong to the Macedonian ethnic community. When analysing the Macedonian ethnic community, the number of women and men at the majority seniority levels of the central public administration is balanced. Unfortunately, this is not the case with the other ethnic communities (see table 4).

*Table 2*

	Macedonians	Albanians	Turks	Roma	Vlachs	Serbs	Bosniaks	Others	Unknown
Women	5,818	637	62	26	70	108	24	34	43
Men	4,641	1,413	90	37	55	93	16	31	32

There is visible gender imbalance among civil servants from the Albanian, Turkish and Roma communities. The numbers are even more striking when the number of women belonging to these 3 communities is analysed from the seniority level perspective.<sup>3</sup> At the top posts of the public administration (general secretary and state secretary) no female civil servant from any of the smaller ethnic communities is represented. It should be noted that this is an ethnic effect, not necessarily connected to gender. Irrelevant of gender, these posts are occupied by civil servants who belong to the Macedonian ethnic community (there is one Albanian and one Vlach on the position of General Secretary and three State Secretaries who are Albanian; all of them are men).

When analysing these 3 communities, gender imbalance is registered at all levels. Although, at the lowest posts of the hierarchy the number of women and men is far from balanced, the ratio men/women significantly decreases compared to the higher positions where the ratio is higher in favour of men.

The percent of women in the local administration is 47.6. As in the previous case (the central level of public administration) this argument, could imply that gender balance is practically achieved. However, analysing the number of female civil servants from the aspect of the local administration hierarchy, the situation is far from being favourable for women, irrespective of ethnicity. Female representation at the higher posts in the local administration lags behind. A particularly dramatic gender gap is visible in rural municipalities.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Annual report on the data of the register of civil servants for 2008, Civil servants agency, March 2009

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, pg.55

At local level only the number of female civil servants belonging to the Macedonian ethnic community is higher than the number of male civil servants. However, even there the highest posts are “reserved” for male civil servants. The total number of women is significantly lower when analysing the statistics of the smaller ethnic communities.

*Table 3*

	Albanian	Turks	Roma	Vlachs	Serbs	Bosniaks
Women	86	9	4	6	13	3
Men	279	28	4	13	21	5

The conclusion is the same; women are not proportionally represented at all levels of the local administration hierarchy. Again, the highest posts are occupied by men, and the number of women civil servants increases at the lower posts of the local administration.<sup>5</sup>

On the other hand, it would be interesting to compare the number of graduated male and female students with the representation at different levels of public administration. Looking at the number of graduated students at the public administration faculties, the number of female graduates is higher than the number of male graduates. Moreover, the data for 2007 and 2008 show that the number of women from the two largest ethnic communities, the Macedonian and Albanian, is higher or almost balanced to the number of male graduates. In 2007, in total numbers, 70% of the students that graduated at these faculties were women, whereas in 2008 also a high 60 % of the graduates were women (see Annex II). Given that these numbers refer to a very small group of graduates (from only three faculties) on the one hand, and on the other hand the public administration is “recruited” from wider range of faculties dealing with social sciences, several more faculties<sup>6</sup> were taken into consideration. Even in this case, the percent of female graduates is higher than the percent of male graduates. When different ethnic communities are analysed, there is a clear ethnic effect. The number of female graduates belonging to the Macedonian, Vlach and Serbian community is higher than the number of male graduates. Their number is lower (but not drastically) in the Albanian community (see table 4).

*Table 4*

	Total men	Total women
Total Mac.2007	691	1139
Total Mac.2008	1103	1945

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, pg 61

<sup>6</sup> Faculty of economy Prilep; Faculty of administration and management of information systems Bitola; Faculty of economy-Skopje; Law faculty Skopje; Law faculty, Tetovo; Faculty of economy, Skopje; Faculty of public administration SEE; Law faculty SEE; Faculty of political sciences and public administration American College; Faculty of Law sciences American College; Faculty of Economy, European University; Faculty of law sciences, FON; Faculty of political sciences and international relations, FON; Faculty of economy, Tetovo

Total Alb.2007	133	106
Total Alb.2008	232	190
Total Tur.2007	7	7
Total Tur.2008	12	8
Total Rom.2007	0	1
Total Rom.2008	4	2
Total Vla.2007	9	14
Total Vls.2008	7	21
TotalSer.2007	9	10
TotalSer.2008	10	22
Total oth.2007	5	16
TotalOth.2008	10	29
Total 2007	854	1293
Total 2008	1378	2217

*Source: Graduated students, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia by the ethnic groups and foreign citizens, 2008; Graduated students, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia by the ethnic groups and foreign citizens, 2007; State statistical office*

Thus, “a lack of educated women” is not an excuse for the low representation of women at the higher posts in the public administration. There is a large participation of women in the active labour force in this sector, which “mysteriously vanishes” at the higher seniority levels of public administration.

### ***3. Participation in the local administration***

For more detail overview of the situation, two municipalities were analysed; Struga with an ethnic Albanian majority population, and Strumica, with an ethnic Macedonian majority.

The situation within the local public administration is less favourable for women. In Struga only 28 out of 107 civil servants are women, which is 26.2 %.<sup>7</sup> At the highest level (head position) of the local administration there is only one woman among 5 civil servants. As expected, when analysing the lower seniority levels the number of women increases. In Struga, most of the women civil servants are employed at the lowest levels in the local administration.

Although the municipalities are encouraged<sup>8</sup> to foster and improve the gender balance of the municipal administration, no positive measures have been undertaken by now. Neither quotas, nor preferential treatment when employing new civil servants has been established. The main problem and obstacle for such an intervention has been recognized in the law on civil servants, which is gender blind and does not pro-

<sup>7</sup> Data provided by the municipality of Struga, on 19.06.2009

<sup>8</sup> Gender equality law

vide legal basis for such measures.<sup>9</sup>

The situation seems better in Strumica. The percent of women in the local administration is around 46%; with 39 female civil servants out of 84.<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, the two top positions (Municipal Secretary and Head of Sector) in the municipality are “reserved” for men. The women are represented at the level of Head of Section (5 out of 12 are women). The majority of women are represented at the level of Advisor and Independent Officer.

Similar as in Struga, the gender balance is not a criterion of the human resources strategy and is not taken in consideration when new civil servants are employed in the municipality of Strumica.<sup>11</sup> Any preferential treatment of the underrepresented sex is seen as a breach of the principle of equality that would lead to gender discrimination. The notion of “administration” is understood by the HR department as an institution where no divisions along sex should be made, and any affirmative action is perceived as disadvantageous against one of the sexes (the overrepresented). On the other hand, the municipality of Strumica fulfils its legal obligation and produces annual plans referring to the gender balance within its administration; however, no concrete activities and measures have been undertaken.

Unfortunately, the key decision-makers lack awareness of the need for a gender sensitive approach. The gender approach is seen and misinterpreted as discrimination. Until this attitude persists, any affirmative measure will be fruitless. This implies that the trainings referring to gender issues should target not only women, but it is even more important to reach the men working in the institutions concerned. All civil servants should be educated that the essence of the gender approach is compatible and not in opposition to the principle of equality.

#### *4. Overview of the legal framework*

There are several laws and strategic documents relevant for promoting gender balance in the public administration.

All relevant issues concerning the gender balance within the public administration are regulated by:

- The Law on gender equality
- The Law on civil servants
- The National action plan for gender balance 2007-2012
- The Operational plan for implementation of the national action plan on gender balance for 2009.

The Law on Gender Equality was adopted in 2006. This law is the legal framework for achieving gender balance in different sectors of the public administration. The law defines gender imbalance when one of the sexes is represented with less than 40%. The law also provides a legal basis for the introduction of special measures for improv-

<sup>9</sup> 29.06.2009, Interview conducted with civil servant working in the Human resources department within the municipality of Struga

<sup>10</sup> Information provided by the municipality of Strumica, 8.07.2009

<sup>11</sup> Interview conducted with civil servant working in the Human resources department within the municipality of Strumica, 14.07.2009

ing the gender imbalance at all levels of governance and public administration [Article 6 Paragraph 3].

Moreover, the institutions covered by the law<sup>12</sup> are obliged to adopt positive measures within the periodical plans for gender equality. But, no criteria or more detail directions are set in this regard. That could generate problems from the aspect of devising synchronised and coordinated measures, as well as from the aspect of the EU harmonization processes (discussed further in the analysis). Unfortunately, not all institutions (local self-government units and political parties) have provided reports on the progress made with regard to achieving gender balance.<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, no sanctions have been raised against them.

The general position regarding this law is that it lacks clarity and there is room for improvement. The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy is going to launch an initiative to amend the law. At this point, the relevant policy makers see the need to define the clauses more precisely as well as the need to introduce stricter sanctions.<sup>14</sup> Another important law in this context is the Law on Civil Servants. The law does not contain any clause referring to the gender balance in the public administration. Moreover, it does not set mechanisms for improving the gender balance in the sectors where it is needed. Given that the Gender equality law has a general approach, the law on civil servants also fails to provide legal basis for affirmative action.

The National action plan for gender balance sets “the power sharing and participation in the decision-making”, where the representation of both sexes should be within the range of 40% to 60%, at all levels and sectors of the public and political life, as an important precondition for achieving the gender balance.<sup>15</sup> Special part of the national plan is dedicated to “women in the process of decision-making”, where affirmative action is recognised as the most successful approach.<sup>16</sup> Hence, the Second strategic goal refers to substantial representation of women in the executive, legislative and judicial branch of government through special measures and programmes. It is recognised that special measures, such as quotas, could tackle the problem of gender imbalance in the political life and in the public administration. In addition to this, the Third strategic goal refers specifically to increasing the representation level of women belonging to the Roma and Albanian ethnic community and women from rural areas, in the processes of policy-making and decision-making at national and local level.

By late 2009, no affirmative measures have been undertaken. The two operational plans for 2008 and 2009 for implementation of the national action plan have focused exclusively on establishing the relevant institutional infrastructure, its capacity building and awareness rising.<sup>17</sup>

12 chapter IV of the Gender equality law

13 Interview with Elena Grozdanova, State councilor, sector on equal opportunities, 1.07.2009

14 Ibid

15 National action plan for gender balance 2007-2012, Skopje, May 2007, pg.13 <http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/WBStorage/Files/NPARR-finalen%20dokument.pdf>

16 Ibid, 24

17 Operational plan for the implementation of the national action plan for gender balance, Ministry for Labor and social policy, Skopje, January 2008; Operational plan for the implementation of the national action plan for gender balance, Ministry for Labor and social policy, Skopje, January 2009

The Macedonian institutions lack experience in design and implementation of affirmative measures in this area. Hence, it is important that the European standards and principles referring to this policy area are pointed out. This is very important for the EU harmonisation process. Therefore, the next part of the analysis will discuss the most acceptable frame for any affirmative action, seen from EU perspective.

### ***5. EU position regarding the equal opportunities of women and men regarding the access to employment in the public sector***

Equal treatment of women and men is one of the basic values. It is enshrined in the EC Treaties since 1957 when the European Economic Community was established. There are several key articles that provide the legal basis for any measures undertaken at EU level; they are binding for the Member States and require them to promote gender equality. Thus, Article 2 of the EC Treaty sets the promotion of equality between men and women as a task of the European Community (EC). Furthermore, the EC should aim to eliminate inequalities and to promote equality between men and women in all its activities (Article 3). The EC treaty sets the principle of equal treatment of men and women in the area of employment and occupation, outside of the employment field and in the promotion of employment, improved living and working conditions (Article 141, Article 13, and Article 137).

A big step forward was the adoption of the Council directive from 9 February 1976 on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women regarding access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions (76/207/EEC).<sup>18</sup> Given that the directive is a legal act that requires Member States to achieve a particular result, they are not self-executing and do not favour any particular implementation measures. This means that the Member States are obliged to transpose the directive into their national legislation, which leaves certain leeway for them to decide the mode through which they pursue the goal (result) of the directive.

Hence, there is a variety of approaches used among the Member States for addressing the problem of equality between men and women. The directive also refers to employment in the public service. Moreover, useful direction in applying the directive is provided by ECJ case law. Since there is no unified model for addressing the gender balance, and the existing approaches range from more restrictive interpretation to very extensive interpretation of what is positive and affirmative measures, the ECJ practice managed to set clear standards and principles on which the Member States' legislation should rely on.

Hence, Macedonia, as a candidate country for EU membership, should consider and integrate the EU standards and principles when drafting future policies in this area. This is the very essence of the EU harmonization process. Since the aforementioned directive covers the employment in the public administration, the focus in this part will be placed on the EU experience with affirmative mea-

<sup>18</sup> The directive is amended by the DIRECTIVE 2002/73/EC OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND OF THE COUNCIL of 23 September 2002

asures in the public sphere. This is important due to the fact that no affirmative measures in Macedonia have been undertaken by now, but are set as a tool for tackling the gender imbalance in the public sector, in the strategic documents. The EU experience, i.e. the EU Acquis and its case law should be the main guidelines for the Macedonian policy makers in making decisions for any affirmative action regarding the gender balance in the public administration.

This chapter will focus on the most important case law, the Directive 76/207/EEC and the main principles that shape the gender policy in the EU Member States. There are several cases through which ECJ has crystallised its position regarding the definition of “acceptable affirmative gender measures” in line with the Acquis:

- Kalanke v Freie Hansestadt Bremen <sup>19</sup>
- Hellmut Marschall v Land Nordrhein-Wstfalen<sup>20</sup>
- Georg Badeck and Others <sup>21</sup>
- Katarina Abrahamsson and Leif Anderson v Elisabet Fogelqvist<sup>22</sup>

In the first case, Mr. Kalanke had been refused for a post in the Parks Department management on the basis of the Bremen Law on equal treatment for men and women in the Public Service; Mr. Kalanke and the female candidate that applied for the post were equally qualified, but women were underrepresented in that particular department. The law stipulated that “in the case of an appointment (including establishment as a civil servant or judge)..., women who have the same qualifications as men applying for the same post are to be given priority in sectors where they are under-represented”.

The main challenge for ECJ was to assess whether this provision was in line with the Directive 76/207/EEC, in particular Article 2, which stipulates that “the principle of equal treatment shall mean that there shall be no discrimination whatsoever on grounds of sex either directly or indirectly by reference in particular to marital or family status”, and in addition clearly states that shall be without prejudice to measures to promote equal opportunity for men and women, in particular by removing existing inequalities which affect women’s opportunities.

The key principle that emerged from the ECJ judgment is that, although Directive 76/207 permits measures giving a specific advantage to women aiming to improve their equal opportunities on the labour market and to pursue a career on an equal standing with men, the directive does not permit “absolute and unconditional priority” to be given to women.<sup>23</sup>

Another important specification and clarification was provided in the case Marschall v Land Nordrhein-Wstfalen. It should be stressed, that not all legislative acts that give preference to women in the area of employment and promotion in the sectors of the public service (where the number of women is less than the number of men) are incompatible with the Directive. As long as the national normative frame includes safeguards that preclude absolute and unconditional priority to be given to

<sup>19</sup> Case C-450/93

<sup>20</sup> Case C-409/95

<sup>21</sup> Case C-158/97

<sup>22</sup> Case C-407/98

<sup>23</sup> Penelope Kent; Nutcases European Union Law; Thomson Sweet and Maxwell, fourth edition, London, 2006, pg. 192



women, it will be in line with the directive. This means that the national legislation must contain a clause which will enable the candidate from the overrepresented sex (the male candidates usually) to be subjected to an objective assessment. Hence, in each individual case the candidate's specific circumstances should be taken into consideration. Legislation that promotes positive discrimination for women, will be in line with the Community law only if it does not preclude any possibility for employment and promotion for the male candidate from the outset. It implies that the legislation is flexible and not blind to some specific circumstances of the male candidate that could tilt the balance in his favour.

The two principles established by the Kalanke and Marschall cases were confirmed in the following cases Georg Badeck and Others and Katarina Abrahamsson and Leif Anderson v Elisabet Fogelqvist. In the Badeck case<sup>24</sup> it was noted that Hessen Law provided flexible result quota, i.e. it does not determine quotas uniformly for all sectors and departments concerned (academic posts, training opportunities, employment in different administrative bodies), but the characteristics of the particular sectors and departments were decisive for fixing binding targets for gender balance. The Court recognized that the law, although formulated in neutral manner (which could also enable men to benefit) still in general favoured women. The Law was in compliance with the directive, since it enabled the selection of women in cases where women were under-represented in specific departments (even if there was an equally qualified man for the particular vacancy). If there were social factors which tilted the situation in favour of the man, he would be given preference. Thus, there was no absolute and unconditional priority given to women.

By many, when talking about gender equality, Sweden is perceived as a role model country. However, in the case Katarina Abrahamsson and Leif Anderson v Elisabet Fogelqvist the ECJ concluded that the relevant Swedish legislation was not in compliance with Community law, since it failed to meet the 2 principles.

When analysing possible positive measures and quotas for improving the gender equality within the Macedonian public sector, only those best practices in compliance with the Community law should be taken into consideration. Affirmative measures are a useful tool for overcoming gender inequalities. Thus, positive discrimination is recognized as a successful approach through which gender balance should be pursued within the Macedonian context. Hence, any of the measures undertaken by the relevant institutions should rely on the two principles derived from the ECJ case law:

1. The law does not automatically and unconditionally give priority to women.
2. The candidates are the subject of an objective assessment which takes account of the specific personal situations of all candidates.

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<sup>24</sup> Judgment of the Court of Justice in Case C-158/97; NATIONAL RULES FACILITATING THE APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION OF WOMEN IN THE PUBLIC SERVICE WHICH GUARANTEE AN OBJECTIVE ASSESSMENT OF CANDIDATURES ARE COMPATIBLE WITH COMMUNITY LAW PRESS RELEASE No 22/2000, 28 March 2000



## 6. Conclusion and recommendations

In many countries, affirmative measures successfully managed to address the obstacles that prevented women's access to the higher seniority levels within the public administration. Therefore, this approach should be seriously considered in Macedonia as the one that could lead to better representation and participation of women in the public sector. It is crucial to have a wide and exhaustive debate, as well as a transparent process of adopting such measures or legislative amendments. Furthermore, policy makers should be very careful on which comparative experiences will rely, when deciding on the affirmative action to be undertaken in area of public administration employment. Any future steps must be analysed and decided through the prism of the EU harmonization process. This means that irrespective of the model chosen the two aforementioned principles must be integrated and set as bases for any positive action.

**Legislative changes which will ensure more balanced distribution of the posts, especially the higher posts within the public administration.**

*There are several modes for this. Firstly, by introducing more clear provisions within the Law on Gender Equality, or secondly by amending the Law on Civil Servants. In any case clear mechanism for improvement of the position of the underrepresented sex should be set. These two laws should not be contradictory, and given that the Law on Civil Servants is the basic legal framework for any action regarding employment of civil servants, possibly the best option is to amend this law with clauses, which will set gender sensitive approach with regard to the employment. Furthermore, any amendments of the laws should rely on the main EU principle previously discussed.*

**Effective monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the measures**

*The mechanism integrated in the Gender equality law referring to the monitoring and the evaluation of the progress regarding gender balance in the public sector should be effectively applied. Moreover, the sanctions foreseen in case of disregard of the legal obligation should be effectively applied. But important precondition for successful implementation of the law is the introduction of clearer directions within the legislation.*

*Annex 1*

Title (in hierarchical order)	Women			Men			Total		
	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008	2006	2007	2008
General Secretary	6	6	6	2	3	3	8	9	9
State Secretary	3	3	5	9	9	7	12	12	12
Municipal Secretary (Urban)	2	2	2	10	12	13	12	14	15
Municipal Secretary (Rural)	0	0	1	2	3	5	2	3	6
State Advisor	82	81	88	79	82	85	161	163	173
Head of Sector	124	143	166	162	183	201	286	326	367
Assistant Head of Sector	101	114	133	73	83	92	174	197	225
Head of Unit	510	542	597	534	507	593	1044	1049	1190
Advisor	1023	1099	1279	1215	1329	1470	2238	2428	2749
Senior Associate	274	267	294	237	248	259	511	515	553
Associate	339	364	336	248	246	243	587	610	579
Junior Associate	304	490	519	312	607	579	616	1104	1098
Independent Officer	1391	1433	1560	1415	1418	1486	2806	2851	3046
Senior officer	634	585	577	498	475	446	1132	1060	1023
Officer	1034	1021	1047	269	284	377	1303	1305	1424
Junior Officer	267	267	212	671	617	522	938	884	734

## Annex 2

Female	Male	Faculty of public administration SEE		Faculty of administration and management systems Bitola		Faculty of political sciences and Public administration American College		
		Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	
46	9	/	2	46	7			Macedonians 2007
94	41	20	13	67	19	7	9	Macedonians 2008
10	14	10	14	/	/			Albanians 2007
46	45	44	44	2	/	/	1	Albanians 2008
/	/	/	/	/	/			Turks 2007
2	4	/	3	1	1	1	/	Turks 2008
/	/	/	/	/	/			Romas 2007
1	3	/	1	1	1	/	1	Romas 2008
/	/	/	/	/	/			Vlachs 2007
1	1	/	/	1	1	/	/	Vlachs 2008
1	/	/	/	1	/			Serbs 2007
/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	Serbs 2008
1	1	/	/	1	1			Other 2007
1	1	1	1	/	/	/	/	Other 2008
58	24	10	16	48	8			Total 2007
145	95	65	62	72	22	8	11	Total 2008

Source: Graduated students, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia by the ethnic groups and foreign citizens, 2008; Graduated students, citizens of the Republic of Macedonia by the ethnic groups and foreign citizens, 2007; State statistical office



# 3

## Gender and employment

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## CONTENT

1.	Introduction	38
2.	Gender based analysis of Macedonian employment policy	39
	<i>2.1. Law on Employment</i>	40
	<i>2.2. Active employment measures</i>	43
3.	Gender participation on Macedonian labor market	45
4.	Conclusion	50

## 1. Introduction

The socialist regime of former Yugoslavia established several positive elements of gender equality policy (the enhancement of women's education and personal autonomy, supporting their participation in representative institutions, promoting their paid employment and providing social services for child care).<sup>1</sup> It however, did not integrate gender equality in the wider socialist ideology of equality, reducing the latter to the class question and precluding any recognition of difference as was the case with the ethnic variable.<sup>2</sup>

In Macedonia, the principle of gender equality is enshrined in the Constitution. The country became a member of CEDAW in 1994, but it was not until 2003 that a precise anti-discrimination provision was included in any specific law. Harmonizing the domestic law to the EU acquis, in 2006, the Law on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men was adopted.<sup>3</sup> The Law set the basis for building a state infrastructure for gender aware policy making (gender focal points in line ministries and equal opportunity commissions in every municipality). This contributed to increased awareness for gender equality. However, gender based analysis is rarely used in policy development or evaluation of policy outputs.

Achieving gender equality in all sectors is important particularly in employment. Employment has great effect on the economic independence of women. Women have always been productive members of society, but for long time have not participated in the formal labor market. Employment policies that are not gender neutral, but are gender aware can stimulate and together with other gender aware policies in sectors like education, welfare, infrastructure and wage policy, further build the capacities of women to participate in the labor market and secure paid employment.

This paper provides a review of the employment policy framework using the gender based policy analysis method. It looks closely at the following issues: do inequalities among men and women in employment and labor relations exist and are policies contributing/generating inequalities in the field of employment and labor relations?; Is there future capacity of men and women to acquire paid employment?; and How policies respond to such developments? Finally it provides policy advice on how to improve gender equality in Macedonia through setting up a gender aware employment policy framework.

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1 See, Sabrina Petra Ramet (Edited by), *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans – Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999; Djordje Stankovic, *Zena u Ustavima Kraljevine Jugoslavije (1918-1945) in Srbija u Modernizaciskim Procesima 19 I 20 veka*, Beograd, 1998

2 Sabrina Petra Ramet (Edited by), *Gender Politics in the Western Balkans – Women and Society in Yugoslavia and the Yugoslav Successor States*, The Pennsylvania State University, 1999; Vesna Kesic, *Gender and Ethnic Identities in Transition - The Former Yugoslavia - Croatia*, in *Gender and Nation*, Julie Mostov and Rada Ivekovic (Edited by), Longo Editore, Ravenna, 2002.

3 Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men [The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia], 6 June 2006, available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/44b26f664.html> [accessed 15 November 2009]

## *2. Gender based analysis of Macedonian employment policy*

Being part of socialist Yugoslavia, jobs in Macedonia were typically available in the administration and state-owned companies. In these times the administration of labor relations was used as one of the main tools for creation and implementation of the social policy. Following the democratic transition changes in the labor relations were implemented. Under the new circumstances, the policy of employment was no longer managed by the state. The new policy framework encompassed the Law on Labor Relation, the Law on Employment and Insurance and the Collective agreements. The policy framework in other related areas that directly influence the capacity to participate in the labor market and have paid employment such as education, time saving infrastructure, child care and wage policy also contribute to the increasing level of economic independence of Macedonian women.

A Law on Labor Relations was adopted in Macedonia in 1993. This policy document went through several revisions (1995, 1997, 1998, 2000, and 2001) and was finally replaced with a new Law on Labor Relations adopted in 2005. Within the 2005 revisions, as mentioned, specific gender based reforms have been introduced as part of the state gender mainstreaming strategy and in alignment with international conventions and European directives. The new policy framework changed the previous Law on Basic Rights itself based on the Law on Labour Relations from 1989. Additionally, a Law on Employment and Insurance in Case of Unemployment was deliberated in 1997. These laws are based on the Constitutional principles according to which everyone has the right to employment, to freely choose a job, to protection at work and to material support during temporary unemployment.<sup>4</sup>

To analyze the employment policy from a gender aspect we have looked closely at the labor regulations seeking for gender aware provisions (based on gender analysis which helps identify and understand the dimensions and relevance of gender issues and gender-based constraints. This analysis includes understanding the differences between men's and women's roles, rights and opportunities ).<sup>5</sup>

The methodology applied to produce this study was diverse. We have used policy analysis as a tool to review current employment policy instruments, and the most recent official statistics to analyze gender participation on the labor market. In order to gather data on the constraints for bigger gender participation of women in the Macedonian labor market, we have employed two quantitative methods - a representative survey of the whole population and monitoring of the job adds (published in the daily newspapers and republished on the [www.najdirabota.com.mk](http://www.najdirabota.com.mk)) in the period June-September 2009. These tools allowed for statistical information to be gathered which latter was cross analyzed with the qualitative data gathered through focus groups organized by CRPM for the World Bank commissioned study on "Gender constraints to employment" conducted in 2008. The employment policy areas that were closely analyzed were the Law on Labor Relations, the wage policy and the active

4 Stojanoska Dominika, Gender equality and human development in Macedonia in transition (1991-2006), PhD thesis, in International Cooperation and Sustainable Development Policies

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employment measures. In terms of gender participation we have looked closely at the following determinants: age, ethnicity, and education.

## 2.1. Law on Employment

According to the Law on Labor Relations everyone can enact a contract regulating labor relations if it fulfils the conditions foreseen by the law and the collective agreement. The procedure for the selection of candidates is performed through public announcement of the vacancy, followed by the procedure of selection of winning candidates leaving the possibility for not selected applicants to make an appeal. In this sense the provisions for recruitment are partly gender aware. Namely the procedures for selections of candidates do explicitly ban discriminatory requirements, based on gender.<sup>6</sup> However, the principle of equality in access to work (equality of opportunity) is not stated within the criteria for establishment of labor relation. Gender aware employment policies should have special provision that prohibits the inquiries of marital or family status of women on behalf of the employer, which might bring a person that is seeking employment in an unequal position. The Macedonian Law on Labor Relations does not envisage this. In practice, employers do inquire about the marital or family status of applicants. Over 13% of the surveyed female respondents in Macedonia have recognized that they have been asked about their family status (see Table 1) and almost 8% have not been offered the job because of their plans to have family/or get married (see Table 2). These data are echoed in other CRPM research that identified determinants to employment inactivity in 2008. Employers presuppose that (potential) young mothers would not be able to work long working hours because of the need to spend time with their children.

*Table 1. At a job interview have you ever been asked about your plans to start a family / get married? (only female respondents considered)*

	%	#
Yes	13.4%	40
No; or refused to answer	86.6%	261

*Table 2. Have you been denied a job because of your plans to have family/or get married? (Only female respondents considered)*

	%	#
Refused to respond	87.7%	252
Yes	7.3%	22
No	9.0%	27

<sup>6</sup> Law on Labor Relations “Official Gazzette no. 62, 2005”, Article 24, “The public announcement for a job should not suggest that the employer gives preference to one gender over the other except if the gender is necessary for the job position that is advertised”

<sup>7</sup> The survey was made in August, 2009, using a representative sample of 600 respondents of which 301 were women and a margin of error of 4%.

The concern for gender awareness of the Law is maintained when one analyzes the rights that derive from the employment contract. Here again, the Law regulates in gender neutral terms: the maximum working hours per week, the situations when these can be extended and under what conditions, the full-time and part-time work, as well as paid leaves (for holidays, health problems and other causes). This section of the Law does not guarantee retaining of the same employment position after maternity leave, but only after paid and unpaid leave of the worker (in cases such as working abroad in diplomatic or consular institutions, or attending specialization courses, accompanying proper conjugal partner working in a foreign country, or performing state/public functions).<sup>8</sup> Unfortunately the same clause has not been considered for women on pregnancy leave where just the right to early return to work is provisioned (article 166).

The Law however has special chapter on protective measures (Chapter XII) referring mainly to the reproductive function of women. In this section the working status of pregnant female workers is regulated. While it regulates paid maternity leave and other protective rights, the Law also provisions that a female worker during the period of pregnancy or having a child that has less than one year cannot perform additional working hours nor undertake night shift work (article 164). While these protective measures may be well accepted as a positive affirmation for “what concerns pregnant women, whose ability to perform their working duties may be affected for the particular physical and health conditions in which they are”<sup>9</sup>, its usefulness for women-parents can be disputed as discriminatory since currently this provision jeopardizes gender equality of male and female laborers as they do not have the opportunity to choose whether to work more or during night shifts. Hence, it endangers the gender equality of both male and female labourers. This is on the other hand provided as an option to a “single parent that has a child younger than seven years of age or a child that has physical disabilities”.<sup>10</sup> The Law in this manner allows further inequality to be created because knowing of this option the employers might decide not to promote female workers as there will be limits to their work engagement (occasional or continuous) for extra hours or at night when that is needed. What is more, with this article the law suggests that women are primary child carer within a family. The role of the father “in caring for the child during the eventual extra-hours or night working of the mother has been completely neglected by the law”.<sup>11</sup>

It should be recognized that the Macedonian Law on Labor Relations with the revisions in 2005 somewhat reformed the concept of parental leave, as it allowed for the “father of the child to use the right to paid leave if the mother does not use it, or in the event of death of the mother, if the mother abandons the child or if there are justifiable reasons that prevent her from exercising these rights” (article 167). The wording itself suggests that the main child bearer is the mother. Only when for whatever reasons she does not want to, or cannot take care of the child, the father can step

8 Law on Labor Relations “Official Gazette no. 62, 2005”, Article 152: the employee can return to her/his work “and undertake activities suitable to her/his degree of preparation”

9 Stojanoska Dominika, Gender equality and human development in Macedonia in transition (1991-2006), PhD thesis, in International Cooperation and Sustainable Development Policies

10 Law on Labor Relations “Official Gazette no. 62, 2005”, Article 164 paragraph 4

11 Stojanoska Dominika, Gender equality and human development in Macedonia in transition (1991-2006), PhD thesis, in International Cooperation and Sustainable Development Policies

in her shoes. It would have been more just to use in the law a formulation along the lines “both parents can use the right to paid leave to take care of the child.” Furthermore, the changes of the Labor Law in 2005 strengthened the role of women in the labor market and their economic independence by allowing female employees to return to work before the expiry of the maternal leave with a possibility to receive 50% of the welfare benefit for the remnant period of the maternity leave.<sup>12</sup>

In terms of wage policy the law (article. 108) does not explicitly guarantee equal pay for equal work for all the employees, independently of their sex, marital status, ethnicity, residence and so on. Wages are determined in a process of collective bargaining at national, branch and enterprise levels, as the Law prescribes. This works for the public sector, where unions still exist. Even there the power and role of women in the unions remain disputable. In the private sector, however, unions are rare and are weak. The wages there are mainly determined at enterprise level. Unfortunately in Macedonia women are employed in the less paid sectors using unskilled labor. Therefore, there is a considerable wage gap between men and women in Macedonia (please see Table 3). The effect of this practice is noticed by Diego Angel-Urdinola who states: “this is not merely an equity issue, but one that contributes to a higher rate of female poverty and deters women from entering the labor market”.<sup>13</sup>

*Table 3. Unconditional gender wage gap and occupational segregation (low-skilled workers only)*

Sector	Share of employment		Average wage rate			
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Mi/M Fi/F	Gender Gap
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(3)/(4)
Agriculture/mining/fishing	6.01	2.33	65.3	40.5	0.04	41.2%
Manufacturing	26.66	44.41	55.5	40.2	0.18	32.0%
Electricity/Gas/ Water	5.71	1.55	78.2	72.3	0.04	7.6%
Construction	14.87	1.76	101.3	44.6	0.13	58.5%
Wholesale/retail	12.24	14.57	55.9	48.0	0.02	15.2%
Hotels/Restaurants	4.61	4.25	95.8	51.5	0.00	55.7%
Transport/communication	8.78	2.32	62.6	67.1	0.06	-7.1%
Financial/Real-estate Services	2.48	4.22	65.8	71.2	0.02	-7.9%
Public Administration	9.65	5.16	68.0	55.9	0.04	18.7%

<sup>12</sup> Many experts see this as an additional stimulation for women to return to work before, since this new financial entrance could cover the supplementary expenses for the care of the child during parents working hours.

<sup>13</sup> Diego Angel Urdinola “Can the Introduction of a Minimum Wage in FYR Macedonia Decrease the Gender Wage Gap?”, World Bank working paper 2008

Education/health/Social Work	4.64	16.13	52.9	50.3	0.11	5.0%
Other services	4.35	3.31	60.9	59.2	0.01	2.9%
Index of Segregation					0.33	

*Source: Diego Angel Urdinola's estimates using 2006 Macedonia LFS data. The formula for computing the Index of Dissimilarity by industry is:  $D = 0.5 \times (M_i M) - (F_i F)$  where  $M$  ( $F$ ) is the male (female) population of employees and  $M_i$  ( $F_i$ ) is the male (female) population employed in industry  $i$ .*

This large gender gap (especially in construction, hotels/restaurants, and agriculture/mining/fishing) is not necessarily explained by labor segmentation (whereby women enter sectors offering lower-pay) nor by differences in return to education by gender, but more likely by discrimination (whereby men in similar sectors, with similar education, and doing similar jobs earn higher wages than their female counterparts).<sup>14</sup> This conclusion is derived from the analysis of the data presented in Table 3 where it can be observed that the gender wage gap is quite high in segregated industries (usually dominated by men) such as manufacturing and construction, as well as in non-segregated industries such as wholesale, hotels/restaurants, and agriculture. Interestingly, the gender wage gap is rather small among employees working in utilities (electricity, water, and gas) and transport and communications, both which are generally men-segregated industries. Low market wages, high reservation wages, and harsh employment conditions influence uneducated women to stay at home.<sup>15</sup> This might be altered if a minimum wage is introduced which is estimated to decrease the gender wage gap by up to 23%. But as this improvement is conditioned by introduction of a rather high minimum wage it is foreseen that such intervention can contribute to reductions in employment, itself a negative outcome for women.<sup>16</sup>

## 2.2. Active employment measures

The employment policy is additionally strengthened by the active employment measures (ALMP) designed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy with technical assistance of the United Nations Development Program. These measures are directed to create more opportunities for access to employment for the following groups: unemployed; young unemployed; unemployed in rural areas; single parents; handicapped and orphans; redundant workers. The monitoring data from the implementation of the active employment measures in 2007, presented in Table 4, show that the two measures in support of opening own business have been most popular (e.g. Subsidies for self-employment and Training and advise for unemployed or redundant workers). On the other hand, the measures promoting employment of vulnerable groups - unemployed from rural areas, single parents (in Macedonian society usually mothers), handicapped and

<sup>14</sup> Ibid

<sup>15</sup> CRPM, Analyzing the reasons for economic inactivity within low-skilled women from minority communities in Macedonia (unpublished manuscript), prepared by the World Bank, 2008

<sup>16</sup> On these estimates please consult Diego Angel Urdinola "Can the Introduction of a Minimum Wage in FYR Macedonia Decrease the Gender Wage Gap?", World Bank working paper 2008

orphans - are not successfully implemented. By comparing the planned budget with that executed one can also notice that the Government overspent at almost all active employment measures implementation except for the Subsidies for employment of single parents, handicapped and orphans. What is more, only the least popular measure vaguely targeted low skilled women and none directly affected this target group. This gap analysis reinforces the finding of ILO that the ALMP measures are of limited effectiveness. The reasons for this are found in the weak capacity for job creation by firms, the long duration of unemployment spells and the low human capital of the long-term unemployed.<sup>17</sup>

*Table 4. Active employment measures implementation in 2007*

Type of active employment measures	Targeted number	Number of participants	Budget planned in MKD	Budget spent for the measure in MKD
Public works in the Local Self Government Units	1000	965	18.000.000	19,835.415,00
Subsidies for self-employment	500	815	73.300.000	84.506.490,00
Subsidies for first employment of young people max. age 27	N/A	600	N/A	N/A
Employment in civil works and environment of unemployed in rural areas	432	418	19.900.000	20.180.974
Subsidies for employment of single parents, handicapped and orphans	800	339	8.960.000	3.796.800
Training in business planning and advise for unemployed or redundant workers	3000	3866	50.000.000	52.097.796

*Source: Ministry for Labor and Social Policy*

<sup>17</sup> Employment Policy Review "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" Prepared by the International Labor Office and the Council of Europe in 2006 and 2007

### 3. Gender participation on Macedonian labor market

The Labor Force Survey reveals that the participation rates in the country are very low.<sup>18</sup> The female participation is much lower than male activity. Labor force data for 1996 and 2005 show, however, that the gender participation gap narrowed from 24.1% to 21.7% during that decade.

*Table 5. Labour force participation rate, by age and gender*

	2001			2002			2003		
Age	Total	M	W	Total	M	W	Total	M	W
Total	55.5	65.6	45.5	52.6	63.7	41.5	54.5	65.6	43.4
15-19	19.7	21.6	17.8	16.6	18.1	15.0	15.4	16.7	14.1
20-24	60.5	68.0	52.6	55.6	66.5	42.8	55.3	64.5	45.5
25-54	76.6	88.1	64.8	76.2	89.6	62.5	76.4	89.3	63.1
55-64	31.9	47.4	17.7	31.1	46.7	16.4	35.8	51.9	20.7
65-over	9.0	10.8	7.5	5.9	6.1	3.8	5.3	7.2	3.7

	2004			2005		
Age	Total	M	W	Total	M	W
Total	52.2	63.5	40.9	54.1	64.9	43.2
15-19	14.4	16.4	12.3	14.5	16.8	11.9
20-24	51.2	60.9	40.9	50.9	59.1	42.2
25-54	74.1	86.8	61.0	76.2	88.3	63.7
55-64	33.7	51.0	17.5	37.0	53.5	21.5
65-over	3.7	5.6	2.1	7.8	6.7	3.2

*Source: Labour Force Survey, State Statistical Office*

An analysis of the table above shows that female enter the labor market later than men (in the age group 15-19 years the female participants are less than male participants on the labor market). However, the participation for this age group is very low in general. There are many reasons for this including a good number of youth pursuing an undergraduate degree. The gender difference in economic activity however can be observed analyzing the gender segregated education data (presented in Table 6) which show that the number of women enrolled at undergraduate, and graduate schools is bigger than the number of men.

<sup>18</sup> ILO reports that Macedonian activity rates in 2004 were below the EU-15 level, and even below that of the new EU Member States (NMS): 58.8%, as against 70% (EU-15) and 65.5% (NMS)

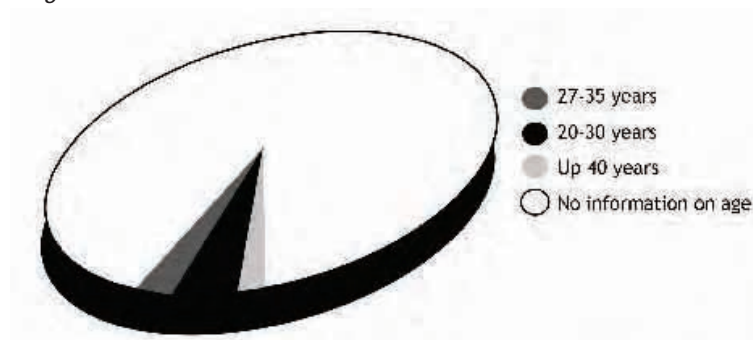
Table 6. Education and gender (2005-2006)

	Number of students		Sex distribution		Net enrolment rates	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Primary and lower secondary education	114,414	120,771	49%	51%	93	92
Upper secondary education	44,530	49,378	47%	53%	71	74
Undergraduate diploma (2006/2007)	31,052	25,959	54%	46%	20	16

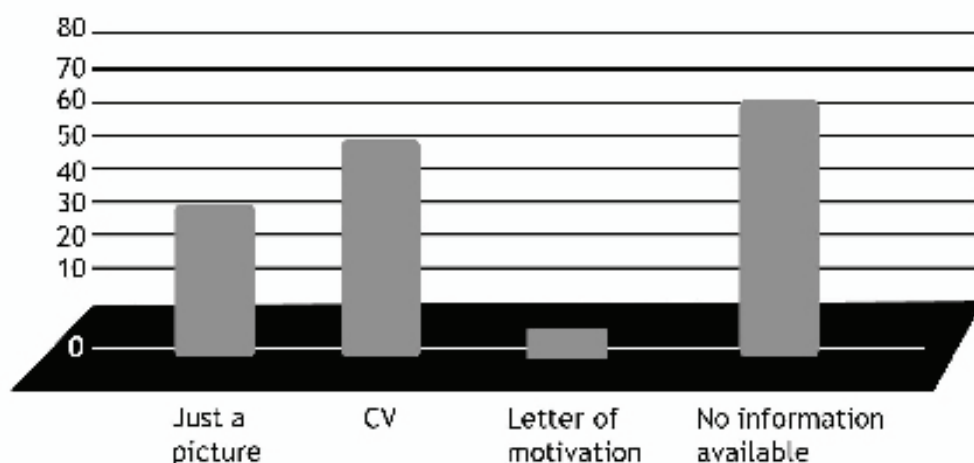
Source: State Statistical office 2006

The gender gap in participation in the labor market grows in continuity as the age progresses. There is significant difference between male and female participation in the peak years for productivity (25-54 years), but is huge among the age group 55-64. This data reinforces the concern that employers prefer younger employees which discourage older women to remain active and participate in the labor market. The monitoring of job advertisements in the period June-September 2009, shows that employers still put age as a criteria for recruitment although the Labor law bans discrimination based on age in the recruitment process (please see Picture 1). CRPM has identified that young women are disadvantaged as many (mainly private) employers are reluctant to hire young newly married women, or women with small children. The physical appearance seems pertinent for some employers to award the job to a certain candidate. By monitoring job advertisements, in the period June-September 2009, CRPM has found that submitting just a picture (please see Picture 2) is sufficient to apply for a job for significant number of jobs (even though providing your CV is the most common requirement). This also plays a discouraging role for many women to remain active in the labor market after their thirties.

Picture 1. Age

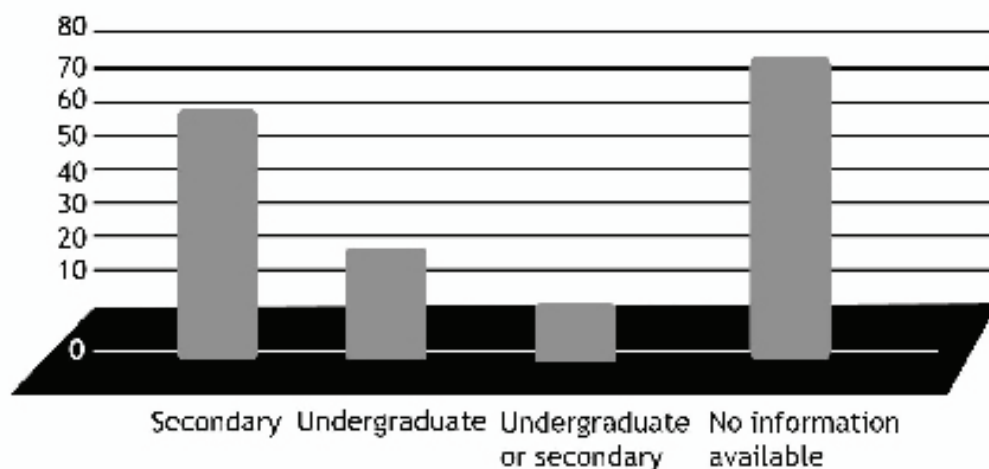


Picture 2. Job application should include



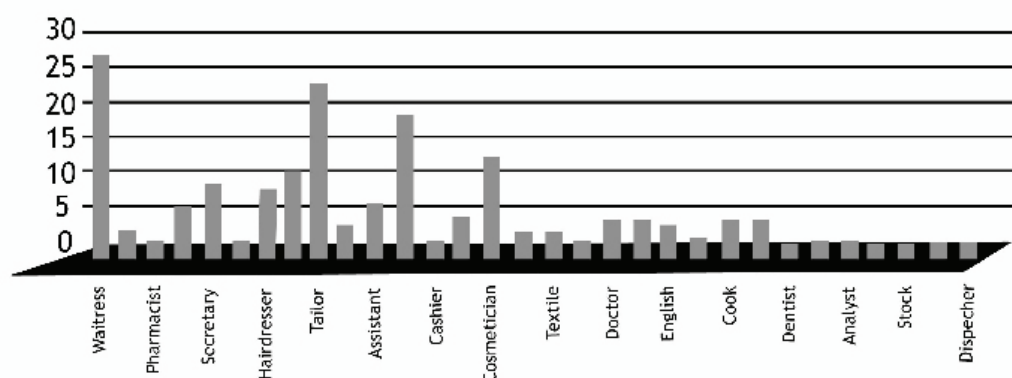
The lower education in Macedonia seems not to be barrier for finding a job as for most of the jobs employers are looking for applicants that have only secondary education (see picture 3). Women are usually recruited for a low paid labor intensive jobs such as tailor and cleaner (please see picture 4). But as we see in Table 6 the number of educated women is growing and sourcing lower educated staff from the age group 25-54 will become a problem in the future. If the economy does not grow and offer more jobs equivalent to the qualifications of the job seekers it might discourage more women to remain active as they would not take a job for which they are overqualified.

Picture 3. Educational requirements



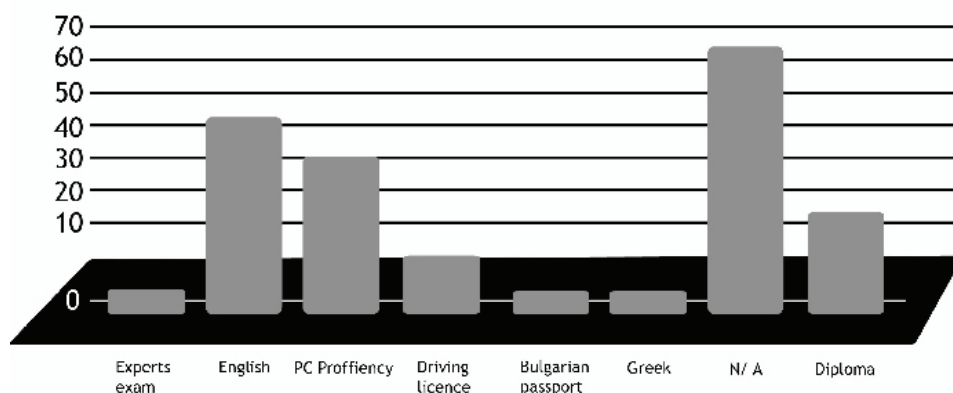


Picture 4. Professions



However, to become competitive on the labor market women in the age groups 25-54 and 55-65 should have the following skills: English language, computer proficiency and a diploma. To increase their capability undertake a paid job they have to acquire the afore-mentioned skills.

Picture 5. Skills



Another reason for the low activity rate of women might be that cultural values affect the choice of low-educated women to engage in domestic production, especially among women belonging to ethnic minorities (Albanian, Turkish and Roma).<sup>19</sup> This seems to be confirmed, by the data from the Labor Force Survey conducted in 2000 where the ethnic disaggregated data show the participation rate of women of ethnic Albanian origin being 11.3%, compared with 62.3% for men of the same ethnic community.

For the women in the age group 55-65 finding a job is a 'mission impossible.' Majority of these women were once active on the labor market but after the transition when many socially owned enterprises were liquidated, they have lost their jobs and cannot find new ones. CRPM research on constraints for labor activity among women

<sup>19</sup> CRPM research on barriers to employment on behalf of the World Bank, 2008

shows that due to their age these women even discard the possibility of ever finding job again and stop looking for employment. They loose hope.

Furthermore, the domestic unpaid work and responsibilities related to care-work for certain family members do not allow many women to work. These responsibilities can be divided into:

- Taking care of their small children;
- Taking care of ill family members (mostly elderly) at home and providing them with a special medical treatment.

This is confirmed by the survey on care-work CRPM did in 2008. The results of this survey show that care-work is part of everyday life of both men and women.

*Table 7. Distribution of housework by sex*

Sex		< 1 hour	1-4 hour	5-8 Hour	8+ hour	Do not spend time	Total
Male	Count	175	120	67	79	10	451
	% of Total	72.0%	35.7%	30.0%	28.3%	50.0%	41.0%
	% of Male	39	26	15	17	2.2	41.0%
Female	Count	68	216	155	200	10	649
	% of Total	27.9%	64.2%	69.8%	71.6%	50.0%	59.0%
	% of Female	10	33	24	31	2.2	59.0%
Total	Count	243	336	222	279	20	1100
	% of Total	22.1%	30.5%	20.2%	25.4%	1.8%	100.0%

As it can be observed in the table above there is only small number from the surveyed population that does not spend any time on housework, whereas 76.1% of the sample spends from 1 to over 8 hours on housework. Table 7 shows that most of the men (39%) spend less than an hour on housework, compared to only 10% of women. In contrast, most of the women spend from 1-4 hours (33%) or over 8 hours (31%) on housework. Care work in the household is by definition unpaid.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In Macedonia the employment policies are generally gender neutral. Recent reviews of the Law on Labor Relations included anti-discriminatory provisions, aligning with EU directives and CEDAW. These, however, do not encompass full response to the constraints of gender participation on the Macedonian labor market. The research and analysis presented in this paper show that policies may improve at several levels:

**a) Additional regulations in the Labour Law in order to provide equal opportunities for men and women at recruitment and in career development**

1. Employers need to be specifically prohibited to make inquiries of marital or family status of men and women.
2. The Law on the other hand needs to provide guarantees for the return to the same employment position after maternity leave.
3. The reforms of the parental leave should be continued with campaign promoting the father as equal care-giver of the children. The policy will reinforce this notion once opportunity to choose whether to work additional hours or during night shifts is given to women with small children and not just men.

**b) Enforcing the wage policy in order to set the basis for economic equality and independence of women**

1. As wages are determined in a process of collective bargaining between the unions and the employers investment should be made to increase the negotiating power and role of women in the unions.
2. Special efforts could be made in setting up unions in the labor intensive low paid industries in the private sector, where unions' presence is weak and competition is intense.
3. The introduction of a minimum wage is a tricky option. It could entail re-organization of the production in many of the companies (decreasing staff and introducing more value-added production) and affect the increase of unemployment.

**c) Adopting measures for increasing gender participation on the labor market**

1. De-stigmatize vulnerable groups of women, such as single mothers and provide specific active employment measures as a stimulation for companies to employ them, but also as motivation for the users to apply for the programs.
2. Increase awareness on the productivity peak ages that could favor women older than 30 years.
3. Investment in education, welfare, time saving infrastructure that will further build the capacities of women to participate in labor markets and undertake paid employment.



# 4

## Women's effective property and inheritance rights in the Republic of Macedonia

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## CONTENT

1. <i>Introduction</i>	54
2. <i>Legal framework</i>	56
3. <i>Effective rights</i>	58
3.1 <i>The gap between norms and practice</i>	58
3.2 <i>The situation on the ground</i>	59
3.2.1 <i>The role of women in families</i>	59
3.2.2 <i>The role of women in the economy                     and the struggle for their economic                     rights</i>	60
3.2.3 <i>Gender concept in rural areas</i>	64
3.3 <i>Focus Groups</i>	67
4. <i>Comparative perspective</i>	71
5. <i>Concluding remarks and recommendations</i>	73

## 1. Introduction

A widely acknowledged fact is that women possess only an estimated 1-2 per cent of all titled land worldwide and are very often denied the right to inherit property that legitimately belongs to them. That is why the economic empowerment of women, and among other issues the protection of women's property and inheritance rights has been recognized in a vast number of laws and other national legal acts, as well as in international conventions, treaties and other legal instruments.<sup>1</sup> The general conclusion from all of these legal acts is that "women have the right to be free from discrimination; they have the right to an adequate standard of living; they have the right to adequate housing; they have the right to enjoy financial independence and to earn a livelihood; and therefore have the right to own, manage, enjoy, and dispose of property".<sup>2</sup>

However, women's property and inheritance rights are an area in which the success is yet to be achieved. So far, they have been only to a small extent incorporated in the massive corpus of human rights and they are not perceived as independent human rights. That is why dealing with this issue still requires a broader analysis of the general state of women's rights.

The main challenges on this matter that human rights advocates meet are:

*"the inadequate laws and systems of enforcement; the lack of awareness that laws do exist and insufficient understanding of options for legal redress and the resolution of disputes; the prevalence of traditional attitudes and practices, many of which directly contradict statutory laws and established civil rights"*<sup>3</sup>

The effective property and inheritance rights of women in Macedonia have not been a significant research topic in the past. In fact, there are only a few sources that can be useful for this analysis. Nevertheless, before carrying on with the analysis, we have to take in account the specific Macedonian context with regard to this problem.

Macedonia carries the burden of a twofold legacy of Southeast Europe that has immensely affected the shaping of the cultural context and the property and inheritance customary practices: first, it is the five-century Ottoman heritage, and second, it is the post-Yugoslav one.

1 Such as the International Covenants on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights and on Civil and Political Rights; the Platform for Action adopted at the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women; the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child; United Nations Commission on Human Rights resolution 2002/49; and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. According to Nadia Steinzor, "Women's Property and Inheritance Rights: Improving Lives in a Changing Time", March 2003. See also "The Feminization of Poverty: the Role of Civic Organizations and Women Groups in its Prevention", Civic World, <<http://www.civicworld.org.mk/default-en.asp?ItemID=B979098D8445844FA683DF184E50120F&arc=1>>, last accessed 25.10.2009

2 UNCHS, "Women's Rights to Land, Housing and Property in Post-conflict Situations and During Reconstruction: A Global Overview," UNCHS (Nairobi), 1999, p.22., as quoted in Ibid.

3 Steinzor, op. cit.

Initially, in the Ottoman legislation, men and women were perceived as equal.

*“women were guaranteed full competence in their dealings and actions, and possess significant rights within the institution of marriage: the right to alimony; immunity from the duty to contribute to the family budget; the absolute right to dispose of their property; the freedom to take up any employment (the conditions of which are not inimical to Shari’ah law or to morality); and, under certain conditions, the right to divorce. In addition, Islam encourages the education of women. This legal framework was adopted by the Ottoman Empire, as the laws and courts of record testify.”<sup>4</sup>*

However, these legal benchmarks achieved under Ottomans were not really contributing to the image of gender equality as there were many other norms that altered this ideal image of the Empire. Regarding the property and inheritance matters, in the Ottoman era, “men were entitled to twice as much inheritance as women”.<sup>5</sup> There were also provisions regarding every minority to separately arrange the civil, family and inheritance law. In compliance with the Qur’an, however, the Ottoman authorities were strictly respecting the privacy of the reaya. They did not interfere within one’s private and family matter, as well as one’s home, which means there were no mechanisms of protection in cases of abuse. Men were legally allowed to physically punish (beat) their wives as a final resort in case of disrespecting and disobeying, although there were clauses that men were not allowed to mistreat women.

In the Yugoslav period on the other hand, the situation of women significantly improved. While in the interwar years there was a general lack of respect towards human dignity, women’s social status was notably enhanced after the Second World War. The participation of some women in the anti-fascist struggle during the war influenced the decision to grant them an equal status in the emerging order. Additionally, the inclusive policies and the promotion of equality no matter the gender or ethnicity by the Communist Parties contributed to the advancement of women’s rights. The general principle of equality was subsequently accepted in the legislation of independent Macedonia after the break-up of the Yugoslav Federation in the early 1990s.

Emerging from these two rather different contexts, the present-day situation of women in Macedonia is marked by features inherited from the both of them. On the one hand, the Ottoman heritage left Macedonia having a patriarchal and patrimonial modes of social. On the other hand, the egalitarian institutional design inherited from Yugoslavia intrinsically imposes gender balance. In fact, the dynamics of the implementation of women’s rights, especially the property and inheritance ones, is to a great extent marked by the opposition of the both legacies.

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4 Berdal Adal, “The Idea of Human Rights as Perceived in the Ottoman Empire”, *Human Rights Quarterly* 26 (2004) pp. 454-482

5 Ibid.



## 2. Legal framework

In the Macedonian legal system there is a gender balance regarding all types of human rights, including the economic ones. In the Article 9 of the Constitution claims that "all citizens of the Republic of Macedonia are equal in terms of their rights and personal liberties, no matter their gender, race, skin color and so on".<sup>6</sup>

Furthermore, there are four laws in the Macedonian legal system that seem to be of a great importance for the analysis of property and inheritance rights of women: the Family Law, the Property Law, the Inheritance Law, and the Law for Equal Opportunities between men and women. Of these four crucial laws, the first three have been in force since the independence of the country, and they have gone through only small changes that were not significant for the research topic. The Law for Equal Opportunities, on the other hand, was adopted in 2006 and is still being implemented.

According to the Family Law, a necessary condition for the existence of a family is the community of parents that have children.<sup>7</sup> A family functions in a way that all the relations within are based on equality and mutualism.<sup>8</sup> Except the equality in all the relations between the partners (further in the law defined as a married heterosexual couple), both of them share equal rights towards their children.<sup>9</sup> It is important to note that the Family Law says that non-married couples that live together for more than one year will be **treated same as married couples** in terms of their property rights (additionally regulated with the Property Law).<sup>10</sup> Regarding the economic rights, it is also said that everyone has a right to choose their job independent from their spouse<sup>11</sup>, but that both of the partners contribute and take care of the family according to their possibilities.<sup>12</sup> Regarding any detailed issues concerning property and inheritance, the law focuses more on the rights of children than on the rights of widows and widowers, yet does not make any specific remarks on the gender factor in both of the situations.

When it comes to the Property Law and the Inheritance Law, it can be clearly seen that they both insist on equality and fair distribution as there is no mention of gender, any specific treatment of women or whatsoever related to the topic.<sup>13</sup> With no further classifications, it is said that all people, no matter if domestic or foreign citizens have the right to acquire property<sup>14</sup> and that there are same and universal

6 See Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia, <[http://www.president.gov.mk/UserFiles/File/stav%20na%20RM/Ustav\\_na\\_RM%20nov.pdf](http://www.president.gov.mk/UserFiles/File/stav%20na%20RM/Ustav_na_RM%20nov.pdf)> last accessed 25.10.2009

7 Article 2, Family Law of the Republic of Macedonia, <<http://pravo.org.mk/documentDetail.php?id=500&gid=20&tid=1&page=documentlaws.php>>, last accessed 25.10.2009

8 Article 3 and Article 6, Ibid.

9 Article 8 and Article 9, Ibid.

10 Article 13, Ibid. At the same time, the law does not specify the methods of measuring if a couple has lived together for a year or not.

11 Article 32, Ibid.

12 Article 33, Ibid.

13 See Property Law of the Republic of Macedonia <<http://pravo.org.mk/documentDetail.php?id=43&gid=76&tid=1&page=documentlaws.php>> and Inheritance Law of the Republic of Macedonia, <<http://pravo.org.mk/documentDetail.php?id=377&gid=76&tid=1&page=documentlaws.php>>, last accessed 25.10.2009

14 Article 2, Property Law, op. cit.

conditions regarding any citizen's right to inheritance.<sup>15</sup>

The only questionable part of the Inheritance Law is the one that refers to the exclusion of the heirs by the will of the deceased. According to Inheritance Law, any of the potential heirs, even if they are children to the deceased person whose property is about to be shared, can be excluded from the inheritance procedure under certain circumstances.<sup>16</sup> That is a norm that is opposed to the continental European laws, where a big portion of the property (50% and more) is reserved for the children, and it is obligatory to be divided equally between them (what is also known as "forced heirship"). In 26 of the 27 European Union countries, it is illegal to exclude children from the inheritance or to significantly reduce their share. The only similar law practice to the Macedonian can be found in the Anglo-Saxon law (with the exclusion of Scotland), where heirs are determined by the will of the deceased.<sup>17</sup> This norm in the Macedonian legislation does not have a direct effect on the women's inheritance rights, but it indirectly provides the opportunity for legally marginalizing the daughters in the distribution of the family property.

The most important legal act regarding women empowerment and achieving gender balance is the Law on Equal Opportunities. The aim of the Law is "promoting(...) equal opportunities for men and women in the political, economic, social, educational and other areas of societal life".<sup>18</sup> The Law introduces new legal terms, as **equal opportunities, equal treatment, discrimination, direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment**.<sup>19</sup> It also points to several means for achieving equal opportunities and also suggest that every instance of the government, but also other subjects, like the media and the civil society actors should have an important role in the implementation. However, the law does not refer particularly to the property and inheritance rights.

What can be inferred from the overview of the basic legal acts on this matter is that there is not any specific regulation that refers to women's property and inheritance rights. Women and men are considered to be equal according to all the laws on the matter, and there is not any distinction with regards to the gender in terms of the property and inheritance rights. While it is visible that the Macedonian legislation has no specific regulation, it still provides basic gender balance conditions, which can be seen from the undisputed equality proclaimed in every act that is somehow related to women's property and inheritance rights.<sup>20</sup>

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15 See Inheritance Law of the Republic of Macedonia, op. cit.

16 See Ibid., Articles 46-29

17 See "Where there's a will there's a row", The Economist 15.10.2009

18 Article 2, Law on Equal Opportunities between Men and Women of the Republic of Macedonia <<http://pravo.org.mk/documentDetail.php?id=697&gid=20&tid=1&page=documentlaws.php>>, 25.10.2009

19 Article 3, Ibid.

20 In addition, see "Women's rights in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Briefing delivered to the Human Rights Committee, 2007 <<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/hrc/docs/ngos/Macedonia-omct.pdf>>, last accessed 25.10.2009. The authors say: "In Macedonia, both the Constitution and the national laws guarantee complete equality between men and women. The fact that the law does not make any distinction between the legal capacity of men and women means that there are no legal limitations for women to own property, initiate court proceedings, obtain credits, etc."

### *3. Effective rights*

#### *3.1 The gap between norms and practice*

A striking impression of various monitors of the democratization processes in Macedonia, is that there is a significant discrepancy between the norms and the practice - while Macedonian laws are adopted there is no adequate execution. The poor observance of human rights has been noted in many reports on the matter. That has been the key point, for instance in the reports by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights<sup>21</sup> and the Human Rights Report of the United States Department of State.<sup>22</sup>

It is important to mention that the European Union plays an important role in the work on bridging the gap between the statutory norms and the practice. One of the core values and main pillars of the existence of the European Union is the promotion, practice, protection and advancement of all kinds of human rights and civil liberties, and one of the most important subfields within the human rights topic, is the one of the women's rights.

The official foreign politics of Macedonia since proclaiming its independence have been oriented towards joining the European Union. Since 2004, the country has been assigned the status of a candidate for a full membership. Its progress in fulfilling the EU political and economic criteria imposed has been reviewed by the European Commission. One of the several areas in which the progress was tracked, was the advancement of rights of women. In the reports on the country's progress from the last three years, the Commission has made several remarks concerning this topic. Some of the remarks were related to the women's economic rights.

Thus, for example, in the 2007 report, an emphasis was made on the "only slow" pace of the implementation of the law on equal opportunities for women and men. It was said that there was a gap between the norms and the practice, as "the definitions provided for in the law are not yet in full compliance with the *acquis*". A further remark was made on the lack of institutions and formal bodies that would deliver on the enactment of the legislative. Furthermore, it has been recommended that the government should focus on the issue of women rights and work on a solution for the discriminatory practices especially in the rural areas, but as well to find a way to increase female participation on the labour market. Action remains "insufficient in the areas of employment".<sup>23</sup>

21 Ibid.

22 2008 US Department of State Human Rights Report: Macedonia, February, 2009, <<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2008/eur/119091.htm>>, last accessed 25.10.2009. The report among other things says: "Although the law requires men and women to be paid equally for equal work, wage discrimination against women remained pervasive, particularly in the private sector. While the law prohibits dismissal of women on maternity leave, discrimination against pregnant women continued in practice. (...) Women from parts of the ethnic Albanian and Romani communities did not have equal opportunities for employment and education due to traditional or religious restrictions on their schooling and participation in society. In some ethnic Albanian communities, the practice of men voting on behalf of female family members disenfranchised women."

23 See The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2007 Progress Report, European Commission Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2007-2008, <[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_docu-](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_docu-)

In the report for 2008, similar comments were made by the Commission It was said that “limited efforts have been made to promote women’s rights in rural areas and to increase female participation in the labour market”. The impressions of the Commission are that there is still structural insufficiency of the administrative capacities in this area. They also refer to the endurance of discriminatory customs, traditions and stereotypes against women and especially women from ethnic minorities.<sup>24</sup>

In the most recent annual report, from October 2009, some of the crucial remarks persist. Regarding women’s economic rights, it is said that “a strategic approach to equal opportunities is missing” and has recommended “further efforts are needed to develop administrative capacity on gender equality”. At the same time it is emphasized that “female participation in the labour force remains very low”.<sup>25</sup>

### *3.2 The situation on the ground*

To get a full understanding of the conditions of women’s property and inheritance rights, some of the basic conditions of the Macedonian society should be taken into account. These conditions are:

- the general role of women on micro level (in their families)
- the role of women in the Macedonian economy and struggle for the fulfillment of their economic rights
- the variation among different environments (urban/rural)

#### *3.2.1 The role of women in families*

By assessing the role of women on micro level, one can clearly identify the basics of the property and inheritance customs in the society. The way the questions of ownership, material contribution and distribution, and inheritance are solved on the ground level basically depends on the inter-personal relations, which depend upon objective factors, such as personal liberty and education level.

The common impression about the Macedonian case is that the family order is generally based on a patriarchal/patrimonial tradition in which women are subordinated. One important fact is that women in Macedonia get married earlier than men. On average, Macedonian women get married for the first time at the age of 25, while men get married at the age of 28.<sup>26</sup> Women’s average age of fist marriage is below the world average (28,1 years)<sup>27</sup> and significantly below the average of the women from

ments/2007/nov/fyrom\_progress\_reports\_en.pdf>, last accessed 25.10.2009

24 See The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2008 Progresss Report, European Commission Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2008-2009, <[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press\\_corner/keydocuments/ reports\\_nov\\_2008/the\\_former\\_yugoslav\\_republic\\_of\\_macedonia\\_progress\\_report\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/press_corner/keydocuments/ reports_nov_2008/the_former_yugoslav_republic_of_macedonia_progress_report_en.pdf)>, last accessed 25.10.2009

25 See The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2009 Progresss Report, European Commission Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010, <[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2009/mk\\_rapport\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2009/mk_rapport_2009_en.pdf)>, last accessed 25.10.2009

26 See State Statistical Office, “Women and Men in Macedonia”, Skopje, 2008, p. 14

27 See NationMaster People’s Statistics, Age at first marriage for women (most recent) by country, <[http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo\\_age\\_at\\_fir\\_mar\\_for\\_wom-people-age-first-marriage-women](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo_age_at_fir_mar_for_wom-people-age-first-marriage-women)>, last accessed 25.10.2009

the most developed countries.<sup>28</sup> At the same time, men's average age is closer to the world average (30,3).<sup>29</sup>

At the same time women's education level is lower, (although among younger groups of people it is rather equal) and illiteracy rate is slightly higher than men, which might affect the role of women in the decision making within the family. With regard to the property and inheritance rights, this can be seen as a solid basis for the hypothesis that the practice of ownership and inheritance in Macedonia have a lot of reminiscents from the traditional patrimonial model in which men's dominance remains uncontested.

### *3.2.2 The role of women in the economy and the struggle for their economic rights*

According to the latest survey of the labour market conducted by the State Statistical Office, 61% of the active population are men, while 39% are women. Among the inactive population 35,4% are men, and 64,6% women.<sup>30</sup> To be considered active, according to the methodology of the Office, a person has to be between 15-79 years old; employed (working legally for profit) or unemployed (not working but actively searching for a job and ready to accept work immediately). Hence being inactive means the person is either not within age range (15-79), is either retired or not actively searching for job. Having in mind that in Macedonia there is a demographic balance in the distribution by gender, and that the legal system stands for equal opportunities, the only viable argument on the disproportion with regard to the activity rate is the women not fulfilling the criteria of constantly searching for a job and being prepared to accept any kind of work as soon as possible.

At the same time, according to another survey by that State Statistical Office, the activity rate distribution by gender varies significantly depending on the rural/urban factor. While the rate of activity of men in rural areas is slightly lower than the one in the urban areas, it is not the case with women. While urban women's average activity rate in the age groups from 30 to 50 years old is above 70%, in the same age groups, among the rural women, is less than 50%. Regarding the total values, while more than 45% of the urban women are considered to be active, less than 40% from the rural share the same status.

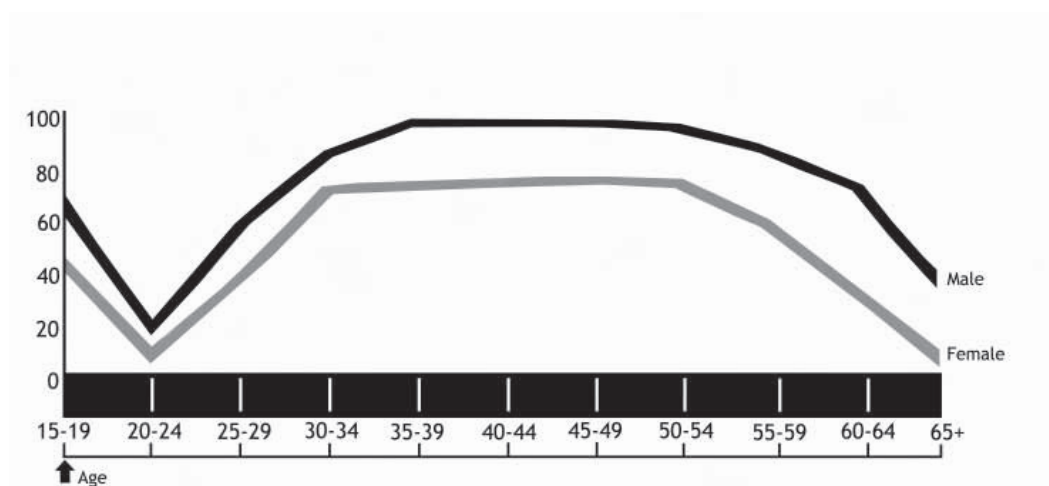
28 For example, women from Sweden and Denmark get married after 30, see *ibid*.

29 See NationMaster People's Statistics, Age at first marriage for men (most recent) by country, <[http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo\\_age\\_at\\_fir\\_mar\\_for\\_men-people-age-first-marriage-men](http://www.nationmaster.com/graph/peo_age_at_fir_mar_for_men-people-age-first-marriage-men)>, last accessed 25.10.2009

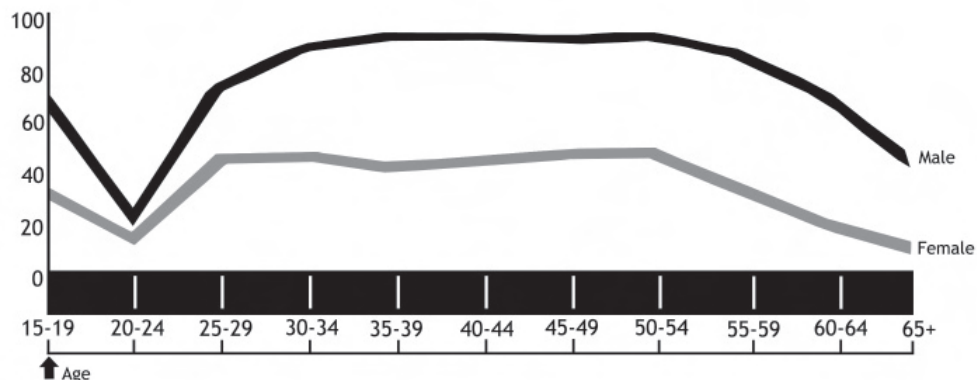
30 State Statistical Office, "A Survey on the Labour Market", Skopje 2009

Chart 1. Activity rates of the urban and rural population by age

Urban:



Rural:



Source: State Statistical Office, "Women and Men in Macedonia", Skopje, 2008, p. 46

Within the active population on the other hand, there is a proportion among both the employed (61,4% men, 38,6% women) and the unemployed population (60,1% men 39,9% women).<sup>31</sup>

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

Table 1. Population aged 15-79 by economic activity and gender, second quartal, 2009

	Total population	Structure by gender
Total active population	933 878	
Men	569 643	61
Women	364 235	39
Total employed population	636 156	
Men	390 747	61.4
Women	245 409	38.6
Total unemployed population	297 722	
Men	178 896	60.1
Women	118 826	39.9
Total inactive population	703 950	
Men	249 424	35.4
Women	454 526	64.6

Source: State Statistical Office, "A Survey on the Labour Market", Skopje 2009

However, there is also a huge gap between the economic status of the employed. For example, 79% of the employers are men (8% of the total employed men population, compared to only 3% of the employed women). Furthermore, there are a lot more female unpaid family workers (60% of the total number of unpaid family workers are women; and 17% of the women population are unpaid family workers).<sup>32</sup> In terms of occupation, it is very unlikely regarding the other tendencies on the labour market, that there are more women professionals than men (and at the same time, most of the women are professionals). However, all the other types of occupations are dominated by men.<sup>33</sup>

Another significant survey has been conveyed on this topic has been conveyed by the Women's Section of the Trade Unions Association of Macedonia in 2005. According to their survey, only 4% of the employed women are business

One very illustrative example about the economic position of women in Macedonia is the case of Stip, the center of the clothing production industry:

"The clothing companies are the biggest employer in Stip. Most of the employees in this sector are women. (...) Half of the women that are less than 40 produce clothes. An estimated number of 5,000 women work in the Stip's 58 clothing companies, whereas another 1,000 women work in other sectors. Today manufacturers looking for women to work in clothing production have difficulty finding suitable candidates: young, trained and skilful sewers of the Macedonian clothes for Europe. This increases the salaries for the Stip workers, the average one being between 150-200 Euros. The producers claim that the wages in this sector are too high in Stip, and highest in Macedonia. (...)

32 See "Women and Men", op. cit. 49

33 See "Women and men", op. cit.. p. 54



owners. Almost 89% of the women who work in big corporations are not involved in the decision-making process. As well, some of the findings of this survey were that most of the women give up from their ideas about their career for the benefits of their husbands. Women also experience a lot of difficulties even when they want to start their own business, since **most of the property is legally possessed by their husbands**, and the inheritance practice is that most of the property is left to the men rather than to the women. For many, the perception is that it is immoral for a woman to start business if her husband is not employed. Moreover, it is thought that women are not qualified enough to be bosses as much as the men are. In the public eye, the only sphere where women have good chances to succeed commercially, is in the public domain.

Those women who have full-time jobs are miserably paid. While men earn on average three times more than women, only 11% of the employed women are entitled to an above-average salary. One of the main reasons for this is that a big portion of employed

women (almost a quarter) work in the clothing producing industry which is considered to be among the least paid and most hard working ones. Overall, about 90% of the total number of textile workers are women.<sup>34</sup> (see the box above)

What can be conferred from the overview on the role of women in the economy is that they are strikingly overpowered by men. The facts show that they have a lower contribution but also a lower access to the labour market than the men, have generally worse working places and earn significantly lower wages directly. That affects their capability to acquire private property. These conditions also create almost unsurpassable barrier in terms of capital investments, such as land, housing, various other forms of real estate, vehicles etc. In that situation no matter the fairness of the legal framework, the effective property rights by women can not be practiced.

(...) Stipteks the oldest private clothing producers in Macedonia, (...) has German partners who come to Macedonia periodically to order different kinds of clothes from local producers and Stipteks. (...) When the order is made the deadlines for production are short and the work is intense. It is often required to work over time. The T shirts are produced in a large hall on the bottom floor where 200 women are seated in five long rows. In front of them are sewing machines, the women forming Ford-like factory lines in which everyone is focused on one specific task. (...) Each line has about fifty women working on a piece of cloth, i.e. the separate components of a woman's t-shirt. (...)

Briteks produces some 300,000 clothing items annually in 4 lines. However, the manager admitted that the "company lacks space" and that "the hall is overcrowded as it should accommodate only three lines." (...) there are about 130 employees. 90 percent of employees are women, most of them around 35 years old. (...) About 95 percent of production is based on orders made from foreign companies based in the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany and Greece and arranged through an intermediary firm (...).

Center for Research and Policy Making,  
Macedonian Clotes for Europe , policy study,  
N.1, February 2006

34 Magdalena Mihajloska, "Running Bussines is still Men's Job", Kapital Magazine no. 279, March 2005 <<http://www.kapital.com.mk/DesktopDefault.aspx?tabindex=19&tabid=65&EditionID=452&ArticleID=945>>, last accessed 25.10.2009.



In 2007, a brief on Women's rights in Macedonia said that:

*"There is a need to introduce measures to eliminate the existing frequent practice of leaving the estate to the male heirs, in spite of the fact that under the inheritance law both male and female siblings are equally entitled to this right. (...)"*

*Property, i.e. real estate is usually registered under the name of men(...) even though legally men and women have equal rights in terms of property ownership, this equality is rarely practiced. Women are also often placed in an inferior position when it comes to making financial decisions. The reasons (...) can be found in traditions, customs, and in certain objective circumstances."*<sup>35</sup>

Moreover, according to a survey conducted by the Supervision Mission of the Real Estate Cadaster Agency of Macedonia, in 55% of the property deeds there is only one owner, while in 45% of the cases the ownership is shared among 2 or more people. In 73% of the cases where only one single owner appeared, that person was a man, and in only 27% of the cases women appeared as owners. The Supervision of the Cadaster report also refers to the inheritance traditions among Muslims in Macedonia, ethnic and Albanians, Turks and Roma, influencing the disproportional distribution of property. For many, among these communities, men are the main heirs of the family property and women are basically deprived of their inheritance rights.<sup>36</sup>

### 3.2.3 Gender concept in rural areas

The emphasis on the distinction between women's property and inheritance rights according to the geography is very important for this research. While the perception of urban areas is that they are far more developed and women more emancipated, the rural areas are always perceived as a somewhat "Oriental" Other where the patrimonial system is strongest since the assumption is that the rural population is less educated and less exposed to a cultural exchange. Data from the State Statistical Office shows that women are actually doing better off in terms of tertiary occupations that are necessarily related to the urban areas, while doing much worse in the rural areas.

A research conducted by the Association of the Women's Organizations from Macedonia, women's property and inheritance rights in the rural areas are at a very low level.<sup>37</sup>

On the matter of the allocation of the family budget, more than one third of their respondents said that it is an issue upon which decide all the family members equally. Another 30% said that the decision is up to the all the adult members of the family, and 15% said it is up to the single oldest one. However, while 13% said that deci-

<sup>35</sup> "Women's rights in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", op. cit.

<sup>36</sup> Real Estate Cadaster Agency of the Republic of Macedonia, An Overview of the Social Protection Measures. Supervision Mission 2009

<sup>37</sup> Gender Concept in Rural Areas, Union of Woman's Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia, 2003

sions regarding the family budget are made by the oldest male member of the family, and additional 2,5% said that it is up to the adult male members of the family, only 2,1% said that those type of decisions are made by the adult women in the family.

*Table 2. Answers to the question "Who decides about the distribution of the total monthly incomes in the household?" by gender*

*Table 2. Answers to the question "Who decides about the distribution of the total monthly incomes in the household?" by gender*

	The oldest member of the family	The oldest male member	Major male members	Major female members	All major members	Equally all members
Male	78	63	19	7	158	177
Female	77	68	6	14	146	187
Total	155	131	25	21	304	346
Structure	15,5%	13,1%	2,5%	2,1%	30,4%	34,6%

*Source: Gender Concept in Rural Areas, Union of Woman's Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia, 2003*

*Table 3. Answers to the question "Who decides about the distribution of the total monthly incomes in the household?" by ethnicity*

	The oldest member of the family	The oldest male member	Major male members	Major female members	All major members	Equally all members
Macedonian	52	59	10	17	289	311
Albanian	80	53	13	n/a	5	12
Roma	2	10	1	3	4	2
Serbian	8	2	n/a	1	4	24
Turkish	10	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	14
Vlach	2	n/a	n/a	n/a	2	1
Others	1	5	1	n/a	n/a	n/a
Total	155	131	25	21	304	346
Structure	15,5%	13,1%	2,5%	2,1%	30,4%	34,6%

*Source: Gender Concept in Rural Areas, Union of Woman's Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia, 2003*

With such an insignificant portion, the hypothesis that the traditional family structure prevails in the rural areas of Macedonia is confirmed. The gender differences were not reflected in the answers, as it turned out that both the male and female respondents had more or less very similar answers. Furthermore, the pattern of the

answers to this question was neither affected by the age, education level nor the employment status of the respondents. However, ethnic Albanians and Turkish respondents stated that mostly the oldest member of the family has the biggest rights over the family budget.

The survey also showed that men's votes are considered to be a lot more important than the women's. To the question "who makes the decision on the brand, the color and the design when the family plans on buying new household items?", 36% of the respondents said that those decisions are brought by the vote of the majority of the members in the family. However, 39% said it is "the man of the family", while only less than 8% said it is "the woman". Similarly, about 6% said it is the father, 1% said it is the mother, and 8% said it is the children who bring a decision on what kind of item is going to be bought. The answers of this question do not depend on the gender, age, ethnicity and education level of the respondents.

Regarding the perception of ownership and possession, differences between men and women are obvious. When asked whether if they preferred to be the declared owners of the newly acquired property of the family, almost 60% of the male respondents answered positively, while around 20% said no, and additional 20% said that they do not care. Among women, only 16% answered positively, 47% answered negatively, and the rest said they do not care. The answers of this question clearly suggest that men find it personally much more important to be acknowledged as owners, while women are rather apathetic and not interested in this matter.

*Table 4. Answers of the question "Do you prefer to be declared as owner of the newly acquired property of your family?"*

	Yes	No	All the same
Male	301	105	96
Female	80	237	181
Total	381	342	277
Percentage	38.1	34.2	27.7

*Source: Gender Concept in Rural Areas, Union of Woman's Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia, 2003*

Furthermore, several questions were asked on the factual ownership in the families of the respondents. It turned out that men own outstandingly more property than women. In terms of living places, almost 63% of the respondents said that in their household, the husband is the owner of the flat/house where the family lives, and additional 28% said that is the father. Only 5% said the owner of the flat/house is the wife, and 1,8% said it is the mother. 53,7% answered that the husband and 39% said the father is the owner of the land of the family, while less than 2% said that is the mother and less than 2% said that is the wife. When it comes to the money, more than 61% said the husband is the owner of the family's savings, 16% said it is the father, while 4% answered that it is the wife and 2% said it is the mother. Husbands are said to be owners of the car in their households according to almost 54% of the respondents and according to 14% it is the father. On the other hand, less than half percent said it is

the mother that owns the car in the household, and less than 2% said it is the wife. The results regarding the ownership of the means of agricultural production are the most striking ones: while almost 56% of the respondents said the husband and almost 21% said the father is the owner of the means of production, less than half percent said it is the wife and less than one percent said it is the mother.

*Table 5. Answers of the question "Who is the owner of mechanization useful for agriculture in your household?"*

	Frequency	Percentage
Husband	558	55.8
Eife	3	.3
Mother	8	.8
Father	209	20.9
Other	30	3.0
No answer	192	19.2
Total	1000	100.0

*Source: Gender Concept in Rural Areas, Union of Woman's Organizations of the Republic of Macedonia, 2003*

The general conclusions from this survey according to the authors, were that in the rural areas in Macedonia:

*"the traditional type of household dominates and women in this type of household have inferior role; women in the rural environment have insignificant influence in the distribution of the total monthly incomes, and in decision of buying contents for the household; (...) women's opportunities for decision making are insignificant not only in the household but wider in the society; (...) in the rural households there is distinction between male and female activities and the same attitude is shared by men and women regardless their education, age or working status (...) which is especially present in the Albanian households)." <sup>38</sup>*

In the rural areas there is a deeply rooted patrimonial system of values in which the role of men is undisputed. Besides dominating the decision-making process within the family, men are owners of the land, house and mechanization. At the same time, women indirectly support and perpetuate the patrimonial order, as they do not seem very eager to improve their economic position.

### *3.3 Focus Groups*

For the purposes of this analysis, the Center for Research and Policy Making has conducted four focus groups in the Macedonian town of Struga and Strumica. De-

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

pending on the gender and ethnic background, the perceptions of the respondents resembled but also differed one from another.

The municipality of Struga is a place with a majority of Albanian population and with an assumed patrimonial cultural model. During the focus group meeting, the three male respondents of Albanian descent were rather self-assertive, confident, but mostly inflexible on the topic. They generally said that they have inherited their property from their respective families. In their perception, the fact that the property came from their families is a reason enough for their women to be subordinated in terms of not having any right to the property, even in a case of divorce. In their opinion, it is acceptable that women are deprived from any participation in the decision making regarding financial issues since they are not considered to have contributed to the family's property. Furthermore, the majority of them said that they would prefer if their sons inherited their property, which would be a legitimate act, since it would be based on the tradition of male heirs having greater importance. Regarding their viewpoint on the broader community, they all share the same attitude that men are considered to be dominant over women. More or less explicitly, they all said that they conform to these norms. In the answers, they used several key words like: "tradition" with the reference to the model of the inheritance along the male genesis in the family; the keyword "priority" was used to describe the status of the son and his future as well as the concern about his well being; and the phrase "our mentality" was used at times as an excuse or self-justification for some of the proclaimed attitudes which leads towards a conclusion that the dominant cultural model sometimes can be perceived as a burden.

The second focus group in Struga was comprised of total of seven women from both Macedonian and Albanian ethnicity. All of them generally said they do not own any property except in one case where the respondent said that she had inherited the house from her parents since she was the only child in the family. All of the respondents also said that they would like to earn enough and to possess their own property, but almost none of them works or receives good payment. Unlike the male respondents, they said they would prefer to share their property as equally as possible among their kids. However, they gave rather different answers to the questions regarding the decision making in the family and their role in that process. The answers varied from willingness to compromise or even subdue to the will of the husband, to a militant defense of the women's rights and denouncing men's dominance as anachronistic. Their perceptions on social norms and the readiness to give up property under pressure from their surrounding also varied, from a total apathy and preparedness to completely follow the husband's interest on one side, to rather emancipated and independent attitude standing for the one's intrinsic right over their property. It has to be emphasized that the more progressive answers resembled minority, if not a single individual's opinion, whereas the rest of the rest of the answers were given by the majority of the respondents. Overall, more progressive answers were given by respondents of Macedonian ethnic origin. The Albanian women's answers were rather conservative and supporting the dominant cultural model.

In Strumica, a municipality with a majority of ethnic Macedonian population, the first focus group was comprised of four men from Macedonian and Turkish ethnic origin. It is significant that they stated they do not own any property, as some of them

live in family houses owned by their fathers or pay a rent. Regarding their opinion on the family relations regarding property, they were almost unanimous in the attitude that it is usual for men to own property and take care of women, who are assumed to have less potential for economic success. That stance also implies that in terms of inheritance, the male heirs are of higher priority. As one of the respondents explained, the traditional perception is that since women gain some property by getting married, inheriting property from the family would mean they gain twice as more than men. Colloquially said, it is unfair for their daughters to gain property both from their husbands and from their fathers, while at the same time their brothers are virtually left with only half of their family's capital. This attitude, shared by the respondents no matter their ethnicity, also implies that inheritance is seen as the most important way of gaining property. In this respect, a further statement was made by one of the respondents about the economic dependence of children to their parents. He has stated that in the more developed countries, young people have opportunities to become financially independent relatively early in their lives. Thus, he assumes, for them the family property and the inheritance are not that important and a far more simple matter.

During the discussion, it could also be noticed that the respondents were aware of the importance of maintaining a certain equality level among the members of the family. They seemed ready to solidize with daughters/sisters/women in general when they would be in need for that. Nonetheless, one of the Turkish respondents, made a rather diverging claim, saying that he would rather transfer some of his property to his brother's son than to his own daughter. The reason behind this attitude is that, as he stated, he would trust his nephew rather than his son-in-law. That clearly suggests that in his perception, women are not considered to be independent, but fully contingent on their husbands (transferring property to the daughter means transferring property to the son-in-law). Regarding the decision making process on property matters, one significant statement was made by one of the Macedonian respondents who said that "it would be bad if [he and his brother] included their wives" in it. Generally, the respondents assumed their opinion is decisive, or at least very important in these processes, although they showed signs of preparedness to compromise and were rather ambivalent in terms of giving up property. However, in case of divorce, they are generally not ready to meet their wives' needs. Overall, the opinion of the men from Strumica was not very different from the one of the men from Struga, although less intense references to the norms and traditions of the community were made.

The second focus group from Strumica was consisted of five women of various ethnic origin (Macedonian, Serbian, Turkish). All of them owned no property and said what they have earned during their marriage was considered to be shared and mutual with their husbands. However, the practice in their families is that the husbands are the ones considered to be legal owners of the family property. Moreover, all of the respondents turned out not to be very willing to inherit property from their families and they all justify in some way the practice of leaving the biggest share of the property to the male heirs. One of them has even said that "it is better to have [her] brother for a lifetime, than to fight for land". However, one of them later said that she insists on equality in terms of sharing the property to be inherited, while another one said even though the practice of favoring the male heirs was not fair, she would keep her dignity by not asking to be granted a decent share from the total amount of the property. Re-

garding their children, one of the respondents said that she would rather leave more property for her son than to her daughter, since she will be protected by her husband. The opinion of the others on the other hand, was more referring to the ideal of equal treatment of their children and the means to achieve it. In terms of decision making on property issues, there was a general opinion that the practice in their families is a bringing mutually acceptable decisions, although one of the respondents said she had the upper hand in her household. Regarding the consequences of a hypothetical divorce, some of the respondents hesitated from answering the questions, while the others said they would ask for a share of the family property than would be bigger than the one of their husbands or will rather try to leave it for their children. Generally, their perceptions were very similar to the ones provided by the women from Struga.

The focus groups have generally confirmed the hypothesis that women's property and inheritance right are not generally practiced in Macedonia; but they have also given a precious insight on the inter-relation between the culture and the tradition on one side and the practices on the other. Among other things, in the focus groups, religion and ethnicity turned out to be an important strand. The fact that in every survey on women's rights the category Muslim (and the ethnic categories Albanian, Turkish and Roma) appears as a potential diverging category, is caused by the cultural specifications of their community. In devout Islam, the inheritance and property patterns are very complex as there are separate formulae of division depending on family size and potential heir's age. That doesn't necessarily mean discriminatory attitude towards women, and depriving them from their economic rights.

However, in most of the cases of the Muslim families in Macedonia, the transfer of the property goes along the male lineage of the family (from the grandfather, to the father, to the son). The possibility of exclusion of some of the heirs from the inheritance with the Inheritance Law, as analysed in the section on the Legal Framework, seems to perpetuate this tendencies. The exclusion of the daughters from the inheritance was seen primarily in the response of the Albanian and Turkish participants in the focus groups, who have given some illustrating examples on this matter. As well, women generally are not expected to contribute in the process of accumulation of family property and are therefore deprived of any rights regarding its management. Since they are used to the minor role in the family and are never stimulated to rethink it, they accept it in most of the cases and then just perpetuate patrimonialism. In their logic, what has been brought (not even earned) by their husband, does not belong to them, and they are only beneficiaries. However, one day, that property will belong to their children; and in most of the cases the son[s] will inherit the biggest portion, in accordance with the tradition. The daughter[s] are supposed to get married with someone else who would invest their inheritance in the formation of a new family; that is how the cycle is maintained. This kind of attitude was noticed not exclusively among Albanian and Turkish male participants, but also among some women, including the ones of ethnic Macedonian descent from Strumica.



#### 4. Comparative perspective

In Europe, research has been done especially on the issue of the property and inheritance rights of Muslim women, as the general perception is that Muslim women are in a far worse position than the others. Some of the findings in this field are quite interesting as they suggest that actually the extreme patriarchalism among Muslims is not in compliance with the Qur'an.

A good case to discuss in this context is Turkey. As a fellow candidate country for a full European Union membership, Turkey undertakes the same procedures in terms of adopting legislation and policies and goes through similar monitoring processes by the European Commission. However, in the most recent report, the Commission stated that the gender equality remains a major challenge in Turkey and a gender equality body has yet to be established. Women's share in the labour market is still at a very low level, and still even employed women end up mostly in the informal sector which makes their situation sensitive. Additionally, for the same amount and quality of work, women receive significantly lower wages and the women's access to education is the lowest among the EU Member States and OECD countries. Although Turkey has adopted several important laws for improving the gender balance, the rest of the figures, such as the women's employment rate or women literacy rate are still the lowest in Europe. Regarding property and inheritance rights, men and women became equal only in 2002

"Islam decreed a right of which woman was deprived both before Islam and after it (even as late as this century), the right of independent ownership. According to Islamic Law, woman's right to her money, real estate, or other properties is fully acknowledged. This right undergoes no change whether she is single or married. She retains her full rights to buy, sell, mortgage or lease any or all her properties. It is nowhere suggested in the Law that a woman is a minor simply because she is a female. It is also noteworthy that such right applies to her properties before marriage as well as to whatever she acquires thereafter. With regard to the woman's right to seek employment it should be stated first that Islam regards her role in society as a mother and a wife as the most sacred and essential one. (...) In addition, Islam restored to woman the right of inheritance, after she herself was an object of

with the enactment of the adoption of the Law on Equal Opportunities.<sup>39</sup> To conclude here, it is easily arguable that the protection and the exercise of women's rights, including the property and inheritance rights of women in Macedonia is far more successful than the case of Turkey.

However, the Western Balkans, Turkey, and generally Europe have been not the main locus for surveys regarding this matter. Most of the research done on women's effective property and inheritance rights has been done outside of Europe, in regions where women's rights are generally weak. The researchers' focus has been on Africa, Southeast Asia and the Middle East.

In Sub-Saharan Africa for instance, the conditions are below any international standards. The general perception is that only men are seen as potential owners of property. The relationship between men and women are seen as a relationship be-

39 See Turkey 2009 Progress Report, European Commission Enlargement Strategy and Main Challenges 2009-2010 <[http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key\\_documents/2009/tr\\_rapport\\_2009\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/pdf/key_documents/2009/tr_rapport_2009_en.pdf)>, last accessed 25.10.2009



inheritance in some cultures. Her share is completely hers and no one can make any claim on it, including her father and her husband. (...) Islam grants woman equal rights to contract, to enterprise, to earn and possess independently. Her life, her property, her honor are as sacred as those of man. These rights reveal the full personality of women. (...) Thus we can say that the mentality that despises women, excludes them from society and regards them as second class citizens is a wicked pagan attitude which has no place in Islam."

Nora Kartelova, Situation of Muslim Women. Muslim women in Balkans: between the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights and the Qur'an, European Parliament Statement 2008

tween a protector/guardian and a protege, no matter if it is a case of a father-daughter, husband-wife, or brother-in-law relation. Women are eligible to inherit property only if their husband or father dies, although there are plenty of cases of women being rejected by their family and thrown out of the marital house after the passing away of their "protector". In these cases they often turn to prostitution. Early death caused by the pandemics of HIV/AIDS only complicates the problem. Governments insist that women's rights, and especially with regard to property, are a private matter and should be resolved privately, out of the realm of the state institutions. Another problem is the unawareness of the society about the situation, as they silently accept the rigid customs with the justification that it is inherent to their cultural matrix; even more, it is used as an argument by various parties

willing to contest widows' property. Since in many tribes there is a practice of polygamy, after the death of one man there is an open contest for his heritage and the success of one of his wives can only happen on the expense on another.<sup>40</sup>

The situation in southern and southeast Asia is not any better. The biggest concern have been the discriminatory practices in terms of property and inheritance rights; in some countries (Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh) laws openly promote double standards regarding men's and women's economic rights.. Where polygamy is legal, there is no standard procedure for fair distribution of the property and of the inheritance if any. **Daughters are sometimes forced to return their inheritance back to their families immediately after getting married.** On the other hand, there is no law regulating the role of the father after separation: men are usually not asked to take care of children after divorce or more commonly desertion,, which just leads to the increase of the number of single mothers in an extremely hard economic position. Religious and traditional practices very often prevail over laws; for instance in the predominantly Muslim countries like Bangladesh sons are entitled to twice as much as daughter's inheritance share; in Hindu laws in India, the inheritance to widows and daughters upon the death of their father is denied.<sup>41</sup>

40 See Women's Property and Inheritance Rights: Improving Lives in Changing, op. cit. Also see Bringing Equality Home: Promoting and Protecting the Inheritance Rights of Women – Sub-Saharan Africa, COHRE, 2004.

41 See Women's Property and Inheritance Rights..., op. cit. Also see Property Ownership and Inheritance Rights of Women for Social Protection – The South Asia Experience, UNIFEM 2006

## 5. Concluding remarks and recommendations

After all the discussions made on the issue of women's effective property and inheritance rights in Macedonia, the following points can be drawn:

- Macedonia has developed a gender balanced legal framework which promotes full equality between men and women regarding their rights, including their economic, property and inheritance rights, with one questionable point (the right to exclude anyone, even children, from the inheritance procedure)
- There is a huge gap between the norms and the practice, as most of the legal acts remain unimplemented, and protection of the women's rights fails
- The factual situation is that men are dominant over women: most of the properties are owned by men and women are being discriminated against in the inheritance process
- The discrepancy between men and women is especially visible in the rural areas
- Some cultural specifications, in the first place Muslim tradition are important factor in the way property and inheritance rights are being exercised

In our opinion the shortcomings can be addressed by taking the following steps:

**Reduce the collision between customary practices and the laws** by first, doing a detailed research on the points where tradition and religion negatively impact women's property and inheritance rights; publicize the research work and demand feedback; try to re-interpret the cultural codes in a manner that would provide an opportunity for opening towards the idea of women's rights (for example, going back to the basics of Islam as observed in the previous section of the analysis might result in alteration of the discourse among Muslims); as well, the questionable point of the Inheritance Law on the exclusion should be revised and adjusted to the European continental law;

**Overcome the lack of delivery on the executive side by**

a) *getting both women and men involved; as the top-down approach seems to be ineffective, institutions need to thrive for new forms of participatory actions; first listen to the women and then try to meet their demands; also, try to educate men about women rights and gender equality;*

b) *integration of the capacities; the potential stakeholders at this point are dispersed and not even aware of their overlapping interests; various governmental, non-governmental, judicial and market entities that touch upon women's rights, property rights, inheritance rights, family issues, land, housing, equal opportunities, affirmative actions need to be brought together in order to create new policies provide more effective policy execution;*

Overcome the **inferiority of women in rural areas** (as their situation is more urgent) by providing access to education, training, and to decision making on the ground level; provide easier access to the labour market; provide easier access to state institutions and programs by taking affirmative actions; provide opportunities for women's businesses and involvement in the market by supporting microcrediting or providing generic loans for women; **include men** in these processes - organize workshops for couples, groups comprised of both men and women etc.

Anticipate and act in time against the unfair customary practices by **providing mediation services**; assign trained judicial and law experts that would provide legal aid in cases where women's property and inheritance rights have been infringed;

**Bridge the "language" discrepancy**: introduce gender sensitive approaches on local level; lobby for the introduction of the gender sensitive language in the institutions on all levels; introduce gender aspect in schools; stimulate civic initiatives that would embrace gender aspect; educate local male leaders on gender.



# 5

## The Effects that Physical Infrastructure has on women's Productive Time in Rural areas

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# CONTENT

1.	<i>Introduction</i>	78
2.	<i>Problem description</i>	78
3.	<i>Methodological review</i>	80
4.	<i>Infrastructure and women in rural areas</i>	81
4.1	<i>Instead of ten minutes on the asphalt, half an hour on ground road!</i>	81
4.1.1	<i>Alternative or Public Transport</i>	81
4.2	<i>At school only until fourth grade?</i>	82
4.3	<i>Neither the child attends kindergarten, nor does the mother work.</i>	84
4.4	<i>There is electricity, but water supply not for everyone</i>	85
4.5	<i>Doctor's visit only as a final measure</i>	86
5.	<i>Conclusion - poor infrastructure unnecessary takes a lot of time to the women</i>	87
6.	<i>Recommendations</i>	88

## *1. Introduction*

"Equal opportunities mean equal participation of men and women in all areas of public and private sector, equal status and equal treatment in realization of all rights and developing individual potentials through the persons that contribute in social development, as well as equal benefits of the development's outcomes." This is the text of Article 4 of the Law on equal opportunities for men and women. However, the reality is completely different.

The infrastructure negatively influences the chances of women from rural areas to participate in public and private sector. Women cannot completely develop their individual potentials. Often women in rural areas, due to the bad and inefficient infrastructure, are put in unequal position with men.

This analysis aims to research the influence of the existing infrastructure over women's time in rural areas in Macedonia, to define positive and negative influence infrastructure has on women's time and to give recommendations how to overcome negative trends. In Macedonia, most of the 84 municipalities, even half of them according to certain findings, are rural. This analysis focuses on the rural areas in the municipalities of Strumica and Struga.

The analysis, depicts how the quality of 'infrastructure' relates to women's life and her everyday activities. The analysis focuses on few aspects of 'infrastructure', such as:

- Road infrastructure
- Educational infrastructure (access to schools and universities)
- Kindergartens as part of infrastructure
- Plumbing and electricity infrastructure (water and electrical power supply)
- Health infrastructure (access to primary health care facilities)

This analysis is the first analysis of this type done in Macedonia and directs to realistic and familiar problems that women from rural areas face. It determines that unserious approach towards these problems actually decreases the quality of life of women from the rural areas. Indirectly, the quality of the existing infrastructure over women's time in rural areas in Macedonia affects many uneducated and illiterate women, unemployed to take care of the family and children, and so on. What is most important, the analysis shows that for women from rural areas the poor quality of infrastructure is a big problem. Using such infrastructure takes too much of their time. Simply put there is inefficient infrastructure.

## *2. Problem description*

Using the infrastructure in the developing countries can be time consuming. This is important when one needs to an everyday life task but depends on the quality of the infrastructure. Using infrastructure of poor quality, citizens complete their everyday tasks more slowly. This problem is especially present in the rural areas.

Bad infrastructure in various countries is a direct factor for poor growth. If using the infrastructure is very time consuming, citizens and especially women cannot

escape poverty. A study made in Lesotho, in sub-Saharan Africa, evidences this. The study determines that improving the quality of the infrastructure, improving the access to water supply or transportation, would have positive effect on women decreasing poverty.<sup>1</sup>

An analysis conducted in Macedonia found out that due to poor quality of the infrastructure part of the women in some rural areas do not get employed. Not having a kindergarten in the neighborhood, they spend their time looking after the children. Furthermore, young girls do not continue their education because there is no school in their neighborhood, and to get to the nearest school they need a lot of time; a visit to a gynecologist sometimes can take whole day, sometimes two, because there is no ambulatory or gynecology practice in the neighborhood. Concrete examples are given further in the analysis.

Women from the rural areas throughout the world see the rate of investment in the infrastructure as a large problem. According to them, investments are very low and have little influence in saving their time using the infrastructure. Poor quality infrastructure has strong influence on many women deciding to migrate, or change their place of living.

According to a survey that the Centre for Research and Policy Making conducted, using a representative sample in April-May 2009, responding to the question - "What needs to be done for the population to stay in your municipality?" - 32% of the interviewed, most of them women, replied that improving the infrastructure is very important issue for the population to stay in the municipality. When to this number of respondents we add those who replied that improving the infrastructure is 'very important' and 'important', we get a clear indicator that large majority of the population (75.5%) is crucially interested to improve the infrastructure. Half of them are women. Detailed answers to this question are given in Table 1.

*Table 1. Answer: Improve infrastructural equipment*

Respondents	Male	Female	Total
Completely unimportant	4,1%	4%	8,5%
Not that important	7,5%	8%	15%
Fairly important	12%	11%	23%
Important	10,5%	9%	20%
Very important	14,5%	18%	32,5%

In the survey, the respondents answered to the question - "What part of the infrastructure should be improved in your place of living?" The answers are given in Table 2.

<sup>1</sup> Infrastructure influences whether poor women in Lesotho have time to earn money, Institute of Development Policy and Management University of Manchester



*Table 2. What part of the infrastructure should be improved in your place of living?*

What part of the infrastructure should be improved in your place of living?	
Refused to answer	47,5%
Road infrastructure	24,3%
Water supply/electrical power	15,8%
Education institutions	5,0%
Health institutions	4,7%
Other	1,8%
Do not know	0,9%

Although large number of respondents did not say what concretely needs to be improved in the infrastructure in their place of living, those who answered the question consider that there is the biggest need to improve the infrastructure that is directly or indirectly related to unnecessary long/slow completion of everyday tasks and obligations, i.e. certain quantity of time spent. For example, poor road infrastructure takes more time to get from one place to another. Not having educational and health institutions in the near neighborhood takes more time from the citizens to visit them, etc.

### ***3. Methodological review***

In the analysis, several research methods were used such as focus groups, interviews, statistical data, surveys and field data. The Centre for Research and Policy Making conducted two focus groups, with 14 members from the municipalities of Struga and Strumica. Focus groups consisted of women from different age groups and ethnicity. The most important to mention is that the focus groups members were representatives that live both in rural and urban areas, as well as having different matrimonial status. The aim was that they directly present the problem of poor infrastructure women face.

In these municipalities research was also conducted research to determine the capacities of the municipalities to improve infrastructure. The research was focused on the following issues:

1. Territory and population in the municipality
2. Access to road infrastructure and transportation
3. Access to water supply and electrical power
4. Access to schools, ambulatories, kindergartens, etc.

Additional data were gathered from representatives of two women's citizens associations that have prior experience in gender policy, with emphasis on rural areas. Additional data sources used in this analysis were also statistical and survey reports.

## 4. Infrastructure and women in rural areas

### 4.1 *Instead of ten minutes on the asphalt, half an hour on ground road!*

The road infrastructure, the conditions of the roads, is especially important element for the normal functioning of women in rural areas. Rural areas in Macedonia have poor road infrastructure and there are not many services available to the citizens of bigger cities. Hence, it is natural for the residents of rural areas to have the need to migrate to urban areas. It is crucial that the road infrastructure is of good quality so that its usage to is less time consuming. The travel time savings in the developed countries amount up to 80% of the total time savings of the overall infrastructure.<sup>2</sup> Thus, efficient and quality transport infrastructure is of great importance from the aspect of time savings.

Take, for example, municipality of Struga. The municipality is comprised of the town of Struga and another 26 surrounding villages. Residents of few villages around Struga use inefficient road infrastructure, as many roads have holes, or are not asphalted. Using such roads takes more time or requires driving special motor vehicles, jeeps, terrain vehicles, etc., which are more expensive than ordinary cars. This situation is prevalent with the roads leading to the villages of Kalishte, Teteishta, Zagrachani, Oktisi, Labunishta, Bidzhevo, etc.

Similar example is the municipality of Strumica and its 24 surrounding villages. There is asphalt road access to most of these villages, but still some villages are de facto cut from normal road traffic such as Belotino, Bajakovo and Barbarevo Here, as well, the only way to come/leave these villages is using special motor vehicles, jeeps, terrain vehicles, etc.

But not only bad roads are the problem women face when using them. Women from rural areas usually do not have driving license which makes them directly dependent on their husbands or the public transport, where available. For example, an average woman living in Strumica villages is either a housewife or unemployed and she does not have driving license. It is the same case with almost all women from rural areas throughout Macedonia. Only 2,4% of women living in the rural areas have a car. Unlike them, 67,9% of car owners in the rural areas are men.<sup>3</sup>

#### 4.1.1 Alternative or Public Transport

Public transport in rural areas exists in a form of taxi service or individually organized mini-buses or vans. The transport with mini-bus/van is organized in such a way that the driver waits for all passengers to come, to fill all available sits in the vehicle. Regular taxi service is faster than the mini-vans, but more expensive. It can often have negative effect on women as they decide to lose one day waiting for a mini-van in order not to take a taxi and pay a lot of money. A taxi service from Strumica to the nearest

<sup>2</sup> The Valuation of Travel Time Savings in Least Developed Countries: Theoretical and Empirical Challenges and Results From a Field Study/ Farhad Ahmet and Kirit G Vaidya/ Aston University Birmingham

<sup>3</sup> See Vesna Dimitrievska, Research: Gender concept in rural areas in the Republic of Macedonia, AWAM: Skopje, 2003, page 23.

village of Dabile costs 80 denars. Transport to the furthest village of Novo Selo costs 300 denars. In Struga, on the other hand, transport to the nearest village of Drslajce costs 40 denars, but to the furthest village one can only take a mini-van that costs 200 denars.

The problem with the unnecessary/too much time spent traveling appears when using alternative transport with mini-vans. Mostly, there is van transport two or three times to a village per a day and the van collects passengers on the way, which makes the travel very long. If one misses one van, the waiting period until the next one is very long. On the other hand, the same vans connect the villages only by certain time during the day. Usually, their service ends before sunset, and afterwards the villagers are left only with the taxi service which is (too) expensive. This is a common case where traffic development and road infrastructure determines the way of life of a woman. She has to organize her time according to the infrastructural potentials, and not according to their needs.

The transport is a problem to women, because in some places there are only two lines a day, actually two times a day to travel, in the morning and in the afternoon, but only to those destinations where the transporters organize transport. In some villages, people have to wait for a van to be filled so they could travel, i.e. there is no fixed departure and arrival time. The driver it waits until there are enough passengers to fill the van. Women depend a lot on the transport, they do not have driving license, nor have completed primary school, and they are 'functionally illiterate'.<sup>4</sup> Such poor quality road infrastructure and transport, takes much of the time of the rural woman.

#### *4.2 At school only until fourth grade?*

Many villages in Macedonia and especially in the region of Struga and Strumica have a school where there are lectures only for the classes from first to fourth grade. Then, are children from several villages make a joint class in a regional school. In order to continue their education, children go to the neighboring village, the one where there is a school where they can continue their education until eighth grade. Children walk to school to the neighboring villages. However, children continue their education in one of the neighboring villages only in the best case scenario. Actually, the education possibility for many children depends on the distance to the villages.

Namely, there are still villages where girls do not continue their education because the school where they can upgrade their education to a higher level is time wise speaking very distant from their home village, but also due to the local mentality and stereotypes (it is a shame for a girl to come back home alone, especially in winter when night falls earlier, fear that somebody seduces her, etc.). Women in rural areas have low rate of literacy, as a consequence of not having educational institutions for them to continue their education. If in their area there are no educational institutions of higher level, most often they do not continue their education. Partly as a consequence of this situation, out of the total number of illiterate people in Macedonia, two thirds are women. Here also, an important role plays the culture of living and the ex-

<sup>4</sup> Interview with Gjuner Nebiu, president of Women's citizens' organization 'Antiko', 10 August 2009, Skopje

isting stereotypes. When it comes to not having primary schools, in those cases parents do not let their daughters go to schools because it is far away from their place of living. The reason is the same with women from the rural areas that do not have secondary education.<sup>5</sup>

It is still early to evaluate the effects of the Law on Compulsory Secondary Education, but even primary education, although compulsory and on paper free of charge, generates many problems for the pupils. The main problem for the students from rural areas is the distance from the school when they should go to study to another village and the time it takes to get to that school. These are above all the main conditions on which it depends whether they would continue their education. For some of these children attending school takes much more time than to an average student from the rural areas and it brings into question their further education.

*“Three villages are in the neighborhood. Children walk to the main village, from all villages, (walk) for almost 20 minutes. However, there are cases where children, in order to come to school in Dabile, wake up at 5 or 6 in the morning, wait for the bus and are making a lot of efforts. For some children, classes end at 11 or 12 o’clock. After the classes they are left wandering around the streets and the village, because there is no way to go home at once, but they have to wait for the bus at 1 o’clock, because it is free of charge.”<sup>6</sup>*

Transport is a serious problem for them unless it is provided by the state, due to the distance of the villages and not having secondary school closer to their villages, where they could go without making any costs for transport and taking less time to get there.

*“Children have problem to get to the school, although it is free of charge and compulsory, because they do not have transport. Taxi drivers should have driven them for free, but the Government did not pay them, so they stopped driving the children. Some villages are 5 kilometers further, but some are up to 30 kilometers... For example, to Smolare, Novo Selo, Drvosek... Distance of the schools in the region of Strumica is a serious problem for the students to get to school, if the transport is not free for them. There was an example of dispersed secondary school class in Novo Selo, but it failed.”<sup>7</sup>*

This problem is especially emphasized in rural areas with primarily Muslim population. However, it has to be mentioned that big role in continuing the education until now were also the stereotypes for the position of women in rural households.

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5 Interview with Safka Todorovska, president of AWAM (Association of Women’s Associations of Macedonia), Skopje, 12 August 2009

6 Excerpt of a conversation with a student from the focus group in Strumica, 19 august 2009

7 Excerpt of a conversation with a student from the focus group in Strumica, 19 august 2009

### *4.3 Neither the child attends kindergarten, nor does the mother work.*

Taking care and looking after the children in the rural municipalities is an obligation which is completely done by women. Besides all other household duties, it is her job to look after the children. Not having kindergartens in the rural areas is a serious problem that mostly affects women's time. It is impossible to save any time, because she is completely dedicated to the household duties.

In the rural areas in Strumica and Struga municipalities, there is not a single kindergarten. The only kindergartens that could be found are located in the town. Taking children to kindergarten from the rural areas to the town is equally time consuming as looking after them at home. In practice it means that children stay at home. Majority of the families in the rural areas, 41,5%, leave the care for the children to the mother. In 47,7% of the families it is a joint obligation to mother and father, while in only 1,6% of the families in the rural areas this obligation falls to the father.<sup>8</sup>

*"There is not one kindergarten in the rural areas in Strumica. If they have grandmothers, grandmothers will look after them, if not, the mother will look after them. If one child is older, it will look after the younger one. In these areas, looking after the children is 100% women's obligation. The woman will take care of children's nutrition, as well as getting them ready for school, and completing her other duties."*<sup>9</sup>

The same situation could be found in almost all other rural regions in Macedonia, as it is in Strumica and Struga rural regions. Municipality of Tearce is one of the bigger rural municipalities in Macedonia. There are 13 habitats/villages at its territory. Brezno, Varvara, Glogi, Dobroste, Jelosnik, Lesok, Neprosteno, Neraste, Odri, Prvce, Prsove, Slatino and Tearce, and there is no kindergarten in neither of them. Closest kindergarten to the villagers from these villages is in Tetovo.

*"Not having a kindergarten deprives the women the right to get employed. She has to stay at home to look after the children. For example, women in Tearce mostly stay at home and look after their children, since the nearest kindergarten is located in Tetovo. The case is the same with women from other rural areas. Not having adequate infrastructure both directly and indirectly affects women's quality of life. As a consequence to not having adequate infrastructure, as well as to local stereotypes, men are more engaged in profit work, while women are those who stay at home and do the household duties and look after the family."*<sup>10</sup>

<sup>8</sup> See Vesna Dimitrievska, Research: Gender concept in rural areas in the Republic of Macedonia, AWAM: Skopje, 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Excerpt of a conversation with a student from the focus group in Strumica.

<sup>10</sup> Interview with Gjuner Nebiu, president of Women's citizens' organization 'Antiko', 10 August 2009, Skopje

Opening kindergartens or children's day care centers in the rural areas will have large and positive effect over time saving for women in these areas.

#### *4.4 There is electricity, but water supply not for everyone*

Water supply in the rural areas in the Republic of Macedonia is still a big problem in many of municipalities. This as other types of infrastructure negatively affects women's time. Not having water, or good quality water, significantly changes the quality of life of these women and at the same time unnecessary consumes large part of their time during the day to get water. The problem is even bigger if the family lives in a village located higher in the mountains.

*"I live in a village where my house is located a little higher and farther from other houses. It happened to me that there is no water at my house. This situation is very difficult and stressful. Whole burden falls to us. To spend the whole day without water is a difficult thing... Men come home and look to find everything as it should be. It is a bit odd that in other houses in the village there is water, and not in our house, but we think it's due to the water pressure. We have addressed the local government and they recommended that we buy better hydrophores."*<sup>11</sup>

Lack of water supply mostly affects the woman, because she is mostly in charge of household duties. Women need much more time to complete their household tasks because they need to use water. In 87,1% of the families living in the rural areas in Macedonia, food preparation is women's duty, and taking care of the hygiene is also a duty which falls on the burden of women.<sup>12</sup> Not having adequate water supply access affects the time necessary to complete these tasks.

*"I have water supply problem all day long. Water is an all day necessity, for cooking, washing, cleaning. Without water, not only that I suffer, but also I take from the children's time because they have to help me too. Thus I cannot complete my tasks. I cannot complete the tasks properly, not even the cleaning could be done right without water. I don't have time for myself at all..."*<sup>13</sup>

Lack of water supply is especially big problem for the women in agricultural families. They lose a lot of time at home, but also for watering the field. Women in the agricultural families are more burdened with duties, because working in the field they have the same duties as men, but at home they have many more. Those fields that cannot be watered through irrigation systems are watered with pumps and hydrophores. Rarely the agricultural workers have "drop by drop" irrigation systems,

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<sup>11</sup> Excerpt of a conversation with a student from the focus group in Struga.

<sup>12</sup> See Vesna Dimitrievska, Research: Gender concept in rural areas in the Republic of Macedonia, AWAM: Skopje, 2003.

<sup>13</sup> Interview with a woman from the village of Bogovica, Struga, 19 August 2009. In/to this village there is no water supply.

because it is very expensive. Watering the field with hydrophores takes much more time than watering through irrigation system. One of the agriculture women in Dabile commented: "I watered the field with pumps and it took me a lot of time, because with the irrigation system it goes faster... I watered even at moonlight, I stayed up all night to finish the job."<sup>14</sup>

Unlike water supply, electrical power supply according to the interviewed in this analysis is on a satisfactory level. According to them, there are short and occasional interruptions of electrical power that do not affect their work much.

#### *4.5 Doctor's visit only as a final measure*

Not having ambulatory or private health care practice in their village, affects women from rural areas to have very little knowledge of general health care issues and they visit the doctor only if there is a very urgent health need. Prevention check-ups for these women are almost non-existing, because going to the doctor takes a lot of time, and on the other hand generates financial burdens as well. Due to their poor material condition, regular doctor's examination is a luxury for these women.

*"Women from surrounding villages in Krusevo have to go to Prilep because Krusevo, although a town, does not have gynecology practice. It costs a lot of money and time. Transport is a problem because in some places there are only two lines a day, in the morning and in the afternoon and only for those destinations where the transport is organized. In some villages, people have to wait for a van to be 'organized' so they could travel, i.e. there is no fixed departure and arrival time, but the driver waits until there are enough passengers to fill the van. It can also depart much earlier[than according to the departure schedule]. They visit gynecologist and ambulatory service only if it is very necessary, they do not go to the doctor preventively, because there is no practice in their neighborhood."*<sup>15</sup>

Not having health care institutions in many villages makes women from the rural areas unequal to other women in realization of some of their rights guaranteed by the law. For example, the women have legal right to a free examination and early detection of breast cancer. But the examination for these women is far from free. The visit to the doctor would cost a lot of time and money because gynecology practices are usually located only in the towns.

In those places where there are local primacy health care units, they are not open every day or full time. In case when the village primary health care unit is closed, patients are forced to travel to the nearest practice even for the smallest need, and it can often be travelling from village to town. However, big problem from the citizens in the rural areas is that these primary health care units do not have ambulance vehicles nor medically equipped vehicles, so emergency cases are transported either by personal cars or taxis, or they wait a long time for the vehicle to come from the

<sup>14</sup> Interview with woman agriculturer in the village of Dabile, Strumica, 20 August 2009

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Gjuner Nebiu, president of Women's citizens' organization 'Antiko'



city hospital, which often affects person's health condition when in need of emergency intervention or care.

*"There is no gynecologist, only general practitioner who works in shortened working hours, so that in this direction the conditions are disastrous. For an ordinary control we wait for days, and let's not talk about some simple injection that is not available at the local ambulatory. For something small we are supposed to go to the town hospital. There is no transport vehicle - we have to take care of it ourselves. Imagine someone ill what could do in such situation."*<sup>16</sup>

One visit to a gynecologist can take a whole day to the women from rural areas and it costs them a lot of money. Regarding that they depend a lot on public transport, if their husband does not have a car, then they do not have an option to travel to the town.

*"Gynecologist practice is far away from the women living in the villages and they usually take the taxi to visit it. It costs 300-400 denars in one direction. For one check-up they would spend about 1000 denars and lose one hour travelling. And that is only for the trip. One doctor's check-up could take even more time if one decides to take the van. The van waits for passengers. It waits to fill all seats with passengers so that it departs for Strumica. A whole van full of people. There is no time schedule for the vans. It depends on passengers and private arrangements. But from the farthest villages, there are vans that departure in several periods of the day and for the women from their parts, it is the only way to come to the town. Problem is that they go only until 3 p.m. After 3 p.m. there is no van transport, and the taxi is quite expensive, it could cost up to 500 denars to go to Staro Konjare, for instance. Also, a big disadvantage is not having emergency vehicles in the rural areas, at least two vehicles. Current emergency service either does not cover our area, or cannot make it on time."*<sup>17</sup>

## **5. Conclusion - poor infrastructure unnecessary takes a lot of time to the women**

Women from the rural areas face serious problems of 'infrastructural character'. The analysis determined that not having adequate infrastructure, takes a lot of time of these women in their everyday living and completing their family duties. Time savings as a result to good infrastructure in large part of the rural areas are almost impossible.

The main problems pointed out by the representatives from the rural areas that participated in the research are given in the analysis. Thus, the general problem

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<sup>16</sup> Excerpt of a conversation with a student from the focus group in Struga.

<sup>17</sup> Interview with woman agriculturer in the village of Dabile, Strumica



to all is the poor quality of the **road infrastructure**. It does not connect all villages well, and especially represents a problem in the connection with the villages located in mountainous area. Also in many parts, road infrastructure is old and full of holes. Using it takes much more time and requires urgent modernization and renovation.

Difficult access to educational institutions for the women in the rural areas makes them functionally illiterate. Most of the elderly women from these regions **have barely completed primary school**, and most of them are with so called 'forth degree' having finished only four grades of elementary school. As a consequence to not having schools in their or neighboring villages, even today there are still examples when young girls do not continue their primary or secondary school.

A big problem for the women who live in the village with their family is **not having a kindergarten**. They must be devoted to the children all day and do not have much time for other obligations, except for some household duty.

**Water supply is a significant problem** to the women doing agriculture and the women from mountainous villages. They need much more time to supply water before completing other household duties. Regarding that many of the household duties are related to water use, the time necessary to complete certain task is much longer than the usual one.

Women from the rural areas visit **gynecologist only if the problem is serious**. They go to prevention or regular check-ups very little because the closest gynecology practice is far away. Actually, it could be even said that the inefficient public transport and limited working hours of the village ambulatories and minimal staff are a threat to their health.

## 6. Recommendations

Having in mind women's problems in the rural areas, the basic recommendations how to come to timely efficient infrastructure refer to **improving the infrastructure** in their regions. Only with better quality infrastructure they would have the possibility of saving some of their time.

The general recommendations are:

*Improving the quality of the roads* *Improved road infrastructure will enable faster and easier access to the women from rural areas to the towns. This means not only building new roads, but also modernization and maintenance of the local road infrastructure that connects villages to towns, as well as the villages in between.*

*Establishing public transport for the rural municipalities.* *There must be defined detailed and precise public transport in all rural municipalities. Thus, women would not lose time waiting a van to be filled with passengers. Precise public transport with strict departure schedules will help women from the rural areas to organize their time better and save any time losses in public transport.*

*Opening dispersed classes for primary school students and opening dormitories for secondary school students.* *Education of the children from the rural areas*

*in the towns is a burden for rural families. It is simpler that this issue is regulated by an educational strategy for the children from the rural areas and the time losses that children face are taken into consideration.*

**Efficient transport from the villages to the regional schools.**

*Opening dispersed regional kindergartens or daycare centers for the children in the rural areas. Women from rural areas, mothers or grandmothers, lose a lot of their time when there are little children in the house. Opening dispersed kindergartens or daycare centers at regional/rural level will decrease time losses for these groups of women and will enable them to get employed or do other activities which are now impossible to complete.*

*Establishing water supply system to all villages. Stable and constant water supply system will decrease the time losses of the rural women in their homes.*

*Strengthening the capacities in local or regional ambulatory practices. Local practices have to have precise working hours and offer constant service to the citizens of the rural areas. If they work like this, there will be a smaller need for the women from the rural areas to travel to the town only to visit a doctor.*

*Opening gynecology practices in the regional ambulatories or occasional, but regular visits by the gynecologists to the local and regional practices. In none of the Macedonian villages, and sometimes even at the municipality level there are gynecology practices and women lose much time travelling to the nearest such practice. They even decide not to visit gynecologist at all. Opening regional practices or occasional visits to gynecologists will save much of women's time from the rural areas, when it comes to visiting gynecologist and will preventively affect out of the aspect of improving women's health in the rural areas.*

## Annex 1 - Real needs to improve the infrastructure

To the question 'What policy changes would you make in your municipalities?' women from 4 rural municipalities in Macedonia answered that every second change they would do is of infrastructural character. Only to illustrate, the table below shows the changes that women would like to make in their rural municipalities. Covered were the municipalities of Lipkovo, Krusevo (v. of Borino, v. of Sazdevo, v. of Jakrenovo, v. of Belushino), Tearce and Mogila (v. of Musinci).

*Table 3. Policy changes women would like to make in their municipalities*

Lipkovo	Krusevo (v. of Borino, v. of Sazdevo, v. of Jakrenovo, v. of Belushino)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase the number of women in politics</li> <li>- Improve the infrastructure in the municipality</li> <li>- Arrangement of public areas and parks</li> <li>- Better and more equipped schools</li> <li>- Free university education</li> <li>- Better health care within their communities</li> <li>- Dentist to be present within the practice</li> <li>- Increase the number of middle class in the high school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Open a kindergarten</li> <li>- Refurbish the school</li> <li>- Establish pensioners' hospice</li> <li>- Improve the water supply and sewage system</li> <li>- To have regular transport</li> <li>- Raising women's awareness to educate their daughters</li> <li>- To establish information centre</li> <li>- To attend lectures in health care, focused on reproduction health</li> <li>- Open ambulatory practice</li> </ul>
Tearce	Mogila (v. of Musinci)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase the number of women in management organs</li> <li>- Improve the hygiene</li> <li>- Open kindergarten</li> <li>- Open women's café</li> <li>- Arrange the parks</li> <li>- Establish pensioners' hospice</li> <li>- Build pedestrian lanes and bicyclelanes</li> <li>- Open a cinema</li> <li>- Build a pool</li> <li>- Organize lectures in health care, focused on gynecology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regular water supply</li> <li>- Determining a landfill site</li> <li>- Need of adequate space for social activities</li> <li>- Refurbish the school</li> </ul>



# 6

## Girls in secondary education: How to increase the enrollment?

Author:  
Ana Mickovska- Raleva MPhil

# CONTENT

1.	<i>Introduction</i>	94
2.	<i>The Macedonian context</i>	95
3.	<i>Analysis of the situation</i>	95
3.1.	<i>Enrollment of girls into secondary education</i>	95
3.2.	<i>Transition throughout secondary school</i>	97
4.	<i>Reasons for low enrollment into secondary school affecting girls</i>	98
4.1.	<i>Traditional norms (related to ethnic and religious affiliation)</i>	98
4.2.	<i>Infrastructure</i>	100
4.3.	<i>Financial constraints</i>	101
4.4.	<i>Lack of knowledge of the language of the majority group</i>	103
5.	<i>National policies for gender equality in education and their implementation</i>	103
6.	<i>Recommendations</i>	105

## 1. Introduction

One of the main UNESCO's goals refers to eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005 and achieving gender equality in education by 2015. Although Macedonia is generally considered as a country that provides equal educational opportunities for men and women, it still faces inequalities when it comes to the inclusion of girls into secondary education. This topic becomes increasingly important with the provision of making secondary school mandatory. Hence, this analysis is focused on detecting the main setbacks for equal inclusion of girls into secondary education and examining the mechanisms for attaining greater gender equality.

### Benefits of higher inclusion of women in education

*"...there is no tool for development more effective than the education of girls."*

*Kofi A. Annan*

When talking about the gender inequalities in the education system, traditionally the girls are the ones suffering from lower inclusion although the gains of their greater inclusion in education are undisputed. A report developed by UNICEF<sup>1</sup> outlines the main results of a variety of studies that emphasize the benefits of greater involvement of girls into education, and concludes that female education is reflected into several development indicators:

1. **Enhanced economic development.** Studies show that regions that invested over the long term in girls' education tend to show higher levels of economic development.
2. **Education for the next generation.** Educated girls that become mothers are much more likely to continue the circle of education by sending their children to school.
3. **The multiplier effect.** Education has an impact on areas beyond learning, extending a positive influence into most aspects of a child's life, such as improving their health habits, and becoming less vulnerable to abuse and violence.
4. **Healthier families.** Societies with educated girls tend to be better balanced in terms of family size and family resources. Hence, children of more educated women tend to be better nourished and get sick less often.<sup>2</sup>

It can be concluded that gender equality in education is not just a women's issue,<sup>3</sup> but a development issue. However, it is also acknowledged that resolving the situation with greater inclusion of girls into education takes specific measures, different from the activities for increasing the overall transition through education.

<sup>1</sup> The State of the World's Children 2004: Girls, education and development, UNICEF, 2003

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, p. 17-19

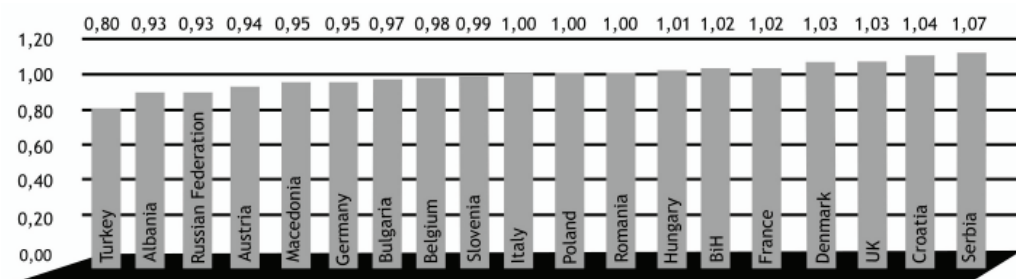
<sup>3</sup> Education in the 21st Century: Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth, UNGEI, 2009

## 2. The Macedonian context

The Macedonian society is among the better standing ones when it comes to gender equality in primary education. However, when compared to other European (and even CEE) countries, Macedonia is in the lower range concerning gender parity in secondary education (Graph 1). According to the UNESCO Institute for Statistics, the **gender parity index<sup>4</sup>** in primary education in 2007 was 1.00, in upper secondary 0.95 and in higher 1.27. This implies that the two genders are most equally represented in primary education, in secondary the boys slightly outnumber girls, while in tertiary is vice versa.

At first glance, this situation does not appear very concerning, however, since the secondary education became mandatory from the academic year 2008/09, the expectation is to have 100% enrollment out of the students that have completed primary school and hence - an equal gender representation. However, this is still not the case. Although this policy has generally raised the enrollment level, it has not affected girls to the same extent as boys.

Graph 1. Gender Parity index in secondary education, 2007



Source: UNESCO Institute for Statistics

## 3. Analysis of the situation

### 3.1. Enrollment of girls into secondary education

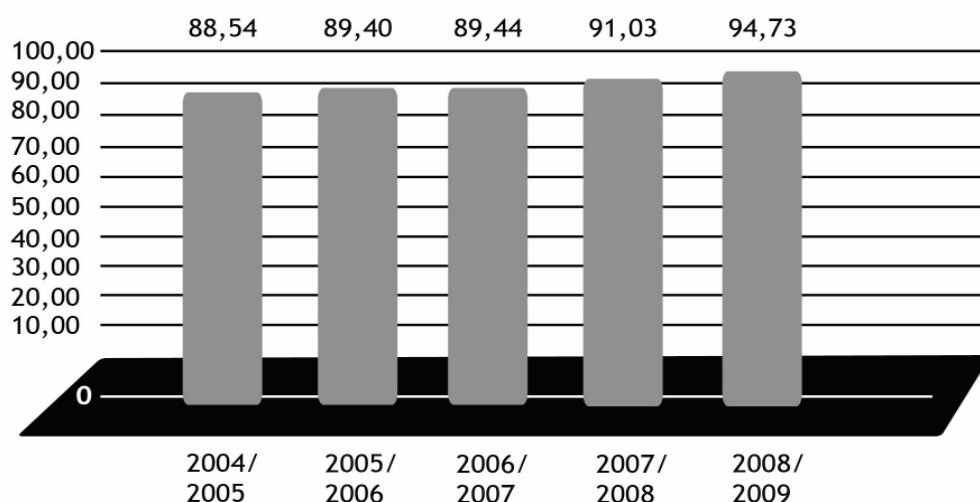
The policy of mandatory secondary education has generally resulted in overall increase in student enrollments by almost 4% (Graph 2), but while the increase within boys resulted in about 100% enrollment, out of the total population of girls that have completed primary school, only about 89% have continued to secondary (Graph 3).

<sup>4</sup> ratio between the female and the male rates (F/M), where: GPI below 1 means disparity in favour of boys, GPI = 1 means parity (the male and female indicators are equal), GPI above 1 means disparity in favour of girls or women



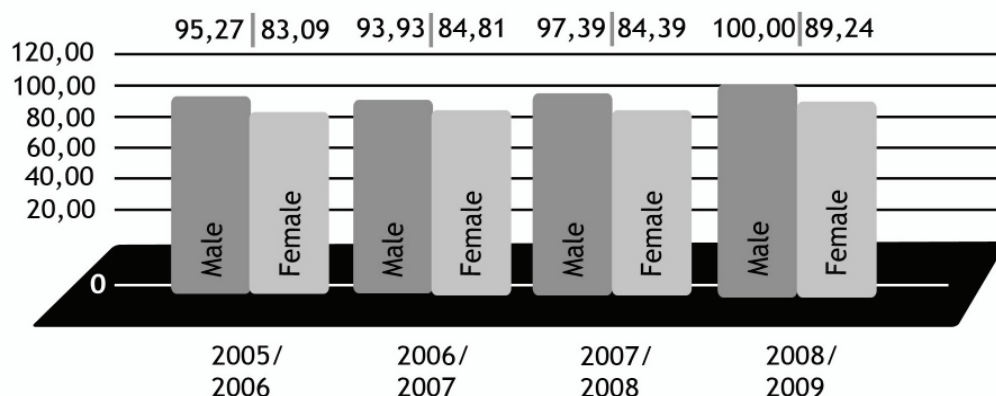
## 6 Girls in secondary education: How to increase the enrollment?

Graph 2. Percentage of students enrolled into secondary school (out of the ones that have completed primary) 2004/5-2008/9



Source: State Statistical Office, Schools and students at the beginning and the end of the school year, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; authors' calculations

Graph 3. Percentage of male and female students enrolled into secondary school (out of the ones that have completed primary) 2005-2008



Source: State Statistical Office, Schools and students at the beginning and the end of the school year, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008; authors' calculations

These numbers imply that the provision of mandatory secondary education in its first year of implementation did not have a 100% impact on girls' enrollment. The question is - who are these 11% of girls that did not continue to secondary school and what are the reasons for the termination of their compulsory education. These issues are going to be further explored in the analysis through examining the national context but also focusing on two case-study municipalities - Struga and Strumica.

In Strumica (and the neighboring municipalities: Vasilevo, Bosilovo and Novo

Selo), during the academic 2008/09 year, 123 children were registered by the State Education Inspectorate as not continuing from primary to secondary education. 81 of them were male and 42 female, which indicates that the gender parity in these municipalities is in favor of females. They mostly live in rural areas around Strumica, but some also come from the Turkish area ('Tursko maalo') in the town of Strumica.<sup>5</sup>

In Struga, on the other hand, 122 students have not continued into secondary education in 2008/09, which is about 10% of the graduated eight-graders. About two-thirds of them are female and come from the rural areas around Struga.<sup>6</sup>

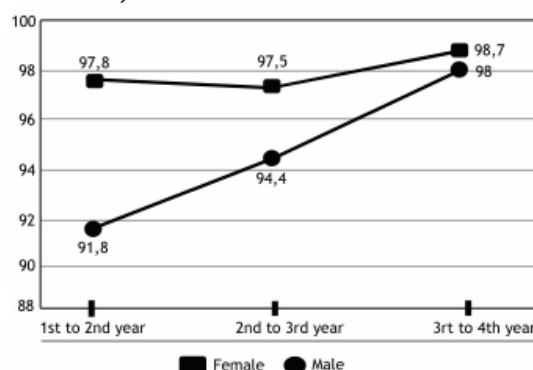
The data point out to an interesting trend which is probably influenced by the socio-economic and ethnic composition of the municipalities. Namely, Strumica is one of the most developed agricultural areas, in which children from young age get involved into the family's farming activities. Male children are more frequently utilized as unpaid family workers than females; hence they are more needed for the family's income generation which prevents some of them to continue education.

Struga, on the other hand is a municipality mostly populated by Muslim communities (primarily Albanian, but also Turkish), the most traditional of which have a tendency to wed the female children quite early, usually after completing primary school. Hence, these girls are unable to continue to secondary school, and often do not even consider these to be an option for them.

### 3.2. *Transition throughout secondary school*

Interestingly, while girls from certain social and ethnic groups enroll less into secondary school, once they do, they have higher transition rate than boys and lower dropout rates. Hence, contrary to the belief stated in the National Action Plan for Gender Equality, the main issue is the enrollment of girls into school, while the transition through secondary school is a lesser problem.

*Graph 4. Transition rates of girls and boys throughout secondary education (2006/07 - 2007/08)*



*Source: State Statistical Office, Schools and students at the beginning and the end of the school year 2007, 2008, authors' calculations*

<sup>5</sup> State Education Inspectorate-Strumica

<sup>6</sup> State Education Inspectorate-Struga

*\*Note: The graph includes data on girls and boys that have enrolled into one school year in 2006/07 and continued to the next one in 2007/08*

Females less frequently terminate their schooling compared to males. The data indicates that once enrolled into secondary school girls have better prospects of completing their education. Hence, the main efforts should be towards encouraging the transition of girls from primary to secondary school.

#### ***4. Reasons for low enrollment into secondary school affecting girls***

Girls are not always affected by the same reasons for not enrolling into secondary schools as boys. Certain social and economic aspects are differently reflected on girls, mostly as a result of the patriarchal norms still dominant among many families. These aspects are examined in more detail below.

##### ***4.1. Traditional norms (related to ethnic and religious affiliation)***

Many studies show that socially excluded groups (such as non-majority groups) are often less likely to send their daughters to school and more likely to allow them to drop out early compared with their sons.<sup>7</sup>

This situation can be noticed among the traditional muslim non-majority population in Macedonia. While the percentage of girls completing primary education during the last 3-4 years is about 48 and there are no distinctive variations among girls from different ethnicities; the case with secondary education is different. Females are less represented in secondary school, especially when it comes to girls from traditionally muslim communities (e.g. Albanian, Turkish, Roma). Though their representation in secondary school has risen during the past 7-8 years, it is still below the percentage of males (Table 1).

*Table 1. % of girls in secondary school according to ethnicity*

	Macedonian	Albanian	Turkish	Roma
1999/2000	51	41,1	36,8	39,8
2000/2001	50,8	42,1	38	43,3
2001/2002	50,7	43,8	42,3	37,4
2006/2007	49,7	42,0	40,7	44,4
2007/2008	49,7	44,3	41,8	46,4

*Source: State Statistical Office: Schools and students at the end of the school year, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2008, 2009*

<sup>7</sup> The Double Disadvantage of Gender and Social Exclusion in Education, M. E. Lockheed in *Girls' Education in the 21st Century in Gender Equality, Empowerment, and Economic Growth* M. Tembon and L. Fort (Eds.)

The situation is also concerning when it comes to the completion of secondary school, especially for Roma girls. Specifically, only about one third of Roma children that complete secondary education are female (Table 2).

*Table 2. % of girls completing secondary school according to ethnicity*

	2002/03	2006/07	2007/08
Macedonian	51.1	50,0	50.2
Albanian	40.8	43.3	44.6
Turkish	41.9	41.2	41.7
Roma	34.2	35.1	35.8

*Source: State Statistical Office: Schools and students at the end of the school year, 2003, 2008, 2009*

The traditional norms these girls face, which restrain them from enrolling and/or completing secondary school are intertwined, but the following are the most dominant ones:

**- Tradition of early marriage**

Although most of the traditional muslim communities have abandoned the custom of early marriage, in some partially isolated rural or suburban communities, this is still a common practice. The girls usually marry after completing primary school. Since the responsibilities of married women do not leave much space for other activities and married women are not supposed to have contact with other men, they do not continue into secondary school. The marriage also comes with the responsibility to have children and this limits the possibility for enrollment even more (Case Study 1).

### **CASE STUDY 1**

#### *A Wife and Mother instead of a Student*

'The sixteen year old Anka A. is been living in her husband's house for a while. She is planning to start a life with him after the wedding planed in July. From some time ago she perceives herself as a good wife and mother, and would not want to ruin the age-old Roma tradition of early marriage. But Anka still looks like a little girl. One year ago, what she completed the primary education, she has terminated her schooling. She says that she does not care about school, and the only thing she would like to learn is to be a hair-dresser.

Her female peers face a similar destiny, when deciding to marry quite young. They terminate the schooling process, which could be a visa to achieve something more in life.

*Source: Mandatory secondary education is still a utopia, Globus Magazine, No.62, 24.06.2008*

### - Belief that girls do not need education in their everyday life

The belief that a woman primarily needs to be a good housewife and for that she does not need to have a secondary school diploma is still common among some traditional communities. While men need to be the breadwinners in the family and the education increases the prospects of a better job, a woman's role is to stay at home and take care of the household duties.

### - Concern allowing adolescent girls to go to school with males

At the beginning of secondary school girls are also entering adolescence which comes with a need for relationships with the opposite sex. However, in the mentioned communities romantic and sexual interactions with the opposite sex are strictly forbidden before a girl is married and going to school in the adolescent years may incite these types of relationships. Hence, parents are concerned that the girl might be seduced from the older male students and do something inappropriate (Case study 2). Some girls tend to drop out from secondary school since they are not comfortable learning in a community with males.<sup>8</sup>

#### CASE STUDY 2

#### *Schooling is not necessary, a good marriage is more important*

Blerta from the village Koroishta near Struga has completed primary education in her village. She was a regular student, although her school achievement was lower. She lives in a family with a single mother and 3 siblings. Her mother first says that Blerta did not continue her education because of financial problems and problems with the transportation. However, she afterwards admits that the girl should not continue with her education, even if there was a secondary school nearby. She is afraid that Blerta could be seduced by boys in the school, which is considered to be shameful for the family. She believes that the education would not be necessary in her life, and the best thing for her would be to marry and begin a family life.

The family has received a court notification that they would need to pay a fine for not enrolling into secondary school, but the mother admits that they do not have the means to pay it.

### 4.2. Infrastructure

Girls that live in distant rural areas encounter difficulties related to the school proximity, which are more prominent for them than for males. Secondary schools for them are not easily approachable because they need to travel long distances to the school or stay in a dormitory (Case study 3). Furthermore, for some traditional

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Sadudin Sadiki, Psychologist from the Technical school in Gostivar, 1.06.2009

muslim families, staying in a dormitory is not perceived as a valid option, since it is not perceived as appropriate for adolescent women to mix with men.

### CASE STUDY 3

#### *Limited transportation opportunities limit the access to school*

Hajrie is a girl from the village Sedlarevo near Tetovo. She was one of the best students in her primary school, which was located in her home village. However, despite hers and her parents' wish she could not enroll into secondary school because the village she lives in is located in a mountenous area which is difficult to approach, especially in winter. Hence, there is not organised transportation by the MoES from the village to Tetovo.

The problem is enhanced by the fact that in Tetovo there is no dormitory for secondary school students, which means that these children would have to travel to school every day. The family is additionally aggravated with the high fines they are supposed to pay.

The state should first see the conditions people live in and then set the fines.

*Hajrie's mother*

### *4.3. Financial constraints*

Traditionally, the socio-economic status of families is considered as one of the main factors influencing enrollment and transition through secondary school. However, the financial problems differently influence male and female children, depending on the belief on the importance of education. A family with unfavourable financial situation would more rather send the male child to secondary school than the female one. Females typically have more needs concerning finances – they want new clothes if they enroll into school and are more sensitive if being segregated on the basis of their social status and physical appearance (see Case study 4). In addition, it is a common belief that the opportunities for marrying into a family with better economic conditions are greater for females than males.

The analyses on the differences in enrollment among girls and boys with socio-different economic status are rare, and the existing research does not lead to clear conclusions. According to the annual UNDP analyses UNDP <sup>9</sup> (Table 3), the situation is changing. While the survey conducted in 2007 indicated that children from poorer families experience a 10% less enrollment into secondary school compared to those from non-poor families, in 2008 this difference was 2%. The social differences in 2007 were the most prominent when girls were concerned, while in 2008 this was not the case.

<sup>9</sup> People-Centred Analyses, UNDP march 2008 and People-Centred Analyses, UNDP

## 6 Girls in secondary education: How to increase the enrollment?

*Table 3. Gross rate<sup>10</sup> of enrollment in secondary education by gender and poverty status (2007 and 2008)*

	Boys	Girls	Total
2007			
Non-poor	90%	82%	86%
Poor	84%	69%	76%
Total	88%	78%	83%
2008			
Non-poor	87%	88%	87%
Poor	85%	85%	85%
Total	86%	87%	87%

*Source: People-Centred Analyses, UNDP march 2008 and march 2009 (data are received on the basis of a field research)*

Note: the data should be carefully analyzed because of the high number of contacted households that refused to be interviewed

### CASE STUDY 4

#### *Going to school takes more than just money for books and transportation*

Maca lives in a village near Strumica. She has completed primary school in the nearby village but has not continued into secondary school. Although she was not a very good student at primary school, her wish was to continue to secondary to study fashion (Textile school). However, her family is rather poor and lives on a welfare assistance. They have calculated the expenses for enrolling her into secondary school and concluded that they would not be able to cover them.

The family is aware that certain expenses are covered by the Ministry, but there are others that are left to the family (e.g. clothing, school materials, school excursions, textbooks etc.). Maca would like to go to school, but provided that she has new clothes and other things children her age have (e.g. mobile phone). Otherwise, she would feel segregated because of her social situation.

<sup>10</sup> Percentage of children of secondary school age enrolled into secondary school

#### *4.4. Lack of knowledge of the language of the majority group*

Girls from non-majority communities are more prone to low primary school achievement if the school they go to does not have instruction in their mother tongue, since they have less experience with languages outside of their immediate community as opposed to boys. Hence, some do not enroll because of the concern that they won't be able to complete their schooling, and the money the family would spend on this would be spent in vain.

### *5. National policies for gender equality in education and their implementation*

The issue of gender equality in education has been raised in several strategic documents. However, none of the below mentioned policy documents or institutions are specifically concerned with gender equality in secondary education, but within the wider issues of gender equality and/or education.

#### **1. Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women<sup>11</sup>**

The Law has been carried in 2006 and consists of provisions on the gender mainstreaming aspects in several areas, including education. Equal education of men and women is considered as a necessary precondition for enabling both sexes to equally and actively participate in the social life. Hence, it is the role of the educational institutions to provide a system of measures to provide equal treatment to men and women, especially when it comes to access to education. (Article 10)

#### **2. Law on Secondary Education<sup>12</sup>**

The Law on Secondary Education states that everyone has a right to secondary education under equal conditions and prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender, race, national and social origin etc.

#### **3. National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2007-2012)<sup>13</sup>**

The relevant stakeholders have prepared a five-year National Action Plan for gender equality, which also includes education-related issues. Specifically, the third strategic goal of the Action Plan is: **Increased inclusion and decreased dropout rate of girls from the non-majority rural communities**. Part of the activities predicted for achieving this goal include:

- Preparing an analysis on the reasons and inclusion of girls from non-majority and rural communities at all educational levels.

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11 Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women, Official Gazette of R.Macedonia, 66/06

12 Law on Secondary Education, Official Gazette of R.Macedonia, 29/2002

13 National Action Plan for Gender Equality (2007-2012), Skopje, May, 2007, p.36



## 6 Girls in secondary education: How to increase the enrollment?

- Conducting an intensive campaign in the ethnic communities (especially the Roma and Albanian community) directed towards higher inclusion in the education.
- Conducting an analysis regarding the respect of the legal provision for mandatory secondary education
- Activities for educating parents and/or guardians on the need for education
- Conducting activities for sensitization, education and inclusion of teachers in active policies for reducing dropout rates

The institutions responsible for implementing the action plan include: MoES, MTSP, Ministry of Agriculture, ULSG, The Macedonian Parliament, BDE, Citizens' associations; and the main organ responsible for coordination is the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy.

However, despite the good intentions, the proposed actions have not been realized. One of the reasons lays in the insufficiently defined specific responsibilities of the concerned parties. The budgetary constraints are additional restrictive factors.

### 4. Committees for Equal Opportunities

The Law on Equal Opportunities for Men and Women (Article 13) predicts mandatory assignment of a person - **coordinator for implementing the equal opportunity policies in the relevant ministries**. The coordinators are responsible for preparing an annual report for their work to the Ministry of Labor. Still, the analyses regarding their work<sup>14</sup> point out to several problems which are in the way of implementing the gender equality policies (e.g. majority of other functions, insufficient experience in the area of gender equality and mainstreaming, have not been included in the development of the Action plan and do not believe to have the mandate on implementing the activities).

**Committees for equal opportunities** have also been established at the level of municipalities. However, even though the case-study municipalities - Struga and Strumica have established such committees, the interviews conducted revealed that their representatives do not consider the gender aspect of the secondary school enrollment as much important, as they believe that this problem in their municipalities is not gender-related. Hence, they have not taken or predicted activities for overcoming the specific obstacles certain groups of young girls face when it comes to secondary school enrollment.<sup>15</sup>

In addition, the interviews with **representatives of the education sector** in the two municipalities also indicated that they do not perceive the low enrollment as being partially determined by gender. They said that the gender has nothing to do with the low enrollment and that it is primarily a financial and social problem.

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14 - Report on the condition determined and recommendations for further development and cooperation of the coordinators for equal opportunities in the frames of Ministries, Project: Building capacities for inclusion of the gender perspective in the policy making, V.Jovanova, Z.Shijacki, MTSP, 2008

15 Interview with Lulzime Zulalu, President of the Committee for Equal Opportunities in Struga, 21.08.2009; Interview with Boris Dimitriev, Coordinator for Equal Opportunities in Strumica, 21.08.2009

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It can be concluded that the policies are in place and the relevant laws and institutions have been established. The laws have been carried, but there is lack of sensitivity for the issue on behalf of the stakeholders. Apart from acknowledging the problematic issues regarding gender equality in education, no specific action has been taken. The gender as an issue is not perceived as a priority among the policy makers.

## ***6. Recommendations***

- Although at the level of national policies there is a general understanding regarding the needs for gender mainstreaming actions for greater enrollment of girls into secondary education, in reality insufficient actions have been taken to improve the inclusion of the vulnerable groups of girls in secondary education. Hence, there is a need for lobbying for **increased awareness of the gender specific approach among the stakeholders** (especially the equal opportunities committees). A close cooperation with the State Education Inspectorate is especially advisable for the municipalities where the gender discrepancies are prominent.
- Since the financial constraints are one of the main factors why families do not send their female children in secondary school, they could be motivated with **stipends** (in form of cash transfers) for enrolling them into secondary school.
- It is important to **detect the 'vulnerable' girls from the primary school** and inform their families on the possibilities for secondary education (types of schools available, benefits for the family, conditional cash transfers). The **families should be directly approached** by representatives of the local community, in coordination with the education inspectorate, NGOs, and representatives of the social services.
- Another crucial activity would be to collect data on girls' from vulnerable groups' **preferences for secondary school enrollment** (whether they perceive it as an important issue, where would they like to enroll, etc.) while they are still in primary school, in order to be able to work with them on achieving that goal.
- Evidently, for a certain number of families, the standard way of secondary school attendance is not a valid option for their daughters. In order to tackle this issue, **possibilities for distance learning** for girls from traditional communities should be explored. Initially, conducting research on whether they would be interested in this method of secondary school attendance, projecting its effects (either greater 'closing up' in the immediate groups or impact on developing consciousness for the importance of education), as well as analyzing the most successful modules for its implementation.

## 6 Girls in secondary education: How to increase the enrollment?

- **Paying more attention to the vulnerable girls' school achievement** on a regular basis and developing motivational strategies for these girls. In this regard, the **peer support in learning** from other girls from the school can be an effective tool.
- **Teaching in the local language** is important for the girls from non-majority communities; however they this needs to be **accompanied with as many activities possible between the girls from with the majority communities** from the region.



# 7

## The Youth Has a Right To Sexual Education

### Gender Analysis of the Need for Introduction of Sexual Education

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## CONTENT

1. <i>Introduction</i>	110
2. <i>International standards</i>	111
3. <i>Comparative analysis</i>	115
4. <i>Case study - Macedonia</i>	119
5. <i>Field Research Results</i> <i>(survey and focus groups results)</i>	120
6. <i>Recommendations</i>	126

## 1. Introduction

Sexual and reproductive health is especially significant segment regarding women's and men's health. This area is integrated in the public health policy through the relevant international conventions ratified by Macedonia, strategic documents,<sup>1</sup> as well as the budgetary programs related to early detection and treatment of reproductive organs' diseases, detection and treatment of breast cancer, AIDS prevention, active health care of mothers and children.

Sexual and reproductive health means existence of awareness for sexual and reproductive rights, as well as having adequate information regarding the sexual and reproductive health risks. So far, Macedonia cannot make a boast of some more significant and coordinated activity in this area. Sexual rights' promotion activities, as well as raising public awareness, generally occur due to the efforts of the non-government sector, targeting its activities mainly towards young population, bearing in mind the fact that they belong to a high risk group when it comes to sexual health. However, this is problematic out of continuity and sustainability aspect, since there is a lack of efficient institutional mechanism, both in the educational and health care system, through which youngsters will get acquainted to all issues significant in the process of their emotional and sexual maturation.

Although sexual and reproductive health consultations (issues such as contraception, for instance) are free, actually are part of the basic benefit package, the interest of the young people for this type of services is very low. In the last ten years, there is noted decreasing trend of registered visits of youngsters to gynecologists for counseling.<sup>2</sup> "Out of the total number of registered initial visits due to family planning, 1209 visits (9,9%) registered in the public health care institutions and only 87 or 12,6% out of 924 total visits registered in the private health care institutions were from adolescents younger than 19 years of age".<sup>3</sup>

Stigmatization, fear of the parents finding out, disbelief in the institutions that there is confidentiality are part of the subjective factors that influence the low percent of youngsters that have asked for a health advice upon their own initiative. Sex is viewed as a taboo, which was also confirmed by the results from the focus groups conducted within the project.

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1 National Plan of Human Rights Activities, National Plan of Gender Balance brought in 2002, National Program for Fight against Human Trade, National Youth Strategy, National Action Plan for Children in the Republic of Macedonia, National Strategy for Equaling the Rights of Handicapped Persons, National Roma Strategy, National Health Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia, National HIV/AIDS Strategy (new for the period of 2007-2011), National TBC Strategy (2000-2005, and 2007-2015), National Strategy against Alcoholism (passed in 2007), National Mental Health Policy (passed in 2005), National Action Plan for Prevention and Early Detection of Breast Cancer, National Strategy of non-contiguous diseases, National Strategy of Adolescent Health, Strategy of Demographic Development of the Republic of Macedonia 2008-2015.

2 Strategic Assessment of the Policy, Quality and Availability of Contraception and Abortion in the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Health, May 2008, page 48

3 Strategic Assessment of the Policy, Quality and Availability of Contraception and Abortion in the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Health, May 2008, page 52

*"Sex is a taboo. Here, in our environment it is considered to be obscene"*  
*17 year old male, Macedonian, Strumica*

*"Sex is considered a taboo. It is due to the mentality, and on the other hand for me it would be very normal to talk about it."*  
*16 year old female, Albanian, Struga*

*"There are no conversations on the subject of sex. I think it is very normal to be like that, we were raised that way..."*  
*Albanian, mother of two daughters and a son, Struga*

Regardless of gender and ethnic origin, adolescents agree that it is necessary to talk more about sex, to have access to relevant information regarding this issue, although are aware of the conservative mentality and the traditional culture in Macedonia. Young people know very little of their sexual and reproductive rights and lack adequate information on how to lead healthy sexual life,<sup>4</sup> which is the main reason due to which they fall under the category of risky sexual behavior.

Hence, this analysis aims to analyze the need and the citizens position on the question of introduction of sexual education in the education system, as a successful way for the young people to get informed and accept healthy and responsible way of life. The arguments and conclusions are based on the international standards and the relevant international documents, comparative analysis of best practices, as well as the perceptions of the need of sexual education as a school subject. For the latter, the information was received from a national survey conducted upon a representative sample and focus groups conducted in two towns, Struga and Strumica, among representatives of Albanian and Macedonian ethnic community.

## ***2. International standards***

Long time ago, the perception of sexual and reproductive health and rights has been changed from "private matter" into a problem that needs to be treated as "public health problem". Key step at international level was done at the International Conference for Population and Development held in Cairo in 1994, when the sexual and reproductive health was raised to a level of priority within the national health care systems.

Based on the WHO recommendations, sexual health is defined as a condition of physical, emotional, mental and social wellbeing regarding sexuality. This is not a negative definition of the concept; it does not only cover absence of disease, dysfunction or deformity, but also the approach of defining sexual health is positive, thus covering sexuality and sexual relationships without force, discrimination and violence. Areas of sexual health (responsible, satisfactory and safe sexual life), reproductive freedom (access to information, methods and services) and safe motherhood (safe pregnancy,

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.



delivery and healthy children) are also covered by this definition .<sup>5</sup>

Sexual education is recognized as the most successful answer to the risks for sexual and reproduction health. Thus, international organizations promote it as one of the basic approaches upon which should be based the state strategies on fight against HIV/AIDS, STD and unplanned pregnancy. Hence, this part of the analysis gives brief overview of the relevant international documents, and refers to the legal bases for introduction of sexual education in the school curricula provided by these documents.

The two most important international documents that provide the legal bases for introduction of sexual education, are:

- The Convention on Eliminating All Kinds of Discrimination against Women
- The Convention on Children's Rights

Article 10 of the Convention on Eliminating all Kinds of Discrimination against Women obliges all countries to take all necessary measures for eliminating the discrimination against women in order to enable them with equal rights with the men in the area of education, on the basis of the principle of gender equality, thus enabling them to have "access to educational information for health and family wellbeing, including the information and advice on family planning".

As an argument for introducing sexual education, also the Convention on Rights of the Child is pointed out, that legally obliges the countries to enable "the child [to] have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers..." (Article 13). Bearing in mind that sexual education promotes and improves young people's health on one hand (positive implications of the sexual education will be discussed further in the text), and on the other hand the right of the young people is to receive information of any kind, a social obligation is imposed that the youngsters should receive adequate information in the area of sexual and reproduction health .<sup>6</sup>

This is followed by Article 24 of the Convention on Children's Rights that obliges the countries to enable "the children to enjoy highest standards in the area of health care...", where each country in order to achieve this goal, among other things should "develop preventive health care, directions for parents and education for family planning and services."

Although the Convention very generally defines the countries obligations in this area, its interpretation by the Committee of Children's Rights<sup>7</sup> clearly supports the introduction of sexual education as a successful way of improving adolescents' sexual and reproduction health. Regularly, the Committee concludes in its reports that the countries' obligation is the introduction of sexual education, thus recommending and encouraging the integration of such subject within the educational system curricula. The Committee so far has prepared two reports for Macedonia, in 1997 and in 2000, concluding that for the adolescents aged 15-18 there is limited access to health care,

<sup>5</sup> Web site of the German Federal Center for Health Education, <http://english.forschung.sexualaufklaerung.de/3029.0.html>

<sup>6</sup> Andrew Copson; Unbiased sex education is a child's right, Tuesday 28 April 2009 16.00 BST [www.guardian.co.uk](http://www.guardian.co.uk).

<sup>7</sup> Responsible body for monitoring the implementation of the Convention of Children's Rights

concretely pointing out the lack of sexual education.<sup>8</sup>

In addition to this, the World Health Organization (WHO) strongly supports and puts efforts in the introduction of sexual education within the educational system curricula. WHO's attitude is supported by the argument of the results available to WHO through the research conducted under the Global Program on AIDS<sup>9</sup>, which on one hand has confirmed the positive effects of the sexual education, and on the other hand destroyed the myths that the opponents use as arguments against the introduction of sexual education within the school curricula.

The biggest fear of the sexual education opponents is that this subject shall encourage youngsters to start a sexual relationship earlier.

*The survey results show that sexual education lead to delay in starting sexual activity. Furthermore, sexual education does not lead to increasing nor to decreasing the sexual activity of adolescents, but it influences the sexually active adolescents to accept non-risky sexual behavior. Also, having information in the field of contraception and counseling for sexual health does not stimulate premature or increased sexual activity.*

Also the UNESCO report contributed for deconstruction of the myths of the negative consequences from the sexual education, where on the basis of detailed analysis of the existing research, the positive effects of the sexual education over the sexual behavior of young people were registered and pointed out<sup>10</sup>. UNESCO in this report sets the frame of efficient and successful sexual education, thus providing concrete and practical recommendations for implementation of a successful sexual education program. The Report emphasizes that the program in each aspect should be based upon the gender approach, having in mind that the sexuality is differently perceived depending on the sex, as well as depending on the constructed social roles related to each sex. UNESCO recommends introduction of sexual education on 4 levels, thus covering four age categories<sup>11</sup> of children and youngsters from 5 to 18 years old with adjusted program regarding their age. Every level covers several areas: relationships; values, views and abilities; culture, social norms and legislation; human development; sexual behavior; sexual and reproductive health.

The recommendations are detailed and refer to the process of program preparation and its implementation. Thus, for a successful programme, the number of classes should not be less than 12 school classes; it is necessary the pupils to have homework, which will indirectly involve the parents; the gender approach should be present in

8 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child: Concluding Observations: The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, 23 February 2000, CRC/C/15/Add.118, page.6 <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/country,,CRC,,MKD,4562d8b62,3ae6afc5c,0.html>

9 Sozial- Und Präventivmedizin [Soz Präventivmed] 1994; Vol. 39 (5), pp. 325.; <http://search.ebscohost.com/>

10 International Guidelines on Sexuality Education: An Evidence Informed Approach to Effective Sex, Relationships and HIV/STI Education, June 2009, UNESCO.

11 Level 1 children aged 5 to 8; level 2 children aged 9 to 12; level 3 adolescents aged 12 to 15; level 4 adolescents aged 15 to 18

all phases of the program development and its implementation; the program should include homosexual relationships and should promote respect of the differences and tolerance, etc.

Sexual health is an issue which is of great interest to EU, as well. Under the threat of HIV/AIDS, since the 1980's there are actions of preventing greater impetus on the territory of Europe. Expanding the Union, EU faces new neighbors, faces a situation that in certain parts of Europe the rate of STD and HIV/AIDS is increasing drastically, which imposes the need of quick and joint act.

Important step at EU level was made in 2001 with the European Strategy of Sexual and Reproductive Health<sup>12</sup> aiming to provide strategic directions for the member-states in the sense of collaboration for development and implementation programmes aiming to improve the sexual and reproductive health of the EU citizens, as well as to decrease the regional inequalities. This document raises the sexual and reproductive health at a level of a top priority for the WHO European Regional Office and EU member-states.

The Strategy concludes that it is a great concern that the adolescents become sexually active earlier, but lack adequate education and adequate counseling services in this area.<sup>13</sup>

Hence, one of the strategy aims is "educating adolescents in sexuality and reproduction" which needs to be achieved by introduction of sexual and reproductive education in the high school curricula, and by adopting and implementing education programs of sexuality and reproduction out of the school system. Thus, it is important that sexual education is introduced before the adolescents become sexually active; interactive methods of teaching to be used; focus to be put on knowledge, values and developing a manner of behavior, etc. Especially apparent is the insisting on gender sensitive approach, actually integrating a special approach for the girls in direction of raising their self-confidence and negotiation skills, as well as an approach for the boys in the direction of satisfying their needs on one hand and fulfilling their responsibilities on the other.

The need of sexual education is also present in other EU strategic documents<sup>14</sup>, among which is the Dublin Declaration.<sup>15</sup> In the context of gender equality promotion and improvement of the reproductive and sexual health, the access to sexual education, information and health care services, are presented as the basic postulates in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

European Commission<sup>16</sup> actively puts efforts in promotion of efficient ways

12 WHO REGIONAL STRATEGY ON SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH, Reproductive Health/ Pregnancy Programme, Copenhagen, Denmark November 2001, <http://www.euro.who.int/document/e74558.pdf>

13 Ibid. Page 10

14 [http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph\\_threats/com/aids/aids\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/health/ph_threats/com/aids/aids_en.htm)

15 Dublin Declaration on Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia, Dublin Ministerial Conference, February 2004, "Breaking the Barriers – Partnership to fight HIV/AIDS in Europe and Central Asia" [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/The\\_Dublin\\_Declaration.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/The_Dublin_Declaration.pdf)

16 COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE COUNCIL AND THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT on combating HIV/AIDS within the European Union and in the neighboring countries, 2006-2009; COMMISSION OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES Brussels, 15.12.2005; COM(2005) 654 final [http://eurlex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga\\_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numd](http://eurlex.europa.eu/smartapi/cgi/sga_doc?smartapi!celexapi!prod!CELEXnumdoc&lg=en&numd)

of preventing STD and HIV/AIDS. In the communication from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament on combating against HIV/AIDS within EU and in the neighboring countries for the period of 2006-2009, it is suggested that within the health care education programs, the focus should be placed on developing personal skills. The schools are recognized as the most adequate place for exterminating the prejudice, stigmatization and discrimination of the people with HIV/AIDS. The Commission has obliged to facilitate the implementation in the schools in the member-states, through analyses and directing to the best practices, as well as by developing teaching modules.

Today, there are no dilemmas for the need and significance of sexual education in the world that is on the lookout of risks of destructive pandemic effects. Hence, there is no strong enough and justified contra-argument, neither of religious nor of traditional or cultural aspect, which could be counterbalance to the introduction of the sexual education.

### *3. Comparative analysis*

The comparative analysis relies on the relevant research conducted in the United States of America and Great Britain. Even though the statistics recognizes significantly high level of risky sexual behavior in the states mentioned above compared to other European countries (such as Sweden and Netherlands) at academic level quality analyses and researches are provided that define directions for quality sexual education.

Most of the researches<sup>17</sup> in this area rely on the sociological presumption that every society regulates the sexuality of its members, including the transfer and access to information (which is strongly influenced by the social institutions - family and religion). Besides the social class, ethnic origin, and the level of education that are factors influencing the perceptions regarding sexual and reproductive health, gender is maybe the most significant factor. Thus, the research studies<sup>18</sup> using the gender theory, conclude that the division between men's and women's roles, actually the social constructions of what is "man" and what is "woman", reflect differently on the sexuality of boys and girls. Boys face much bigger pressure to become sexually active, unlike girls who face the opposite situation, i.e. face the pressure to delay the first sexual act. The same situation is mirrored regarding the issue of the number of sexual partners.

Information sources are different depending on the sex, except the so-called source "same sex peers" that appears as the most influential source with the both sexes. Although the parents do not rank among "the most used" information sources<sup>19</sup>,

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17 Susan Sprecher, Gardenia Harris, Adena Meyers, Perceptions of Sources of Sex Education and Targets of Sex Communication: Sociodemographic and Cohort Effects, JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH, 45(1), 17-26, 2008 Copyright # Taylor & Francis Group, LLC

18 James W. Stout, MD, and Frederick P. Rivara, MD, MPH; Schools and sex education: Does it work?; Department of Pediatrics, Harborview Medical Center, University of Washington, Children's Hospital and Medical Center, Seattle; vol 83, no.3, March 1989.; Thomas Edward Smith, Julie A. Steen, Andrea Schwendinger, Jennifer Spaulding Givens, and Robert G. Brooks, Gender Differences in Adolescent Attitudes and Receptivity to Sexual Abstinence Education; 2005 National Association of Social Workers

19 Susan Sprecher, Gardenia Harris, Adena Meyers, Perceptions of Sources of Sex Education and Targets

it is noted that the girls use this source much more than the boys. Even more interesting data is that most often mothers are more available and open to talk about sexual and reproductive health. As a secondary source of information, besides the same-sex peers, girls use magazines.<sup>20</sup> Most significant and most used source of information for the boys is pornography.<sup>21</sup>

Other researchers<sup>22</sup> have registered different reaction on the subject of sex, depending on their gender. The level of showing interest during the classes of sexual education is drastically different. Girls were more interested and constructive during sexual education classes (if they attend the classes divided by sexes), while the working atmosphere is completely different when the classes were attended by boys only (rude jokes, loud disapproval of the presented material, etc.) This is expected, on the one hand due to the great social pressure over boys to become sexually active, and on the other hand due to the social construction of the significance of the term "manhood", which represents sexual experience. Thus, the negative reaction during sexual education classes is more a reaction boosted by the thought that attending such classes implies lack of experience, and thus decreasing their "manhood" in their own and the eyes of their peers.

However, sex is irrelevant when the level of information and the awareness of the sexual and reproductive health is analyzed. Neither boys, not girls have adequate and enough information for healthy sexual life, although they think they know enough.<sup>23</sup> Only for a comparison, the research in Macedonia showed that most of the boys have great self-confidence regarding their information, while most of the girls consider themselves not being informed enough. Besides boys' self-confidence, the discussion in the focus groups showed that their knowledge was based on incorrect information.

*"I am very much informed. Sexually transmitted diseases are not transmitted by sexual act only, but they can be transmitted by accident as well. So certain disease can be transmitted through blood, or insects such as mosquitoes, for example AIDS..."*  
*Boy, Macedonian, 16*

The United States of America face high risk of STD and unplanned teenage pregnancy (significantly higher rate compared to the rest of the western developed countries). Hence, US is not considered a positive example of prevention and protection of sexual health through the education system. Besides the frightening statistics that direct to obvious failure in the current approach, the largest number of public schools

of Sex Communication: Sociodemographic and Cohort Effects, JOURNAL OF SEX RESEARCH, 45(1), 17–26, 2008, Taylor & Francis Group, LLC, pg.18

20 Lynda Measor, Young people's views of sex education: gender, information and knowledge; University of Brighton, UK; Carfax Publishing; Sex Education, Vol. 4, No. 2, July 2004, pg.155

21 Ibid, page 156

22 Lynda Measor, Coralie Tiffin and Katrina Trina Fry; Gender and Sex Education: A study of adolescent responses; University of Brighton; Department of Education, Falmer, Brighton, UK

23 Tina Hoff, Liberty Green, Julia Davis; National Survey of adolescents and young adults: Sexual health knowledge, attitudes and experiences; 2003 Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation; California

base their curriculum solely on sexual abstinence until marriage (“abstinence-only” programs).<sup>24</sup> The statistics is explained by the fact that the abstinence-only programs as a way of fighting against risky sexual behavior are inefficient.<sup>25</sup> Independent of that, the American government for more than 20 years has financed only such programs. In order for a certain sexual education program to be qualified for financing from the federal funds, it is required to teach that “sexual activity out of marriage has negative psychological and physical effect”.<sup>26</sup>

According to Kirby, the comprehensive programs that refer to both abstinence and contraception have positive effects. The effects<sup>27</sup> of this type of programs are: sexual activity does not increase; the first sexual act is delayed; decrease of sexual activity, as well as decrease of the number of sexual partners; increased use of condoms and contraception.

Even the researches<sup>28</sup> which conclude that there is no correlation between sexual education and decrease in the risky sexual behavior, does not completely exclude sexual education as a good approach, but point out the quality of the programme as a significant factor.

At the moment, the results that Kirby came to are inarguable, and the positive relationship between the sexual education and the decrease in the risky behavior are accepted as a fact. However, the program quality is viewed as a key factor to achieve successful results, so that the debate is no longer prevailing whether it is necessary to have sexual education, but what the quality sexual education should be like.

On the basis of the wide research clear directions and recommendations<sup>29</sup> have emerged, pointing out what a successful curriculum should contain.

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24 Naomi Starkman, J.D., and Nikole Rajani, M.A., The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education; AIDS Patient care and STDs; Volume 16, Number 7, 2002

25 Douglas Kirby, Abstinence, Sex and STD/HIV education programs for teens: their impact on sexual behavior, pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2007

26 Naomi Starkman, J.D., and Nikole Rajani, M.A., The Case for Comprehensive Sex Education; AIDS Patient care and STDs; Volume 16, Number 7, 2002

27 Douglas Kirby, Abstinence, Sex and STD/HIV education programs for teens: their impact on sexual behavior, pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2007, pg.143

28 James W. Stout, MD, and Frederick P. Rivara, MD, MPH; Schools and sex education: Does it work?; Department of Pediatrics, Harborview Medical Center, University of Washington, Children’s Hospital and Medical Center, Seattle; vol 83, no.3, March 1989

29 Lisa Smylie, Eleanor Maticka-Tyndale, Dana Boyd and the Adolescent Sexual Health Planning Committee, Evaluation of a school-based sex education programme delivered to Grade Nine students in Canada; Taylor & Francis, Sex Education; Vol. 8, No. 1, February 2008, 25–46; Douglas Kirby, Abstinence, Sex and STD/HIV education programs for teens: their impact on sexual behavior, pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease; William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, 2007;

- Sufficient number of classes (minimum 14)
- Quality teacher's training
- Multidimensional teaching curriculum whose approach and methods of learning are adjusted to the students' age, culture, sexual experience, features and needs, thus enabling the student to easily personize the information.
- Focus on the methods of decreasing risky sexual behavior (unplanned pregnancy, STD, HIV/AIDS)
- Interactive exercises and simulations of health risks situations and methods of avoiding them
- Integrating the information programs, motivation and communication/negotiation tools necessary to raise the person's self-confidence
- Focus on the factors that influence the behavior, including knowledge, faced risks, values, approaches, accepted norms, etc.
- Promoting the approach of reaching a responsible and healthy decision, including improved communication skills, raising the self-confidence level and negotiation skills for the use of contraception and beginning of sexually active life.
- Raising awareness regarding concrete issues, such as STD/HIV, family planning, unplanned pregnancy, drugs and alcohol effects over health, violence within a relationship, etc.

Reforms in the sexual education curriculum are foreseen in Great Britain that has the highest rate of unplanned teenage pregnancy in Europe. On the basis of a detailed analysis<sup>30</sup> of the existing curriculum, recommendations were designed for better and more successful tackling of the problem of risky sexual behavior among the adolescent population. Hence, it is crucial: more attention to be paid on "relationships", skills and values; sexual education that will promote mutual respect, rights and obligations, gender equality and tolerance; the subject should take into consideration the differences between the students regarding their sexuality, handicap, ethnic and religious origin; good communication between the school and the parents; partnership between the schools and external professionals, etc.

30 Review of sex and relationship education SRE in schools; A report by the external steering group, DCSF 2008, [http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/\\_doc/13030/SRE%20final.pdf](http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/_doc/13030/SRE%20final.pdf)



#### 4. Case study - Macedonia

Existence of social responsibility for prevention and protection of sexual and reproductive health is extremely important in the contemporary society, when under the pressure of the dynamic life, the border of getting married has moved up, and the period when young people become aware of their sexuality, until getting married is long. The period when adolescents become fertile and sexual feelings begin to wake, corresponds to the period when they get into puberty, actually from 12 to 14 years of age. If it is taken into consideration that the average age<sup>31</sup> when the women get married is 24,7, and for the men is 27,7, the inter period is significantly long, 13-14 years. This is a long period when one should avoid unplanned pregnancy, STD, HIV/AIDS, and it needs adequate information regarding protection methods.

Macedonia does not have Strategy on Sexual and Reproductive Health. However, there is awareness at institutional level for the need of such document, which will have interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach<sup>32</sup>.

Statistics present not very positive image and imply lack of awareness among the adolescents for their sexual and reproductive health. In Macedonia only 13.5% of the women use some kind of contraception, while only 9.8% use modern contraception<sup>33</sup>. The main reason for this extremely low percent is the lack of interest among the health care providers to provide counseling services for family planning, as well as the high prices for contraception (it is not covered by the health insurance).

The percent of teenage pregnancy (mothers under 20) in 2006 was 7.1%<sup>34</sup>. Although the abortion rate since the beginning of the 1990's is continuously decreasing, it is significantly higher compared to the EU member-states<sup>35</sup>. Even more worrying is the fact that officially registered rate of 14,2 abortions at 1000 women does not correspond to the reality. It is assumed that the number of abortions is much higher<sup>36</sup>.

The research conducted points out to a low level of awareness and a lack of information with regard to the sexual and reproductive health. It is apparent the need of establishing coordinated, institutionalized system through which adequate information related to reproductive and sexual health shall be transferred to the majority of the adolescent population. Hence, the most adequate would be to use the education system, especially if it is known that adolescents very little use the counseling services within the health care system.

It is significant that the strategic assessment<sup>37</sup> conducted by the Ministry of Health recommends introduction of sexual education. Hence, it shall be interesting to examine the public opinion on introduction of sexual education.

31 Announcement, Decreased Number of Marriages and Divorces in RM, State Statistical Office, 16.06.2009, year XLVII, No. 2.1.9.17

32 Strategic Assessment of the Policy, Quality and Availability of Contraception and Abortion in the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Health, May 2008

33 Strategic Assessment of the Policy, Quality and Availability of Contraception and Abortion in the Republic of Macedonia, Ministry of Health, May 2008, page 53

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid, page 60

36 Svetlana Smilevska, Children Bear Children, Globus, No. 33, 04.12.2007, <http://www.globusmagazin.com.mk/?ItemID=1952157F2552EE40B270329D22FA7683>

37 Ibid, page 85.



## 5. Field Research Results (survey and focus groups results)

A national survey and 4 focus groups were conducted under this research. The telephone survey was conducted at the end of August upon a representative national sample<sup>38</sup>. Four focus groups were conducted in Struga and Strumica, two with adolescents and two with parents.

The survey results show that the higher percent of the citizens are in favor of introducing sexual education.

	For sexual education	Against sexual education	Do not know
%	63.7	32.8	3.5

Besides the fact that at national level there is stronger support for sexual education, the situation is different when this issue is analyzed along ethnic lines. The initiative is supported by all ethnic communities, except by the Albanian and the Turkish ethnic community, where more of the respondents were against. When the Albanian ethnic community is analyzed, the difference between the respondents for and against introducing sexual education is not big, but the majority of 47.7% are against this idea. At the Turkish ethnic community the difference is bigger, thus the majority of 62.5% is against introducing this program.

%	Do not know	For sexual education	Against sexual education
Macedonian	1.3	73.2	25.5
Albanian	9.2	43.1	47.7
Turkish	0.0	37.5	62.5
Roma	6.3	56.3	37.5
Vlachs	0.0	66.7	33.3
Serbs	10	60.0	30.0
Other	0.0	88.9	11.1

Significant conclusion is that there is not big difference per sex related to the support of introducing sexual education.

%	Do not know	For	Against
Men	2.7	64.2	33.1
Women	4.3	63.1	32.6

38 Representative sample of 600 respondents, statistical error 4%, surveyed 49.8 male and 50.2 female, upon ethnic structure surveyed 64.2% Macedonians, 25.5% Albanians, 4% Turks, 2.7% Roma, 0.5% Vlachs, 1.7% Serbs and 1.5% other.

The focus groups also confirmed the support for introduction of sexual education. But, on the other hand they pointed out that although the opponents are minority, they have strong views against this program.

*"The children will be interested in attending sexual education out of the reason that they cannot discuss upon that topic with their parents. This program will facilitate the parents' work, because we also have difficulty when our child comes and asks us something about sex. And today even the younger children know everything, they find it out on the internet, but the question is what exactly they find out on internet."*  
*Macedonian, mother of two daughters and a son, Strumica.*

*"Even if we want to say something, we don't know much, so it is better educated people that know about these topics to talk to our children. Everybody should know what could happen to his/hers health."*  
*Albanian, mother of three daughters and a son, Struga*

*"It is good to introduce this program, we tell our sons very little, but it is not told professionally. Now it is good that a doctor-gynecologist informs them well so that they are aware what could happen if they make a mistake. I am in favor of introducing this program at school, and the children should start to attend it at the age of 15, when they are entering the puberty, until the end of their high-school days to know what to expect."*  
*Albanian, father of two sons and a daughter, Struga*

The respondents in the survey that replied against introducing sexual education program, as a main reason stated that "it would boost the youngsters to become sexually active earlier" (33.5% of the respondents that are against the idea of introducing sexual education) and that "children should not learn those things at school" (33% of the respondents that are against the idea of introducing sexual education). This is also confirmed by the results of the focus groups, where a small group of men showed significant dose of suspicion regarding the need of introducing, and expressed doubt regarding the successful implementation of the programme.

*"I would not support sexual education... young child of 9, 14 or 15, to listen to those things, it's a shame... It could be interesting to children, but the teacher would feel uncomfortable..."*  
*Macedonian, father of three daughters, Strumica*

*"If the education system introduces such program, it would surely face disapproval by the parents, no matter of their ethnic or religious origin. Even if it is introduced as an optional subject, the initiative would fail; the teachers would sit alone in the classrooms, because there would be no one to teach. Not one child would receive permission from the parents to attend the program."*

*Turk, father of two sons, Strumica*

Moreover, 17.8% of the respondents in the survey who are against introducing sexual education consider that "young people know enough" and 7.6% (of the total number of respondents that are against introducing sexual education) called upon religion as the reason why this program should not be introduced in the curriculum. Especially, it should be taken into consideration the last category, that has strong negative attitude regarding this question and obviously it will be difficult to change the position of those people compared to the others who are against. This was also confirmed by the focus groups results.

*"Sex is a taboo and it is due to the environment itself, as well as the upbringing. It arises from religious beliefs, so, for instance, if you read the Koran that is the conclusion.... Muslim families, no matter if they are Albanians, Turks, Roma, they don't discuss about sex. If the conversation comes to the subject of sex, they will only look at each other, and the conversation ends. It is so, mainly because of religious beliefs. If sexual education is introduced, 50% of the girls will not attend the classes. Their parents will not allow them to go. The first thing they would say is 'I don't want some man to teach my daughter about sex'. So if it is a woman teacher, it would be a problem. "*

*Turk, father of two sons, Strumica*

Having in mind that the first category of opponents bases its attitude on lack of information, that sexual education would boost young people to start sexual relationships earlier, concrete activities should be taken to better inform them regarding the real effects of sexual education. More efforts would be necessary to change the mind of those who base their opposition on moral values and consider it immoral to discuss this subject at school. Characteristic for the last and smallest group that bases its opposition on religious beliefs is that no matter of the information for the meaning, the need and the positive effects of sexual education, it is hardly to believe that will change its view. Hence, the efforts for raising awareness should be directed to the first two groups.

The survey respondents who are in favor of introducing sexual education, as a reason for their support have stated that in that way "young people will have adequate information regarding the sexual and reproductive health" (60.2% of those that have replied positively for introducing sexual education) and that "sexual education will decrease the percent of STD, HIV/AIDS, unplanned pregnancy and abortion" (34.3%

of the respondents that have replied positively for introducing sexual education). Interestingly, small number of respondents (4.7%) has stated that "for them as parents it is uncomfortable to talk about those things with their child". On the other hand the focus groups raised the question of the relationship between parents and children as an important issue.

*"I don't talk to my children, and I think it is a mistake. We are ashamed, we are afraid, we expect them to ask, and we don't know what is the most appropriate way to approach them and answer their questions. Maybe, it would be easier if the child asks."*

*Macedonian, mother of two sons, Strumica.*

*"There is nothing to talk about that subject... they watch TV, they watch everything, today I think that even little children know everything... I have never talked to my daughters about it, I don't know, maybe it's the mentality..."*

*Macedonian, father of three daughters, Strumica (neighboring village)*

*"I have never discussed that subject; I have discussed more about how they should behave in marriage, nothing else."*

*Albanian, mother of two daughters and a son, Struga (neighboring village)*

*"My sons do not talk to me about these things, they think they know everything, and I don't feel comfortable talking to my daughter about these things. ... I'm afraid that if I as a parent talk about sex, they would be more open to do something. I'm afraid that with the conversation I would pass the border of giving information and my discussion would be considered as approval of pre-matrimonial sex. "*

*Albanian, father of two sons and a daughter, Struga*

Fathers are more open and ready to talk to their sons on this subject, while they do not even think about having such a conversation with their daughters.

The majority of the adolescents that were part of the focus groups agree that there is a barrier in the communication between them and their parents when it comes to discussing sexual and reproductive health issues. The main reason is stated to be that the parents have difficulties in creating closeness to discuss this subject to their children. On many occasions, especially the boys in the focus groups emphasized lack of interest to discuss this subject with their parents, because they believe that their parents will not give them more information from those they already know.

*"I think that there is no need to discuss these things with the parents. My parents are not more informed than I am, so I don't even try to ask them for these things."*

*Macedonian, 16 year old boy, Strumica*

Interestingly, the focus groups showed that the girls want to talk more to their parents on this subject, compared to the boys. Nevertheless, the conclusion of the focus groups is that the family rarely is the primary source of information to the young people during their sexual maturation.

Regarding the structure and the issues covered by the programme, the survey questionnaire was consisted of four questions (abstinence, contraception and prevention, behavior in an emotional relationship and communication with the partner, and sexual orientation) where the respondents had to answer "yes" or "no".

Table <sup>39</sup>

	Yes	No
Abstinence	74.06%	25.9%
Contraception	94.8%	5.2%
Behavior in an emotional relationship and communication with the partner	94.8%	5.2%
Sexual orientation	76.7%	23.2%

The majority respondents expressed support for all four issues to be included in the programme. Especially high support was registered for the issues related to prevention and contraception, as well as the emotional aspect of the relationship. Surprising result is the high percentage of support for the program to include the topic of "sexual orientation", especially if it is considered the intolerance of Macedonian society regarding homosexual relationships and the high percentage of 91,6% of the citizens, who do not approve of homosexuality<sup>40</sup>. Hence, we should not jump into conclusions that this is a drastic change when it comes to accepting different sexual orientation. The strong intolerance regarding homosexual relationships, as well as the results from the focus groups, unfortunately direct to the fact that programme that promotes differences and integration with regard to the sexual orientation, might face disapproval by the majority of the citizens.

*"They should be taught how to protect from this apparition, it is very widespread..."*

*Albanian, father of two daughters, Struga*

*"A normal human being cannot be homosexual. Those are hormones, and you cannot persuade him/her."*

*Turk, father of two sons, Strumica*

39 Only the respondents supporting the introduction of sexual education program answered these 4 questions. Table considers only those that answered YES or NO, analyzed as total number, i.e. 100% The number of respondents that answered DO NOT KNOW or REFUSE TO ANSWER is insignificant and thus left out.

40 Attitude towards Secular /Traditional/ Values, Macedonian Centre of International Cooperation, MCIC, Skopje, May 2009

*"There is a lot homosexuality... If we start educating the parents and if there is sexual education at schools, it is normal that there will not be such apparitions. The number would not be this large as it is today."*  
*Macedonian, mother of two daughters and a son, Strumica.*

The high support for inclusion of sexual orientation within the programme is more inspired of the impulse to "re-educate" and "prevent" this apparition. Any other approach that would promote tolerance might face resistance and disapproval from the majority of the citizens.

Regarding the staff that should teach the sexual education classes, most of the respondents that supported the introduction of sexual education, consider that it should be combination of doctors, psychologists and NGO representatives.

Who to teach the classes	%
Biology teachers	11.3
Doctors/gynecologists	28.5
Psychologists	23.3
NGO representatives	0.3
Combination of doctors, psychologists and NGO representatives	33.5
Respondents that refused to answer, answered "do not know" and "none of the above"	3.1

The focus groups pointed to apparent difference in the views according to ethnic origin. The focus group conducted with parents of the Albanian ethnic community from Struga, registered complete agreement that only doctors should teach the programme. This implies that the subject should be closely focused on the medical aspect only. The participants from the focus group conducted in Strumica, although agreed that the program should involve doctors, still the majority of the parents considered that the issue should not be approached only from the medical aspect. Aware of the lack of adequate staff such as sexologists, most of the parents think that large part of the classes should be covered by psychologists.

The survey results showed that among the sexual education supporters, the majority are those who consider that the sexual education program should be introduced since primary school, i.e. 7-8 grade.

What level of education should the program be introduced at	%
7-8 grade Elementary school	53.4
1-2 grade of high-school	23.3
3-4 grade of high-school	7.3

It should begin in elementary school, and until high-school with adjusted program according to children's age	14.1
"do not know" and refused to answer	1.9

Besides the strong support for introducing sexual education program, which the survey results and focus groups directed to, it could be concluded that introducing such subject could face problems and disapproval even among those that initially supported the program, if the information and the subject concept do not fit in their value system. Bearing in mind that the views related to this subject are significantly strong and often burdened with stereotypes and constructions of what is moral, and what is not, such programme could face disapproval no matter how professionally it is developed.

## 6. Recommendations

The key recommendation that emerges from this analysis is the introduction of sexual education within the education system. Although sexual and reproductive health is an issue that could and should be addressed through the health system, the recommendations are focused only on introducing school subject within the education curricula. Thus, it is not excluded the need of improvement of the health system in this regard. On the contrary, every initiative that will enable larger availability not only to information, but also to contraception means is welcomed.

### Introducing individual subject - sexual education

*It is necessary to introduce individual subject of sexual education, instead of this problem to be integrated in the current subjects (for example, biology). Only in this way, the approach would be adequately structured and continuous. Another important reason to introduce it as an individual subject are the teachers. Bearing in mind the multidimensionality and sensitivity of this subject, it is necessary to have specially trained staff, as well as staff of different profile depending on the topic that needs to be discussed.*

### Introduction of sexual education in the final grades of elementary school

*Considering the conclusions from the relevant international health care organizations, as well as the research conducted in this area, the most positive effects of the sexual education are achieved before the adolescents become sexually active. This does not exclude that the subject is attended further in the first two grades of high-school, where the curriculum should be adequately adjusted to the pupils' age.*

### Compulsory subject, without grading system

*It is possible certain part of the citizens to oppose to and disapprove of this initiative, which might be manifested by forbidding their children to attend the classes, if sexual education is introduced as an optional subject. Thus, it should be introduced as compulsory subject, whereas pupils would not get grades, and the condition to pass this subject would be attendance to the classes.*

**Comprehensive sexual education that shall not be closely defined as medical and will cover several dimensions**

*Sexual education, besides covering topics as STD, unplanned pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, as well as prevention and protection methods, should also refer to the emotional aspect of a relationship with a partner. In this direction, the subject itself should contribute to improving young people's ability to make responsible and healthy decisions, improving the communication and negotiation skills, as well as raising self-confidence. Hence, it is very important that the gender sensitive approach is integrated in the process of curriculum development, and all relevant factors that influence sexuality of both girls and boys are taken into consideration. The program should include activities in direction of exterminating or decreasing the pressure over adolescents. It is especially important that the subject is based on clearly defined values that would promote mutual respect, rights and obligations, gender equality and acceptance of the differences (considering sexual orientation, handicap, ethnic and religious origin).*

### Quality trained teachers and teaching staff of different profile

*The success of such initiative largely depends on the quality of the teachers, which presupposes adequate and quality training. Moreover, it is necessary to include different profiles in the curriculum, for example medical staff, psychologists, NGO representatives, etc. Useful recommendations in this part could be found in the UNESCO International Directions.*

**Experts of different profiles that will approach this subject multi-dimensionally should be involved in the sexual education program curriculum development**

*Here it is especially important to consider Kirby's recommendations as directions and framework, as well as the UNESCO International guidelines and the other relevant comparative experiences.*

### Pilot project, before introducing sexual education

*Initially, sexual education should be introduced as a pilot project in the schools in several municipalities where people from different ethnic communities live and on the basis of the pilot, to analyze reactions and eventual problems of cultural and gen-*



*der aspect. Especially big attention should be paid to the gender implications, since the comparative experiences pointed out to different reactions from gender aspect in the sense of attention, activity and engagement during the classes. This is crucial for the design and implementation of the most efficient approach. The assessment should gather information on the basis of which efficient approach will be defined not only from gender aspect, but also from cultural aspect, since as the research showed some differences among different ethnic communities exist.*



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