

# 2025



# ANNUAL REPORT

This document summarizes the activities undertaken by the Center for Research and Policy Making in the course of implementation of its 2025 work program. It reports on outputs and impact the CRPM work has on policy making in Macedonia and South East Europe.

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# Foreword by the Executive Director

Dear partners, colleagues and friends,

2025 was a year of consolidation, expansion and measurable impact for the Centre for Research and Policy Making. Guided by our 2022–2032 Strategy and our commitment to evolve “from think tank to think-and-do tank,” CRPM not only generated knowledge, but translated it into institutional reform, regional leadership and global partnerships.

Across our three pillars — democracy and good governance, sustainable development, and human development — we moved from advocacy to implementation and from pilot initiatives to structural change.

This year we witnessed concrete legislative reform through the adoption of the Law on Work Engagement of Persons, establishing a new legal framework for seasonal and occasional workers and advancing labour formalization. Through the SMART Balkans programme, we strengthened 34 civil society organizations with over 3.5 million NOK in grants, while accrediting Financial Academies as adult education programmes in North Macedonia and Serbia. The Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) advanced gender-responsive budgeting from analysis to institution — influencing rulebooks, budget statements, municipal disaster risk plans, agricultural subsidies and EU-level advocacy on the Multiannual Financial Framework.

In climate and resilience policy, the BEALERT platform entered its pilot phase in the Polog region, positioning CRPM within the European climate services community. Our work on gender and transport produced seven national studies and one regional analysis, directly shaping advocacy initiatives ahead of local elections. Through the Young Men Initiative, more than 400 young people were directly engaged in transformative life-skills and violence-prevention programming, embedding gender equality within school ecosystems.

High-level dialogue remained central to our strategic positioning. From the Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development to the European Parliament’s Committee on Budgets, from the OSCE Chairpersonship Forum to the Belgrade Security Conference and EU Enlargement debates, CRPM amplified Western Balkan evidence within global policy conversations.



At the same time, 2025 marked a new phase of international academic and policy engagement. We initiated cooperation with ADA University, opening pathways for joint policy dialogue and cross-regional exchange between the Western Balkans and the South Caucasus. Our partnership with Lund University, supported by the Swedish Institute, launched collaborative work on advancing Gender-Responsive Budgeting (GRB) within universities — bridging academic governance, fiscal transparency and equality standards in higher education systems. In parallel, we strengthened cooperation with the Uppsala University Anti-Corruption Research and Support Centre, deepening analytical work on the nexus between gender and corruption and reinforcing CRPM's position as a regional knowledge hub at the intersection of integrity, public finance and equality.

Beyond Europe, CRPM expanded its engagement with the Global South through structured collaboration with the DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence, advancing dialogue on gender-responsive budgeting, climate finance and inclusive fiscal governance in emerging economies. At the same time, cooperation with the Hedayah – International Center of Excellence for Countering Violent Extremism strengthened CRPM's work on prevention of violent extremism (CVE), resilience-building and whole-of-society approaches, connecting our local referral mechanism model with global standards and peer-learning platforms.

These partnerships signal an important strategic shift: CRPM is no longer only exporting Western Balkan lessons — we are co-creating comparative knowledge with leading universities and centers of excellence, ensuring that our methodologies in gender budgeting, anti-corruption, prevention from violent extremism and democratic governance travel across regions.

The School of Public Policy “Mother Teresa” entered a new three-year cycle, continuing to cultivate democratic leadership while deepening its international exposure through engagement at the World Forum for Democracy and strengthened diplomatic linkages. Our accreditation efforts in North Macedonia and expanded regional cooperation further anchored our institutional sustainability.

Finally, 2025 confirmed that impact is not measured only by publications or events, but by laws adopted, institutions strengthened, young leaders empowered, budgets made transparent, and partnerships built across continents.

As democratic systems face increasing pressures, climate risks intensify, and fiscal space narrows, CRPM remains committed to evidence-based policy solutions grounded in innovation, integrity and measurable results. We continue to Europeanize the region — while contributing to globally relevant policy debates from Skopje to Brussels, from Chisnau to Baku and New Delhi.

With gratitude to our partners, donors, staff, network members and beneficiaries,

Dr. Marija Risteska  
Executive Director  
Centre for Research and Policy Making (CRPM)

# I. High level dialogue

CRPM's participation in high-level policy dialogues throughout the year directly advances the objectives set out in its 2022–2032 Strategy, particularly the transition “from think to a think and do tank” and “from regional leader to active stakeholder globally”. By engaging in international forums, ministerial conferences and global peer-learning platforms, CRPM positions evidence-based policy research from the Western Balkans within broader debates on European integration, climate security, public finance reform, gender equality and governance excellence. These engagements are not symbolic visibility exercises; they are strategic instruments for policy transfer, coalition-building and agenda-setting.

## 2025 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development

At the 2025 Stockholm Forum on Peace and Development, CRPM's Executive Director Marija Risteska participated as a panelist in the side event “*Gendered Perspectives on Climate and Security: Opportunities for Enhancing Equality in Resilience Strategies*”, co-hosted by the OSCE, SIPRI and Adelphi.



In her intervention, Risteska drew on over two decades of experience in gender mainstreaming and public finance reform, as well as CRPM's recent work integrating gender into climate change, disaster risk reduction (DRR), and resilience policies. She emphasized that climate and disaster risks are not gender-neutral, highlighting evidence from the Polog region in North Macedonia where women are underrepresented in formal disaster management structures yet disproportionately affected due to their roles in the care economy and household-level preparedness gaps. Her contribution positioned gender-responsive

resilience not as an add-on, but as a prerequisite for effective security and stability strategies.

Risteska presented CRPM's Guidelines for Gender Mainstreaming in DRR and the development of a gender budget watchdog methodology enabling civil society to assess whether resilience policies are backed by adequate, gender-responsive financing. She underscored that although municipalities formally allocate 3% of their budgets to dis-

aster response, these funds are rarely used for preparedness and prevention and are not informed by gender analysis or used proactively for prevention and preparedness. Referring to the tragic wildfire and nightclub fire in Kočani, she illustrated the real-life consequences of fragmented planning, weak safety standards and insufficient community-wide preparedness. Marija's message to the Forum was clear: climate resilience and peacebuilding must adopt a whole-of-community approach, embed gender analysis into budgeting and decision-making, and move from reactive crisis management toward inclusive, prevention-oriented governance that strengthens long-term human security.

## Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

In April 2025, CRPM actively contributed to regional efforts to strengthen anti-corruption cooperation through participation in the Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Implementing the United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) held on 8–10 April 2025 in Vrdnik, Serbia. This regional workshop brought together representatives from civil society, government institutions, and international organizations to discuss and enhance collaborative approaches in the fight against corruption and organized crime across Southeast Europe.

The workshop provided an inclusive platform for dialogue on key international frameworks supporting anti-corruption efforts, including the UNCAC's Implementation Review Mechanism and its links with the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (UNTOC) and related protocols. Participants explored how preventive measures and international commitments can be translated into national policies and practices. Discussions emphasized the importance of strengthening corruption risk assessment and corruption proofing legislation across various sectors to boost resilience in the region.

A significant element of the workshop involved interactive group work where civil society representatives and public institution representatives reviewed UNCAC country reports and identified gaps in implementation, proposing concrete follow-up actions for reform. The sessions underscored the value of genuine multi-stakeholder collaboration in advancing transparency, accountability, and effective anti-corruption practices. Throughout the event, participants engaged in constructive discussions with international experts, fostering stronger cooperation between civil society organizations and public administration actors towards building more transparent and resilient societies in Southeast Europe.



## Gender Budgeting in the New MFF: Moving Forward?

On 6 November 2025, during the European Parliament's Gender Equality Week, CRPM's Executive Director Marija Risteska addressed the Committee on Budgets at the exchange of views titled “*Gender Budgeting in the New MFF: Moving Forward?*”

Speaking in her capacity as Gender Budget Expert and Regional Director of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network, she contributed to the high-level debate on how the upcoming 2028–2034 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) can move from political commitments on gender equality to binding budgetary practice. In her intervention, Risteska underlined that financing equality is not optional but a treaty obligation and a prerequisite for effective governance, warning that increased allocations to narrowly defined security priorities must not come at the expense of social investment, care systems, and inclusion.

Drawing on CRPM's regional experience in the Western Balkans and the work of the Gender Budget Watchdog Network, Risteska called for the institutionalization of gender-responsive budgeting across all EU programs. She advocated for mandatory ex-ante gender impact assessments, clearly defined gender objectives and indicators, systematic ex-post evaluations and gender audits, as well as stronger transparency requirements through accessible digital reporting. Emphasizing that budgets are political statements of values and priorities, she urged Members of the Committee to ensure that the next MFF becomes an engine of equality, resilience, and democratic accountability—placing human security and measurable progress on closing gender gaps at the core of EU financial governance



## Green Urban Transport Solutions Conference

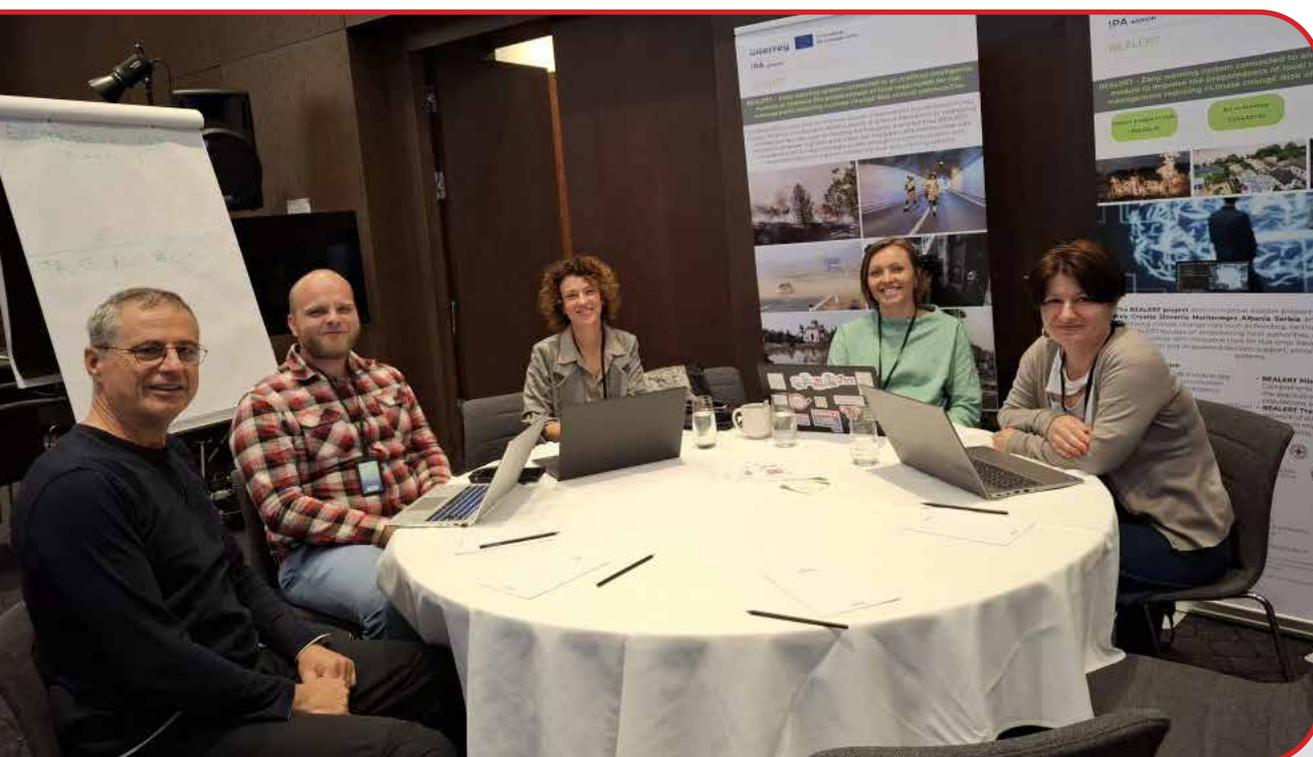
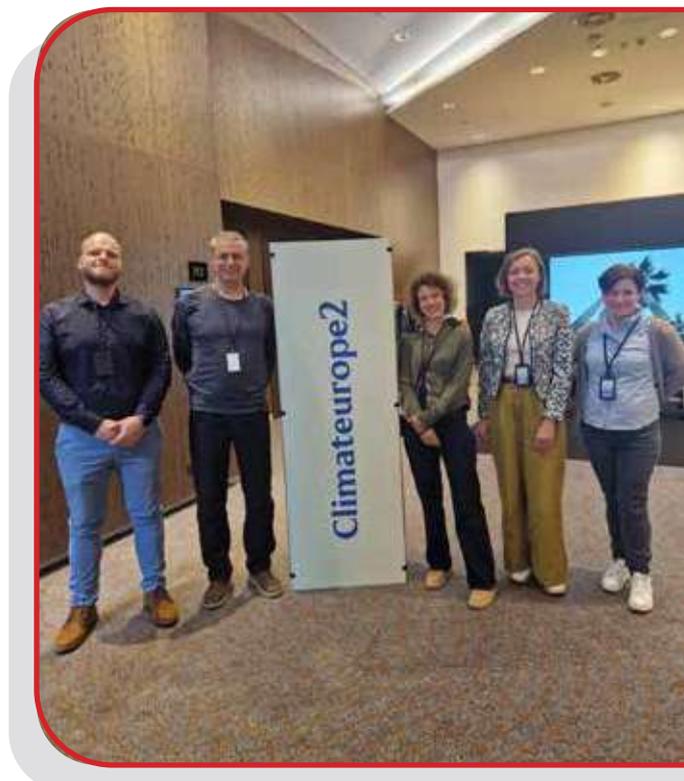
CRPM's participation in the Green Urban Transport Solutions Conference, held in Ohrid 24-25 April 2025 resulted in the strengthened visibility and policy relevance of the Macedonian Green Parliamentary Group within regional discussions on sustainable urban mobility and climate-friendly transport in the Western Balkans. Building on CRPM's continuous support to the GPG since its establishment, the conference served as a concrete example of how sustained engagement enables meaningful parliamentary participation in regional policy processes. Through active engagement in high-level panel discussions, the coordinator of the Macedonian GPG, MP Toni Jarevski, contributed directly to shaping the debate on the Integrated Sustainable Mobility Framework for the Western Balkans, particularly regarding the obligations of national institutions and the legislative role of parliaments. A key outcome of the conference was the reinforced recognition of parliamentarians as drivers of the green transport transition. MPs, especially those who are GPG members are active shapers and will continue to be monitors of sustainable policy implementation.



## Climateurope2 Festival

CRPM participated at the Climateurope2 Conference to strengthening the visibility, relevance, and user orientation of the BEALERT early warning platform within the European climate services community. Together with representatives of the Municipality of Ajdovščina, CRPM jointly presented the BEALERT project and platform (implemented under the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme), demonstrating how transnational cooperation between research organizations and local authorities can support more effective climate risk communication and early warning systems.

CRPM's facilitated a World Café session and generated concrete, user-driven insights: trust is central to user response, warnings issued or endorsed by governmental institutions and local authorities is a preference; simple and reliable communication channels, particularly SMS alerts linked to web-based platforms providing detailed and updated information is needed; community preparedness, emphasizing education on hazards, awareness-raising campaigns, school drills, and concise written and video instructions on how to respond to emergencies for the purpose of development of an integrated, user-centred BEALERT's platform with integrated AI use in disaster risk response in the Adriatic-Ionian region.





## OSCE Chairpersonship Forum “Building a Resilient Future in a Changing Climate”

In September 2025 at the Czernin Palace in Prague, Marija Risteska contributed as a speaker in Session II: “*The whole-of-society approach – investing in resilience and preparedness*” of the OSCE Finland Chairpersonship Forum. In her intervention, she presented CRPM’s integrated model of resilience-building in North Macedonia, highlighting over two decades of experience in strengthening institutional, municipal and community capacities to respond to radicalization risks, climate impacts and disaster risk reduction (DRR). She emphasized CRPM’s “think-and-do tank” approach, which combines policy innovation, capacity-building workshops, mentoring of local gender champions, and direct support to civil society and public institutions to ensure that resilience measures are not only technically sound but socially inclusive and community-driven. She underscored that integrating gender into DRR is not solely a matter of equity, but of effectiveness: gender-sensitive early warning systems, inclusive crisis management planning, and pre-allocated, gender-responsive emergency budgets reduce vulnerability, save lives and increase trust in institutions.

## 2025 Belgrade Security Conference - BSC

In November 2025, as part of the BSC Young Leaders Program, CRPM’s Stefanija Zmijanac engaged in structured discussions on democracy, regional cooperation, EU enlargement, and key security challenges facing the region within the BSC. At the panel “*Youth and Security: Between Perception and Reality*”, Stefanija Zmijanac highlighted the importance of early prevention of violence in schools, emphasizing the role of comprehensive youth programs in fostering safe and inclusive environments. Her contribution reflects CRPM’s continued commitment to youth engagement and violence prevention, including through the Young Men Initiative (YMI) and CRPM’s broader work on gender-based violence prevention. Participation in the Belgrade Security Conference reinforced our role in regional policy dialogue and its efforts to support youth-led approaches to peace-building, social cohesion, and long-term security in the Western Balkans.



## EU Enlargement

In 2025 Dr. Marija Risteska spoke at two forums on EU enlargement. The first, EU Enlargement Forum organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic in Prague Dr. Marija Risteska participated as a panelist in the public debate *“Women in the EU Accession Process: Then and Now.”* In her intervention, she critically reflected on the lessons of the 2004 enlargement, arguing that while legal harmonization advanced gender equality on paper, genuine institutional and societal transformation often lagged behind. Drawing on CRPM’s two decades of work on gender mainstreaming and EU integration in the Western Balkans, she highlighted how accession logic tends to reward formal compliance rather than measurable social outcomes. Risteska emphasized the need to embed gender equality as a binding, benchmarked and financially supported condition of accession—integrated into governance systems, public budgets, and performance indicators—so that future enlargement processes deliver substantive improvements in women’s everyday lives rather than surface-level reforms.



At the second, high-level conference EU Enlargement: Balkans, Ukraine – Who Shall Be Next and Why? Dr. Risteska was a keynote panelist speaking in Panel I, “*Waiting for Godot: European Enlargement in the Western Balkans*,” alongside senior government representatives from Montenegro and Serbia, she provided a critical assessment of why EU accession in the Western Balkans has stalled despite sustained reform efforts. At the conference organized by Module University in Vienna, Risteska argued that the new enlargement methodology has shifted the process from merit-based evaluation toward politicization and securitization, weakening predictability and credibility. Drawing on CRPM’s research and regional data, she highlighted how prolonged accession delays, combined with demographic decline and labour emigration, are generating structural economic and social vulnerabilities that undermine both regional resilience and the EU’s own strategic interests. She concluded by emphasizing that completing Europe’s unification through a credible, phased and performance-based enlargement process is no longer merely a political choice, but a geopolitical necessity.



## Global Engagement

CRPM's participation in the WE Finance Code Community of Champions Study Tour 2025 in Rwanda, positioned the organization within a global peer-learning platform focused on translating commitments for improved financing opportunities for Women owned/-led MSMEs into measurable impact. The event brought together central banks, regulators, financial service providers and development partners to exchange practical experiences on coalition-building, data systems, incentives and accountability mechanisms. CRPM together with Frankfurt School of Finance and Management coordinates the WE Finance Code implementation in Western Balkans, Ukraine and Moldova. As a short-term priority of the Berlin Process for EU integration the WE Finance Code through the work of national coalitions that offer robust governance models drive financial sector stakeholders to make ambitious commitments and clearly defined KPIs that strengthen women's access to finance.



In 2025 we were also present at the Global Trade and Innovation Policy Association - GTIPA Summit "South Meets North" held in Argentina and focusing on deregulation that can facilitate innovation and technology development. For this purpose we have visited Mercado libre and Globant as well as heard about the Chilean experiences of smart regulation and smart deregulation strengthening the consumer freedom to choice.



CRPM participated in the high-level dialogue on "Strengthening Gender-Responsive Budgeting in the Global South", organized with the DAKSHIN-Global South Centre of Excellence (RIS, India), where Dr. Marija Risteska delivered keynote remarks and presented the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN) model. Drawing on GBWN's experience of mobilizing over 100 civil society organizations across the Western Balkans and Moldova, she showcased how gender budget watchdogging moves beyond formal budget analysis to examine who benefits, who is left behind, and whether pub-

lic finance delivers transformative gender outcomes. The discussion, which brought together experts from India, Cambodia, Argentina, the Maldives and Tanzania, highlighted the replicability of GBWN's methodology in monitoring climate finance, resilience spending and SDG 5.c.1 commitments.

CRPM's engagement in the "Enabling Circular Economy for a Sustainable Global South" international workshop organized by DAKSHIN – Global South Centre of Excellence, in partnership with the International Council for Circular Economy (ICCE), India was a great opportunity for Dr. Biljana Matevska to present CRPM's case study on organic waste management in grapes and wine production in the Tikvesh region. The presentation of the pilot implemented with GIZ and Bovin Winery addressed a structural challenge that is common across developing countries: limited valorisation of agricultural and agro-industrial waste, widespread outdoor burning, greenhouse gas emissions, and weak regulatory enforcement.



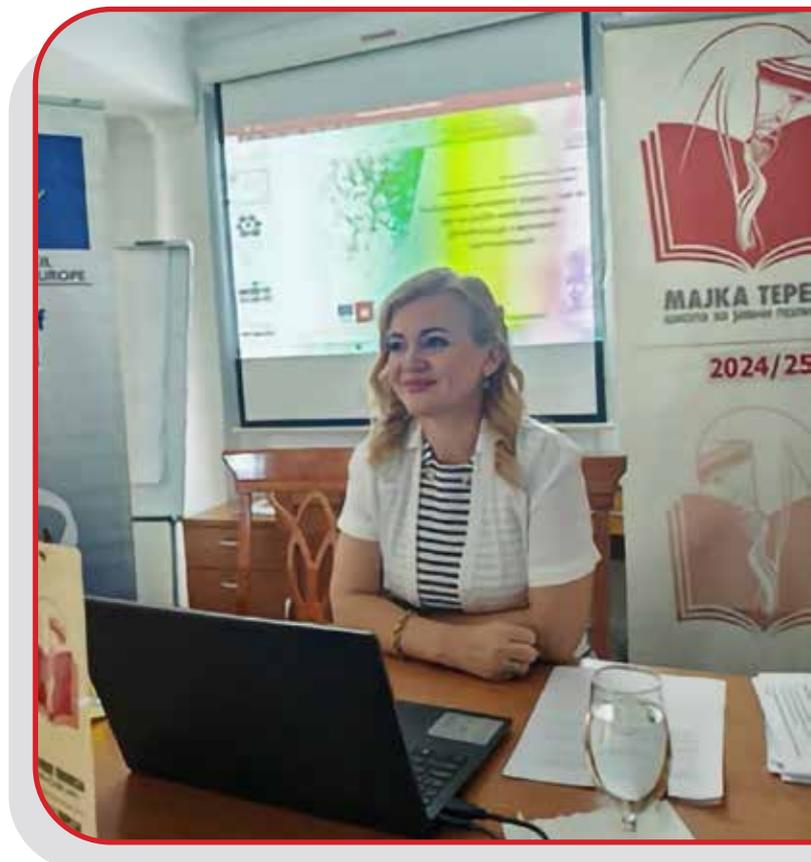
# II. CRPM policy research and analysis work

CRPM's research and policy analysis work remains the core engine of its mission to "improve policies, contribute to development and Europeanize Macedonia and the region based on evidence-based policy analysis". Guided by its 2022–2032 Strategy, CRPM combines rigorous quantitative and qualitative methodologies with field-based research to generate context-specific, implementable solutions across its three strategic pillars: democracy and good governance, sustainable development, and human development. As a "think and do tank," CRPM does not stop at diagnosis; it translates research into policy models, advocacy strategies, pilot interventions and institutional capacity-building, ensuring that analysis leads to measurable public value. In the past year we have invigorated policy debates and instigated thinking in the following areas:

## 2.1. Leadership and education for good governance

### School of Public Policy Mother Theresa

Through democratic education the School of Public Policy 'Mother Teresa' strives to advance liberal values, foster democratic culture, and enhance policy-making processes nationwide. Our mission is to cultivate ethical leadership inspired by Mother Teresa's principles, promoting social justice and addressing poverty and hardship as threats to peace. In 2025 twenty participants (students) were engaged already selected based on the following criteria: advanced knowledge in the field of public policy; readiness to work on improving liberal democracy in Macedonia and minimizing poverty in the country; and multicultural values. In the reporting period, we had twenty lecturers, about third of which are alumni of the School.



In 2025, the School of Public Policy “Mother Teresa” delivered a comprehensive and multidisciplinary programme that combined academic depth with first-hand policy experience, reflecting CRPM’s mission to bridge research, leadership, and real-world governance practice. The curriculum addressed major national, regional, and European challenges, with strong emphasis on EU enlargement, democratic resilience, rule of law, and economic convergence under the EU Growth Plan. Central debates focused on “Towards a New Democratic



*Pact for Europe*” (inspired by the 2025 Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe), the reform agenda linked to EU accession, predictability of foreign policy, and the evolving role of national parliaments in safeguarding sovereignty and democracy within the EU. Sessions also examined socio-economic challenges in the Western Balkans, economic convergence strategies, institutional integrity reforms for 2025–2030, and governance cycles, offering participants structured tools to analyze policy effectiveness and reform implementation.

The School further expanded discussions to include geopolitics, securitization processes, crime’s influence on governance, the transformation of traditional media in times of geopolitical shifts, and the intersection of politics, religion, and democracy. Regional environmental governance was addressed through debates on green politics in the Shar Planina region, while globalisation and deliberative democracy were explored in comparative perspective. The 2025 cohort of students benefited from engagement with high-level policymakers, diplomats, academics, business leaders, and media practitioners—including lectures by the Ambassadors of Germany, Hungary, Lithuania, senior government officials, leading university professors, security experts, and representatives of the Foreign Investors Council—ensuring that discussions combined theoretical grounding with practical insights from governance, business, diplomacy, and public communication. Through this diverse programme, the School continued to strengthen democratic leadership capacities and critical policy thinking among future decision-makers in Macedonia and the Western Balkans.



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## Capacity development of Informal Green Parliamentary Groups from South-East Europe on EU-compliant energy and transport goals - Green Parliamentary Group

During the final phase of the project “Capacity Development of Informal Green Parliamentary Groups from South-East Europe on EU-compliant Energy and Transport Goals”, CRPM consolidated the long-term results of its engagement by further strengthening the effectiveness, visibility, and policy relevance of the Macedonian Green Parliamentary Group - GPG at both national and regional levels.

A central achievement was the completion of the project’s podcast series with eminent environmental experts and MPs: Slavjanka Pejchinovska Andonova, , Prof. Dr. Jana Klopchevska, Gordana Nestorovska, and MPs Toni Jarevski and Velika Velika Stojkova-Serafimovska touching upon very complex and important policy areas such as why gender-responsive climate action is a must, climate change impacts and adaptation in Macedonia, bio-waste valorization for energy production, national energy transition governance, and the role of women parliamentarians in advancing the green agenda. These podcasts enhanced MPs’ substantive understanding of interconnected climate, energy, and transport challenges, reinforced the public profile of the GPG, and contributed to broader societal awareness of green transition priorities. CRPM also contributed to strengthening parliamentary oversight and legislative-executive dialogue through support of parliamentary questions related to environmental governance, waste import practices and regulatory procedures and inspection practices.

At the regional level, CRPM supported the active participation of the Macedonian GPG members in several high-level exchanges, like the meeting of all GPG from Western Balkans with the Transport Community in Skopje, regional conference - Green Urban Transport Solutions Conference in Ohrid and the regional project closing event in Podgorica. In all mentioned events, Macedonian GPG members contributed substantively to discussions on EU-aligned transport frameworks, development of the TEN-T network, smart mobility solutions and energy transition progress.



Implemented by:



## Regional School for Political Development

In 2025, the Regional School for Political Development - RSPD reached its most important outcome, which is a new generation of 30 young leaders from the Macedonia, Croatia and Serbia that successfully completed the programme equipped with knowledge, confidence, regional connections, and concrete solutions to advance green public policies and democratic engagement in their communities.

Throughout the programme, young leaders from the three countries deepened their understanding of green public policies, EU integration processes, advocacy tools, and democratic decision-making. Just as importantly, they built lasting cross-border friendships and professional networks, breaking down stereotypes and national silos that often limit cooperation among the implementing countries. As confirmed by the programme evaluation, majority of the participants reported strengthened capacities and expanded national and regional networks, with many already applying newly acquired skills in their professional, academic, or civic work. The culmination of this learning journey was reflected in the six policy initiatives and solutions developed by the participants themselves with mentoring support. Working in international teams, they translated knowledge into practical, context-specific policy proposals addressing waste reduction, clean energy, climate change adaptation, sustainable urban mobility, urban planning, and the reduction of single-use plastics.



The final regional conference in Skopje and the outreach event in Ohrid served as platforms to share, test, and strengthen these ideas. More than 150 stakeholders from across the region public officials, CSOs, youth groups, students, academia, media, and the private sector engaged directly with participants, discussing their proposals and exchanging experiences from the whole Balkan Region. The exchange of regional showcases and grassroots initiatives reinforced the message that young people from these countries possess creativity, knowledge, and leadership capable of driving sustainable change.



**Regional School**  
for Political Development

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## SMART Balkans

The SMART Balkans project resulted in two Financial Academies being accredited as adult education programs for civil society organizations (CSOs) in North Macedonia and Serbia.

Within the SMART Balkans project, one generation of 32 organizations (16 per country) successfully completed the Academy in 2025. As part of the Academy, a comprehensive Financial Management Manual was developed for both countries in the local languages, providing participants with a practical reference guide to apply the knowledge gained during the training in their daily work. To complement in-person and structured learning, CRPM also developed a dedicated e-learning platform, which functioned as an interactive learning and exchange space. Through the platform, participants actively engaged with experts by completing knowledge quizzes, tests, and practical assignments, participating in thematic debates and peer discussions, and receiving individualized feedback from trainers.

The Module on Financial Planning and Budgeting developed skills in organizational and project-level budgeting, resource allocation, and monitoring as well as improved ability to align financial plans with organizational strategies. The module on Internal Controls and Compliance was designed for strengthening internal control systems, risk management, and compliance procedures enhancing audit readiness and donor reporting. The work of CRPM with grantees from the region showed that CSOs need to link the project activities and results better with financial reporting, thus the third module focused on Project-Cycle Financial Management. Overall, through the Academy participants gained practical experience in procurement processes, documentation, and audit preparation as well as boosted confidence in meeting legal and donor obligations.



In 2025, CRPM, through the SMART Balkans program, delivered measurable and transformative support to civil society in N. Macedonia and Serbia. A total of 34 civil society organizations (12 in N. Macedonia and 14 in Serbia) received grants amounting to 3,565,929.29 NOK, strengthening civic resilience, democratic accountability, and institutional sustainability. Across both countries, supported initiatives advanced democratic governance and accountability, human rights and media freedom, youth participation and social inclusion, gender equality and women’s empowerment, security and rule of law, and environmental protection and green transition.

## North Macedonia – 2025 Results of the grant scheme

SMART Balkans grantees in North Macedonia achieved systemic improvements in governance transparency, digital resilience, environmental protection, youth engagement, and institutional accountability.

	Organization	Key Results 2025
<b>Core Grants – Strengthening Institutional Resilience</b>	Transparency International–Macedonia	Engaged 334 citizens in anti-corruption initiatives; launched Integrity Watch platform monitoring public spending; advanced whistle-blower and environmental protections.
	Glacen Tekstilec	Expanded labor rights advocacy for women in textile industries; strengthened paralegal services and organizational sustainability.
	LEAD	Empowered 318 students and 189 teachers through service-learning programs promoting civic engagement.
<b>National Intervention Grants – Driving Systemic Change</b>	National Youth Council of Macedonia	Established youth representation mechanisms involving 101 participants.
	Metamorphosis Foundation	Strengthened cybersecurity for 48 CSOs; reached 300,000 citizens through digital resilience initiatives.
	Association of Business Women	Promoted gender-sensitive green entrepreneurship models.
	European Policy Institute	Enhanced judicial capacities on human rights.
<b>Ad – hoc grants</b>	Voluntary Firefighting Association – Sveti Nikole	Developed national sectoral database and planning platform, improving preparedness and coordination.
	Front 21/42	Mobilized 40 national and EU organizations against illegal urbanization threatening UNESCO sites.
	Organization of Women of Strumica	Improved transparency in municipal CSO funding via multi-stakeholder allocation model.
	Association of Financial Officers	Trained 51 practitioners in public procurement across four regional workshops
	Go Green	Promoted urban mobility reform through draft national bicycle infrastructure regulation and public campaigns

## Serbia – 2025 Results of the grant scheme

In a context of political instability and shrinking civic space, SMART Balkans grants played a stabilizing role, enabling civil society to maintain essential services and defend democratic space.

	Organization	Key Results 2025	
<b>Core Grants – Strengthening Institutional Resilience</b>	NDNV (Independent Journalists' Association of Vojvodina)	Sustained legal and psychological support for journalists; maintained national correspondent network; strengthened media freedom advocacy.	
	Academic Inclusive Association (AIA)	Advanced disability rights advocacy; developed nationally accredited training program; secured institutional review of "I Cannot Wait" policy proposal.	
<b>SRB</b>	CPŽ (Centar za podršku ženama)	Expanded psychosocial and legal support for survivors of gender-based violence; strengthened service provision and awareness campaigns.	
	Polekol	Mobilized communities against environmentally harmful extractive projects through legal and advocacy actions.	
<b>National Intervention Grants – Driving Systemic Change</b>	Helsinki Committee for Human Rights	Empowered 90 youth; produced 9 videos and 70+ posts reaching 150,000 people.	
	YUROM Center	Advanced Roma inclusion; key anti-discrimination provisions incorporated into draft Waste Management Law amendments.	
	BOS (Belgrade Open School)	Prevented school dropout among rural girls; established CSO-school collaboration mechanisms.	
	Fenomena	Trained 47 municipal legal officers; informed Free Legal Aid Law amendments; reached 3 million citizens through awareness campaign.	
	Hartefakt Foundation	Reached 886,000 citizens via advocacy campaigns; supported formation of new human rights organization.	
	<b>SRB</b>	InTER	Produced 6 policy briefs; reached 10,000+ stakeholders in Serbia-Kosovo dialogue process.
	CeSID	Conducted nationwide survey (1,000 respondents); reached 153,000 online; enhanced EU integration dialogue.	
<b>Ad – hoc grants</b>	CEPORA	Mapped 63 CSOs supporting youth leaving alternative care; convened national conference with 101 participants.	
	KAREJA	Monitored 547 political violence cases; developed analytical framework; informed civil society and EU institutions.	
	<b>SRB</b>	Center for Strategic Analysis	Produced energy security study with 12 recommendations; convened high-level conference; strengthened informed public debate.

## Capacity Building and Mentoring – 2025

SMART Balkans invested significantly in strengthening organizational sustainability. Five tailor-made training programs were delivered, engaging more than 80 participants in both countries. Two organizations received targeted mentoring support focused on organizational management, financial reporting, communication strategies, and operational efficiency.



Funded by:



## Budget Accountability and Transparency

Under the *Budget Accountability and Transparency* project implemented by IDM, CRPM and Faktoje in Albania, CRPM provided structured research and policy advisory support to a series of watchdog reports focusing on municipal climate budgets, energy and climate action plans, Roma and Egyptian employment inclusion, and local youth municipal budget monitoring. CRPM's advisory role centered on strengthening methodological rigor, comparability of budget data, integration of gender and vulnerable-group perspectives, clarity of statistical baselines, and the development of actionable, municipality-specific policy recommendations. Particular emphasis was placed on improving budget analysis transparency (linking allocations to strategic priorities, clarifying expenditure classifications, and introducing trend analysis), enhancing accountability frameworks (deadlines, procedural obligations, public consultation standards), and transforming general findings into concrete reform proposals aligned with public financial management standards. Through this targeted expert input, CRPM contributed to raising the analytical quality, policy relevance, and advocacy impact of the watchdog reports in Albania, ensuring they move beyond descriptive monitoring toward evidence-based, reform-oriented policy dialogue at both local and national levels.



Budget  
Accountability  
and Transparency

Funded by:



This project is funded  
by the European Union

# Strengthening CSO Capacities for Enhanced Participation and Advocacy in Public Finance Management Processes

As part of the EU-funded IBP project “*Strengthening CSO Capacities for Enhanced Participation and Advocacy in Public Finance Management Processes*”, CRPM implemented a targeted social media campaign aimed at increasing public awareness, stakeholder engagement, and civil society participation in public finance management. The campaign was developed in close synergy with the Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN), ensuring that gender-responsive budgeting and inclusive fiscal governance remained central to all communication activities. During the reporting period, the campaign reached a wide audience, generating a combined reach of over 38,000 users across Facebook and Instagram, with more than 64,000 post views.

The campaign utilized CRPM’s established digital platforms, primarily Facebook and Instagram, to disseminate project-related content. A total of 20 project-related posts were published (10 on Facebook and 10 on Instagram), covering capacity-building activities, research outputs, advocacy actions, and policy recommendations. The campaign sustained audience engagement and effective outreach on PFM issues.

Project implemented in cooperation with  International Budget Partnership funded by:  This project is funded by the European Union

## 2.2. Sustainable Development

### CIBIOGO- Citizen Participation in Biodiversity Governance

As a Discovery Partner in the CIBiOGO project under the Interreg Europe Programme, CRPM’s role is to learn from partner regions, exchange good practices, and strengthen its understanding of EU Interreg implementation mechanisms, with the aim of improving biodiversity governance and participatory policymaking in Macedonia. The project is structured around a series of peer-review exchange visits among partner regions. In 2025 two peer review visits were organized. The Peer Review Visit in Potenza, Italy (March 2025) equipped us with tools on how to meaningfully promote citizen participation in biodiversity governance. Exposure to integrated participatory planning approaches, such as river contracts, community-managed green spaces, digital and immersive tools for public engagement, and biodiversity monitoring linked to spatial planning provided us with concrete, transferable models for bridging the gap between citizens, local authorities, and policy processes. The visit reinforced the importance of anchoring participation within formal governance frameworks while using innovative tools to increase inclusiveness and ownership. These insights are informing CRPM’s advisory and advocacy work at local and national level.

The Peer Review Visit in L'Horta Sud, Spain (May 2025) further enhanced CRPM's strategic understanding of how structured stakeholder consultation can translate into durable governance outcomes in biodiversity and climate-vulnerable contexts. Through hands-on engagement in World Café workshops, masterclasses, and field visits to ecosystems exposed to climate risks, CRPM's team gained practical methodologies for designing participatory processes using citizen science, school-based environmental education, and institutionalised local alliances.



Interreg  
Europe



Co-funded by  
the European Union

Funded by:

CIBioGo

## BEALERT

During 2025, CRPM advanced the implementation of BEALERT project, which is under the Interreg IPA ADRION Programme, aimed at strengthening the preparedness and resilience of local communities and risk managers to climate-related hazards. We have been entrusted as a partner to produce the project's Inception Report, which presents analytical and strategic basis for the development of the BEALERT platform by mapping territorial risks, stakeholder needs, and existing early warning and civil protection systems across the project area. We organised a local stakeholder thematic table in Gostivar to ensure direct engagement with institutions and actors responsible for prevention, preparedness, and emergency response. The discussions enabled a detailed assessment of local risks, existing response mechanisms, and communication practices, confirming significant gaps in early warning systems, risk communication, and community preparedness for floods and wildfires. The Polog region will therefore serve as a key pilot area for adapting, testing, and validating BEALERT platform.

At the transnational level, CRPM's team contributed to strengthening coordination and shared learning through active participation in the second BEALERT Partner Meeting held in Cetinje, Montenegro. The meeting enabled partners to review progress on the Inception Report findings, territorial data collection, stakeholder engagement, and



platform development. BEALERT's strategic positioning within the wider European climate services community was further strengthened through CRPM's team participation in the Climateurope2 Festival in Belgrade



Co-funded by  
the European Union

BEALERT

Funded by: IPA ADRIAN

## Articulation of demographic challenges of ageing and socio-economic context in the WB

During 2025, CRPM continued the implementation of the project “*Articulation of Demographic Challenges of Ageing and the Socio-Economic Context in the Western Balkans*,” supported by the Agence Française de Développement (AFD). Shifting from project inception to intensive field engagement and preparation of country studies in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and N. Macedonia. The project addresses the region's accelerating demographic transformation—characterized by declining fertility, rapid ageing, high emigration, and growing old-age dependency ratios—which increasingly strain labour markets, pension systems, healthcare services, and territorial development. Throughout the year, CRPM conducted three comprehensive field missions (Tirana, Sarajevo/Banja Luka, and Skopje), engaging ministries, statistical offices, pension funds, academia, parliamentarians, and international organizations including IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, and the World Bank. These consultations refined the methodological framework, mapped institutional competencies and data gaps, validated research design, and strengthened cross-sector partnerships. By the end of 2025, drafting of three country-specific analytical studies was underway, laying the foundation for evidence-based policy recommendations and regional dialogue in 2026 aimed at supporting sustainable demographic, social, and economic strategies across the Western Balkans.



Funded by:

## 2.3. Human development

### Increasing Employment Opportunities for Seasonal Workers in the SEE Region

In 2025, CRPM successfully maintained the planned implementation pace of the project “*Better Employment Conditions for Seasonal Workers in North Macedonia*”, in partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ GmbH), achieving a major structural reform milestone.

## Legislative Reform Achieved

A key result of the project was the adoption of the new Law on Work Engagement of Persons on 20 May 2025 by the Assembly of the Republic of N. Macedonia. The law establishes, for the first time, a structured legal framework regulating occasional and seasonal work, directly addressing labour informality in vulnerable sectors.

The legislative process was characterized by:

- An inclusive, evidence-based consultation process led by CRPM;
- Cross-party political support, demonstrating broad institutional consensus.

The reform was publicly endorsed through a joint press conference with representatives of Parliament, GIZ, and CRPM, reinforcing institutional commitment to tackling informal employment.



## Institutional Strengthening and Digital System Upgrades

Beyond legislative adoption, 2025 focused on operationalizing the reform. CRPM provided targeted technical assistance to ensure effective implementation, working closely with:

- The Public Revenue Office;
- The Employment Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia;
- The Ministry of Economy and Labour.

Concrete results included:

- Upgrading and adapting electronic systems for registering work engagements;
- Improving digital procedures for tax and social contribution processing;
- Simplifying registration and deregistration processes for work-engaged persons.

BMZ funded technical upgrades ensured that institutions are now equipped with functional digital tools necessary for practical enforcement of the Law. To formalize and sustain cooperation, CRPM signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Employment Service Agency and the Public Revenue office, institutionalizing collaboration for continued system improvements and implementation support.

The project has moved beyond policy development into systemic reform. By strengthening the legal and operational framework for seasonal work engagement, CRPM directly contributes to: formalization of informal economic activities of seasonal and occasional workers; improved compliance with tax and social contribution obligations; and advancement of commitments under the national reform agenda and EU Growth Plan.



Funded by:

## Young Man's Initiative in Gender Based Violence Prevention in N. Macedonia

The *Young Men Initiative* was implemented in nine municipalities: Skopje, Centar, Gjorče Petrov, Gazi Baba, Tetovo, Ohrid, Shtip, Kavadarci, and Negotino directly engaged more than 400 young people, with broader outreach across schools and local communities. The intervention was based on the internationally recognized Program M and Program Y, developed by CARE International, which focus on transforming harmful gender norms and strengthening life skills among young women and men.

**Behavioral Change and Youth Empowerment** - The project achieved measurable progress in promoting non-violent behaviors grounded in equality, mutual respect, and healthy communication. Through structured life-skills education, volunteerism, and youth activism, participants demonstrated: increased openness to discussing gender norms and stereotypes; improved peer relationships and conflict-resolution skills; more responsible and empathetic responses to violence, including digital gender-based violence (GBV); and stronger leadership and civic engagement capacities.

**Institutionalization Through Schools and Municipal Partnerships** - In 2025, implementation was consolidated through: delivery of Program M and Y workshops in all nine municipalities, in cooperation with five local CSOs, high schools, primary schools, and youth centers; active engagement of municipalities and continued cooperation with the Ministry of Education, including participation in project activities and a Community of Practice; completion of needs assessments for establishing sustainable "Be a Man Clubs" in all municipalities, laying the groundwork for building



long-term safe spaces for youth dialogue and peer learning. The strong involvement of educational institutions and local authorities represents a shift from project-based intervention toward institutional ownership and sustainability.

**Peer education for youth-led community impact** - Through the “Closing the Gender Gap: Building Financial Literacy among Girls” initiative, young peer educators from the YMI network were trained to deliver financial literacy programs in Gostivar, Tetovo, Ohrid, and Struga. By enhancing their knowledge in personal finance management, salary negotiation, entrepreneurship, and presentation skills, the project established a multiplier effect: trained educators are now equipped to transfer critical financial competencies to young girls in their communities. This contributes directly to narrowing the gender gap in economic participation, strengthening girls’ financial confidence, and promoting long-term economic independence. Also, in 2025 a second peer educator training

focused on Design Thinking and youth engagement methodologies. Participants developed practical tools to better understand youth needs, co-create solutions, and design inclusive youth club activities and social campaigns. By integrating structured methodologies such as persona development and problem-tree analysis, peer educators strengthened their ability to develop evidence-based, community-responsive initiatives. The outcome is a new generation of youth leaders equipped with actionable plans to foster safe, inclusive spaces, promote non-violent norms, and drive positive social change at the local level.



**Regional Cooperation and Youth Leadership** - Youth participants strengthened regional cooperation and leadership skills through participation in the regional youth camp “Sunčana Reka” (Serbia, June–July 2025), organized by CARE Balkans. The camp enhanced competencies in leadership, mental health awareness, communication, and cross-border collaboration, reinforcing the project’s regional dimension.



**Public Awareness and Community Impact** - The project extended its impact beyond direct participants through sustained media and advocacy efforts: a year-long youth media campaign disseminated videos, reels, and podcasts presenting positive role models and project results; the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence campaign reached approximately 29,000 people online, combining digital outreach and offline engagement focused on digital GBV prevention, reporting mechanisms, empathy toward victims, and responsible online behavior. These activities contributed to increased public awareness of GBV prevention and youth-led advocacy.

**Sustainability and Scaling** - The final project event brought together institutions, educators, CSOs, youth, and parents to validate results and discuss future scaling. Stakeholders confirmed commitment to sustaining and expanding life-skills education, GBV prevention, and gender-transformative youth programming within schools and local communities. By the end of 2025, the project had moved beyond awareness raising to establishing durable partnerships, strengthening institutional readiness, and embedding gender-transformative approaches within local education ecosystems. The initiative leaves behind strengthened youth leadership networks, institutional engagement, and concrete foundations for sustainable safe spaces promoting equality and non-violence.



Young  
Men  
Initiative

Funded by: Embassy of Kingdom of Netherlands



Kingdom of the Netherlands

## Gender Budget Watchdog Network (GBWN)

In 2025, despite backlash on gender equality and the shrinking civic funding space, GBWN sustained and expanded its impact by directly supporting 14 local CSO initiatives focused on climate finance monitoring, watchdog activities using gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) tools, and structured advocacy on local and national level. This ensured continued civil society oversight of public climate and development spending at local and national levels.

GBWN advocacy translated into concrete policy reforms: operationalizing the new Law on Budgets and institutionalizing gender requirements in public budgeting through the Macedonian *Rulebook for Gender-Responsive Budget Statements*; in multiple municipalities (Berovo, Kavadarci, Kocani, Karposh), gender perspectives were integrated into local disaster risk response development plans; in Bratunac, BIH local advocacy resulted in adoption of a Rulebook supporting women in agriculture; in Moldova, gender objectives and indicators were incorporated into labour sector sub-programmes, while civil society recommendations influenced the gender mainstreaming of the 2025 agricultural subsidy programme.

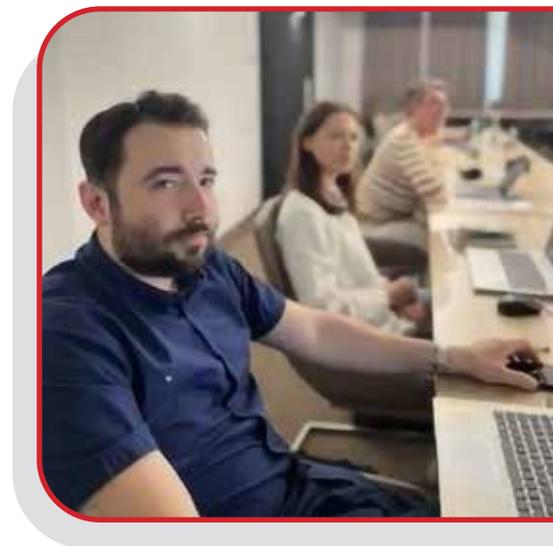
Regionally, GBWN strengthened cross-border cooperation by engaging 6 CSOs in two joint initiatives addressing gender budgeting, disability inclusion, and agriculture–climate policy frameworks. These collaborations deepened regional policy dialogue and harmonized GRB advocacy approaches.

At the European level, GBWN strengthened partnerships with the European Gender Budgeting Network and the European Women’s Lobby, by building a joint advocacy platform on the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2027-2034 of the European Union.

**Powerful capacity-building and advocacy hub** – in the course of the year GBWN delivered 5 specialized advocacy and climate trainings for 20 CSOs; 40 tailored mentoring sessions on GRB and climate advocacy; 20 organizational and advocacy capacity assessments; organized 7 thematic webinars for network members and wider audiences and produce 6 podcasts. This systematic investment significantly enhanced technical expertise, advocacy skills, and institutional resilience of member organizations.

**Advancing accountability on execution of Gender Budgets**

- GBWN monitoring work contributed to greater transparency and accountability for gender equality commitments in Western Balkans and Moldova. The regular monitoring of the 2023 budgeting process using SDG 5c1 indicator framework was produced and a regional snapshot assessed progress on SDG 5.c.1 across the Western Balkans and Moldova was published. In addition, the GRB hubs in all 7 countries of intervention monitored the execution of the local and national budgets for gender equality, producing a regional Gender Budget Credibility Report. The two outputs are to inform parliamentary and oversight hearings and improve not just planning but also realization of gender budgets.



**Contributing to understanding better the nexus between Gender and Climate change**- quantitative and qualitative research on transport and gender equality and its impact on climate change resulted in 7 national and one regional transport analyses which exposed gender-blind and climate-inefficient transport systems, highlighting structural inequalities affecting women’s mobility and safety. Through strategic communication in each country advocacy campaigns were launched and a case study on gender, transport and care as a contribution to the Lima program on Gender was produced for the purpose of international advocacy of findings from the region.

**Consolidating a Strong Regional Movement** - In 2025, GBWN’s regional workshops and network meetings significantly strengthened the Network’s strategic coherence, advocacy effectiveness, accountability framework, and international positioning.

The Second Communication Meeting in Chişinău marked a strategic turning point in aligning communication, advocacy, and network development priorities across the Western Balkans and Moldova. By refining the Communication Strategy and aligning it with the Project Document, Network Development Strategy, and Advocacy Plan, GBWN enhanced its ability to deliver unified, evidence-based advocacy at regional and national levels. The finalization of the PEFA campaign strategy and the Transport Advocacy Plan strengthened GBWN’s leadership in promoting transparent, inclusive,

and climate-conscious public finance and mobility policies. The systematic collection of impact stories from sub-grantees further reinforced the Network's evidence base, improving its credibility with institutions and donors and amplifying the real-life impact of gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) initiatives.

The Quality Standards Workshop in Krushevo institutionalized GBWN's commitment to accountability, transparency, and excellence. By co-creating GBWN-specific quality standards grounded in globally recognized civil society accountability frameworks, the Network took a decisive step toward professionalization and long-term sustainability. The development of tailored quality standards for research, analysis, and advocacy strengthened internal governance mechanisms and ensured consistency, credibility, and mission alignment across member organizations. This represents a foundational investment in GBWN's institutional resilience and reputation as a regional center of expertise.

The Strategic Expansion Workshop in Montenegro repositioned GBWN from a strong regional network toward an emerging global actor. Through stakeholder mapping, donor landscape analysis, and identification of strategic international partnerships, GBWN developed a preliminary roadmap for global engagement. The workshop clarified GBWN's added value as a center of excellence in gender-responsive budgeting and climate finance advocacy, setting the stage for expanded participation in international policy arenas and cross-regional alliances.

The Annual Network Meeting in Skopje consolidated these advancements by translating strategy into collective ownership and future-oriented action. Members deepened their focus on gender-responsive climate finance, transport, domestic resource mobilization, green jobs, circular economy, agriculture subsidies, and women's economic empowerment. Importantly, the meeting reinforced GBWN's watchdog role,

strengthened commitments to inclusion (including disability rights), and explored diversified funding models to ensure financial sustainability.

Collectively, the 2025 workshops and meetings elevated GBWN from a coordination platform to a strategically aligned, standards-driven, and internationally oriented advocacy network. They strengthened institutional capacity, enhanced policy influence potential, and positioned GBWN as a credible and resilient actor advancing gender-equal and climate-responsive public finance systems across the region and beyond.

The year concluded with the International GRB Forum "Going Glocal 2.0: Sustainable Gender-Responsive Futures," gathering over 100 participants from across Europe, followed by the Annual Network Meeting in Skopje — reaffirming GBWN's role as a leading regional platform advancing gender-responsive climate governance.



Funded by:  International Partnerships Austria 

## Guardian Shield

Under the *Guardian Shield* project, CRPM successfully operationalized a Referral Mechanism in three pilot municipalities aimed at strengthening local resilience against radicalization and violent extremism in North Macedonia

**Institutionalization of the Referral Mechanism** - A key structural result was the formal establishment of Local Referral Mechanisms in three pilot municipalities — Gostivar, Kumanovo, and Shtip — through signed Memoranda of Understanding and official municipal decisions. The project also developed and validated through pilot implementation Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for the referral mechanism, that are now available in Macedonian, Albanian, and English.

Through the pilot implementation 15 municipal representatives were formally engaged and strengthened coordination between local authorities and the National Coordination Office (NCCVET) in prevention from violent extremism. Structured dialogue was facilitated between local and national levels, reinforcing vertical cooperation and institutional ownership of the mechanism.

**Capacity Building of Frontline Education Workers and Civil Society** - The project directly reached 190 individuals were involved in projects discussions and trainings. There were 5 meetings and 2 workshops held with NCCVET members, experts, and donors active in the field. Capacities were built for 140 CSOs, front-line workers, Strategic Boards members, and Experts Teams.

Education system front line workers successfully completed refresher (online and in-person) trainings on detecting signs of radicalization while the competences of municipal officials were strengthened for application of referral procedures and prevention approaches. CSOs enhanced their capacities through a three-day training focused on prevention, early identification, and referral practices. These interventions strengthened the preparedness of frontline workers, civil society, and municipal actors to detect early signs of radicalization and apply standardized referral procedures.

The pilot model demonstrates a practical and replicable approach for institutionalizing prevention mechanisms at local level, contributing to national efforts to counter violent extremism through coordinated, community-based responses. Through the Guardian Shield project, CRPM reinforced institutional resilience, improved operational readiness of local actors, and laid the foundation for sustainable, structured prevention systems aligned with national CVE priorities.



implemented in partnership with



and funded by:



This project is funded  
by the European Union

# III. CRPM events

## SMART Balkans Conference

With our partners CPCD from Bosnia and Herzegovina and IDM from Albania we have organized the last Smart Balkans conference “Think SMART: Rethinking the Old-School Funding Approach” in Sarajevo.

The two-day event convened regional CSO leaders, funders, and experts to discuss innovative financing strategies, sustainable grant models, and the evolving role of civil society in the Western Balkans. Panels explored trends in funding, the efficiency and costs of grant mechanisms, and best practices for building resilient, adaptive CSOs capable of responding to emerging governance and social challenges.

CRPM’s participation facilitated knowledge exchange on CSO sustainability, adaptive management, and strategic advocacy, while connecting Macedonian civil society with regional counterparts and international funders. Insights gained from panels on ideal CSO models and evolving funding approaches are being incorporated into CRPM’s ongoing support for local partners, strengthening institutional capacity, financial planning, and long-term impact under the SMART Balkans framework.



## Regional School for Political Development Conference

With our partners Foundation BFPE for responsible society from Serbia and *Academy for Political Development* from Croatia we have organized and hosted a conference “Green Horizons: Shaping the Future of Environmental Protection and Sustainable Development,” in Skopje. The event brought together over 150 participants from across the region, including public officials, CSOs representatives, student groups, academia, media, and the business sector from Macedonia, Croatia, and Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, and Kosovo, creating a uniquely diverse and inclusive regional forum for dialogue on sustainability and green development.



The conference marked a key milestone in consolidating two years of regional cooperation within the framework of the Regional School for Political Development and demonstrated the tangible outcomes of sustained investment in dialogue, leadership, and policy innovation. In the opening plenary, contributions from Igor Roginek, Executive Director of the Academy for Political Development, Dragan Tilev, State Counselor of the Government of North Macedonia, Dunja Trifunović of UNECE, and Lena Schilling, Member of the European Parliament (Greens/EFA), provided strong political and strategic framing, reaffirming the Western Balkans' place within broader European sustainability and green transition processes.

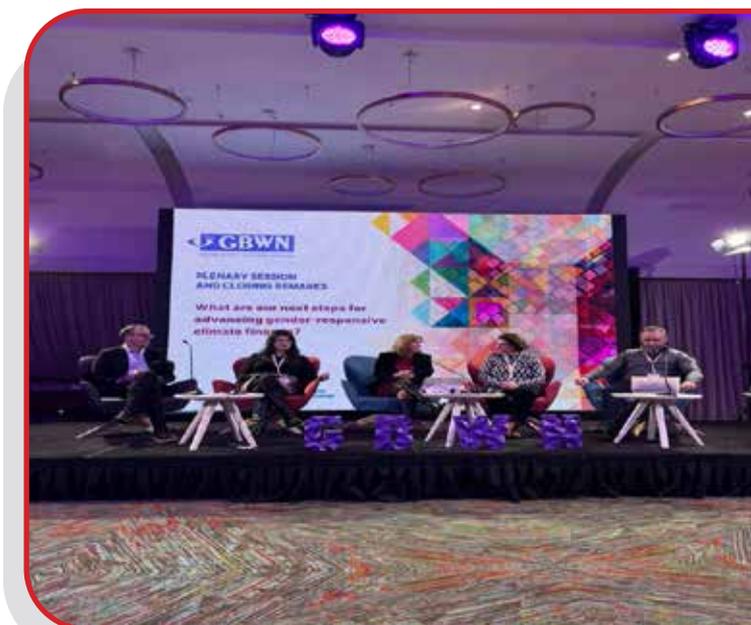
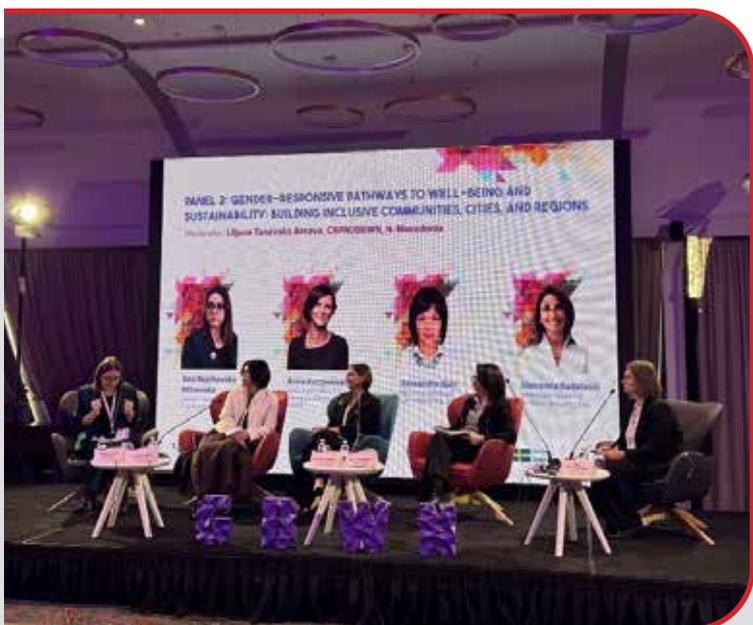
A central outcome of the conference was the collective sharing, presentation, and discussion of all six initiatives and policy proposals developed by the first generation students under the mentorship of the programme addressing waste reduction, clean energy, climate change adaptation, sustainable urban mobility, urban planning, and the reduction of single-use plastics.

## International Gender Responsive Budgeting Forum

This year's edition of the GBWN conference was organized under the title "Going Global 2.0: Sustainable Gender-Responsive Futures". Held in Skopje and organized by the Gender Budget Watchdog Network and CEI the Forum linked global expertise and local experience with the main focus on climate financing from a gender perspective. CRPM hosted more than 100 participants (84 females and 19 males) from 19 countries and engaged the audience into discussions on "good budgeting" once more confirmed that the good budgeting improves the overall quality, transparency, accountability, efficiency and inclusiveness of the process, brings to the surface social inequalities and injustice and provides solutions to better tackle these problems, towards equality.



The Forum elevated civil society's watchdog role in monitoring climate funds, public investments, and transport systems, while reinforcing cross-sector cooperation between governments, parliaments, municipalities, financial institutions, and NGOs. Regional evidence presented during the panels highlighted steady progress in legal frameworks for GRB, yet persistent gaps in implementation, gender-disaggregated data, and accountability mechanisms. By validating monitoring findings, refining advocacy recommendations, and strengthening institutional dialogue (including parliamentary engagement and municipal follow-up actions), the Forum contributed to more structured, evidence-based policy influence at both national and regional levels.



Importantly, the Forum moved beyond discussion to practical capacity-building and policy-shaping outcomes. Through interactive workshops, participants applied gender analysis tools to major climate funds (GCF, GEF, SCCF, WBIF), green investments, domestic resource mobilization, and transport planning, enhancing their ability to track planned versus executed funds and assess gender impact. Concrete examples from municipalities (e.g., improved mobility planning, local gender action plans, gender tagging tools, and strengthened monitoring frameworks) demonstrated pathways for integrating GRB into climate resilience, agriculture, circular economy, and inclusive transport policies. Overall, the Forum reinforced GRB as a “firewall of democracy” and a catalyst for systemic change—linking gender equality, climate action, and public finance reforms to deliver more transparent, just, and sustainable outcomes across the Western Balkans and Moldova

## World Forum for Democracy

In November 2025, the School of Public Policy “Mother Theresa”, an initiative of CRPM supported by the Council of Europe, strengthened its international engagement and democratic leadership mission through active participation in the 13th World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg.

At a time when democratic institutions face growing pressures, the School positioned its young leaders within a high-level global dialogue on democratic renewal. Through direct exposure to policymakers, civil society leaders, academics, and youth representatives from across the world, participants enhanced their understanding of contemporary democratic risks — including disinformation, declining civic trust, and governance challenges in times of crisis — and explored practical approaches for rebuilding democratic resilience.



A key institutional impact was the delegation's visit to the European Court of Human Rights, where engagement with Judge Jovan Ilievski deepened participants' knowledge of human rights protection mechanisms and strengthened their capacity to link European legal standards with national reform processes. The visit to the Macedonian Permanent Mission to the Council of Europe further reinforced institutional bridges between emerging policy professionals and diplomatic structures representing the country at the European level.



By integrating global democratic debates into its curriculum and leadership development model, the School continues to translate international experience into national impact. The Diploma Award Ceremony for the 2024/2025 generation marked the successful completion of another cohort of trained young professionals equipped with critical thinking skills, policy analysis competencies, and a strong commitment to democratic values.

Through sustained participation in the World Forum for Democracy, CRPM consolidates its role as a regional platform for democratic leadership development — ensuring that Macedonia's next generation of public policy professionals is internationally connected, rights-oriented, and prepared to contribute to stronger, more accountable institutions at home and beyond.

## Final Event Young Men Initiative

The final event demonstrated and consolidated the results achieved through the project “*Young Men Initiative in GBV Prevention in North Macedonia – II phase*”, showcasing its contribution to the advancement of gender equality through the active engagement of young people in the prevention of gender-based violence and the promotion of healthy, non-violent masculinities.

The conference presented the project’s reach across 9 municipalities, implemented in cooperation with 5 youth civil society organizations, and its partnerships with 15 high schools and 1 primary school. A total of 270 workshops delivered through the methodologies of Programs M and Y directly engaged more than 400 young people, primarily boys and young men, and these achievements formed the substantive foundation for reflection, discussion, and validation during the final event.



As a result of the final event, stakeholders expressed strengthened commitment to sustaining and scaling the initiative, enhancing inter-institutional cooperation, and further integrating life skills education and GBV prevention into school curricula and youth work. The conference concluded with reinforced institutional ownership and a shared understanding that preventive, gender-transformative programs such as the Young Men Initiative are essential for building safer, more inclusive, and gender-equal environments for young people.



## Budgeting for Integrity in Albania

Together with our partners in Albania IDM and Faktaje we organized a Final conference for the BAT project which gathered representatives from public institutions, civil society organizations, universities, the media, and engaged citizens to reflect on current practices, review achievements, and address the challenges that remain in advancing more transparent, inclusive, and responsive public finances. Key themes included budgeting for environmental and climate goals, strengthening gender-responsive budgeting, enhancing the role of civil society in oversight, and supporting the work of independent accountability institutions.

CRPM's Gender and Climate Expert, Gordana M. Nestorovska moderated the dedicated session on gender-responsive budgeting (GRB) in Albania. The session featured a presentation by Prof. Nadja Rusi, and commentary by Ms. Etleva Sheshi from the Directorate for Gender Equality within the Ministry of Health and Social Protection of Albania, who outlined the government's commitments to advancing GRB at both local and national levels.

The discussions emphasized that while Albania has a strong legal framework for gender-responsive budgeting, implementation remains incomplete. Beyond political commitment, there is a clear need for additional training, standardized procedures, and stronger institutional collaboration to ensure systematic integration of gender perspectives into budgeting. Panellists also stressed the importance of expanding GRB practices beyond traditional sectors like education, social policy, and employment to critical areas such as climate change and environmental policy.



## Webinars

From January 2025 through the GBWN CRPM organized and delivered regular webinars for GRB community of practice:

- [Budget Red Lines: Ending Menstrual Poverty Through Gender-Responsive Budgeting:](#)
- [Shaping Budgets Together – How Can Citizens and CSOs Join the Conversation?](#)
- [Mind the Gap: Gender Responsive Budgeting as the Key to Equal Pay](#)
- [Love Doesn't Hurt: Following the Budgets for Ending Violence Against Women and Girls](#)
- [Case studies of CSOs: Practical measures and initiatives to improve resilience with GRB](#)
- Webinar on [GRB in Global South](#) co-organized by [DAKSHIN - Global South Centre of Excellence](#)
- [Security' for Whom? Exploring Gender Equality in the EU's MFF](#)

## Podcasts

In 2025 we have produced 6 new episodes of GBWN podcast:

### **Ep.13 Intersectionality and Justice in Combating Gender-Based Crimes**

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/2iAVMjpE7ZUkzZO0OUqI2f?si=ziEqMEN-4ToyApRL7EfmL4g>

### **Ep.12 GRB impact by the Gender Budget Watchdog Network's Members**

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/3rpS9q4fm7XqMLky51GUSC?si=kih9OpQSS-3CA3m77ZXzCIQ>

### **Ep.11 GRB transforming cities**

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/09cB0xXYLJyCH6Dy9wFbod?si=M\\_jjztWHRVeDW-myX2cxgHg](https://open.spotify.com/episode/09cB0xXYLJyCH6Dy9wFbod?si=M_jjztWHRVeDW-myX2cxgHg)

### **Ep.10 Engendering municipal policy making and budgeting**

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/1TraY4HIRTYRXjJsJtjVBM?si=WGi9TPxERnO\\_7NZII-j92HQ](https://open.spotify.com/episode/1TraY4HIRTYRXjJsJtjVBM?si=WGi9TPxERnO_7NZII-j92HQ)

### **Ep.9 Communicating gender responsive budgeting**

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/7cZ67xPShC2oyFt44UARUA?si=WN29iMCzQ9idw-jMY7znJyA>

### **Ep.8 Waste management through gender lenses**

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/17YMhkfrVHetN7Zcqere5e?si=IP8ij\\_XJSsCso-4pRPQ3uEw](https://open.spotify.com/episode/17YMhkfrVHetN7Zcqere5e?si=IP8ij_XJSsCso-4pRPQ3uEw)

### **Ep.7 Gender Responsive Budgeting - Care**

[https://open.spotify.com/episode/202YbxKzGV0cGQ4nrblUli?si=Y37b\\_fzcRY20eFUbH-KhAJw](https://open.spotify.com/episode/202YbxKzGV0cGQ4nrblUli?si=Y37b_fzcRY20eFUbH-KhAJw)

# IV. CRPM publications

## 4.1. Policy Briefs

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[Shockwaves from Trump's Tariffs: Will the Western Balkans Be Affected?](#)

[Документ за политики: Затварање на родовиот јаз – Градење на финансиска писменост кај девојчињата](#)

[“Gender Budgeting in the New MFF: Moving Forward?” – Policy Brief](#)

[Delivering on SDG 5.C.1 in 2023 budget cycle in the Western Balkans and Moldova, a CSO perspective](#)

[Credibility of Macedonian Gender Budget](#)

## 4.2. Policy Studies

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[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions National Report \*\*Albania\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions- National Report \*\*Bosnia and Herzegovina\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions- National Report \*\*Montenegro\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions- National Report North \*\*Macedonia\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions- National Report \*\*Serbia\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions- National Report \*\*Kosovo\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions- National Report \*\*Moldova\*\*](#)

[Gender Analysis of the Transportation Sector towards Gender and Climate-responsive Policy Solutions - Regional Report](#)

[Green Horizons: Policy Pathways for a Sustainable Future – CRPM](#)

[\*\*How America's Trading Partners Are Reacting to U.S. Tariffs\*\*](#)

## 4.3. Policy Initiatives

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### ***Advocacy on Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF)***

#### ***Gender Budget Watchdog Network***

(GBWN) joined forces again with the European Gender Budgeting Network (EGBN) and European Women's Lobby (EWL) to advocate for gender-responsive budgeting across the European Union and beyond. The coalition prepared and submitted a [policy brief on gender budgeting](#) to the European Commission, urging it to ensure that the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) the EU's long-term budget truly prioritizes gender equality.

In November at the European Parliament's Committee on Budgets, CRPM Executive Directress and a Regional Director of the GBWN, [Marija Risteska urged EU policymakers to make gender-responsive budgeting the rule](#), not the exception, across the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Drawing on evidence from the Western Balkans and Moldova, she highlighted how gender budgeting enhances transparency, combats corruption, and builds public trust, calling for the EU to ensure that 85% of external financing supports Gender equality objectives.

At the beginning of December, on behalf of [GBWN](#) and EGBN, Nicole Farnsworth, Deputy Director and Lead Researcher at the Kosovo Women's Network (KWN), joined other EGBN members in Brussels last week to coordinate [advocacy efforts](#) with other civil society organisations (CSOs) and coalitions. They met with members of the European Parliament, Alexandra Geese, Tomas Waitz and Ilhan Kyuchyuk, seeking their support in gender mainstreaming the EU budget. Farnsworth also met with EC representatives regarding the Western Balkan (WB) Enlargement Package, asking for gender-responsive budgeting to be implemented as part of Reform Agendas across the WB, including in the EC's direct budget support to governments. This would be in line with commitments to accountability and the rule of law, given WB governments' commitments to implementing gender-responsive budgeting as part of the Sustainable Development Goals, among other legal commitments.

### ***GRB in transport service delivery***

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Prior the local elections, CRPM together with group of NGOs: Go Green, Human Rights Institute, Macedonian Bike Riders, Rural Coalition, Bitola on a Wheel, Radar, Association for Gender Equality, Network Stella Skopje, Eco Logic, Reactor, Geosphere Bitola, ZRE Vision Kavadarci, Green Org Kočani invited the candidates for Mayors to stand up and show that if elected, would implement a new and modern approach to adapting transport conditions at the local level in order to meet the needs of all residents of the Municipalities. The initiative urged candidates to sign the [Declaration](#) and stand for improved transport conditions. This was a result of the analyses performed in the CRPM transport research that variety of factors, the most important of which are local infrastructure, transportation habits acquired depending on the conditions that exist at the local level, and the conditions of residents to access some form of transport. The study showed that local transportation is often tied to the use of cars and there are different transport habits between men and women. Women are more likely to walk

and use public transport, which is poorly organized and enforced. Cycling, as one of the most environmentally friendly modes of transport, is less used by both sexes due to poor infrastructure and perceived as unsafe. People with disabilities are often unable to use sidewalks and public transportation locally due to poor accessibility. From the candidates for mayors, 13 signed the Declaration.

## ***Contributed to National development strategy and the National Strategy for education development***

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Within the activities for implementing the National Development Strategy 2024–2044, at the meeting of the Working Committee on the topic "Sustainable local and regional development that ensures cohesion," held on 22.10.2025, CRPM proposed a measure to provide inclusive capital infrastructure at the local level, within the working group on "Capital Infrastructure for a Better Life - Sustainable system for long-term financing and building resilient capital infrastructure." The proposed measure comes as a recommendation based on the findings of the [Gender, Climate, and Transport research](#) conducted by CRPM within the GBWN project, which the findings pointed out the insufficient inclusiveness of transport solutions at the local level.

# V. Financial report 2025

## CRPM Financials-2025 (in EUR)

### Statement of Revenue and Expenses

in EUR thousands (61.5 MKD/1 EUR)

2025

Granted donations and other revenue	2231
Total revenues	2231
Material cost and services	98
Expenses for employees	246
Capital expenses	7
Other operating expenses	973
Total Expenses	1324
Surplusses of revenue over expenses before tax	907
Income Tax	-
Surplusses of revenue over expenses after tax	907

## CRPM Financials-2025 (in EUR)

### Balance Sheet

As of 31 December 2025

in EUR thousands (61.5 MKD/1 EUR)

#### ASSETS

Cash and cash equivalents	908
Accounts receivables	0
Prepayments	3
Total Current Assets	912
Property plant and equipment (net)	22
Non-material assets (software, license, patents)	0
Total Non-Current Assets	22
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>934</b>

#### LIABILITIES AND OPERATING FUNDS

Accounts Payables	5
Tax payables	0
Total Current liabilities	5
Operating Fund	22
Surplus of revenue over expenses after taxation	907



